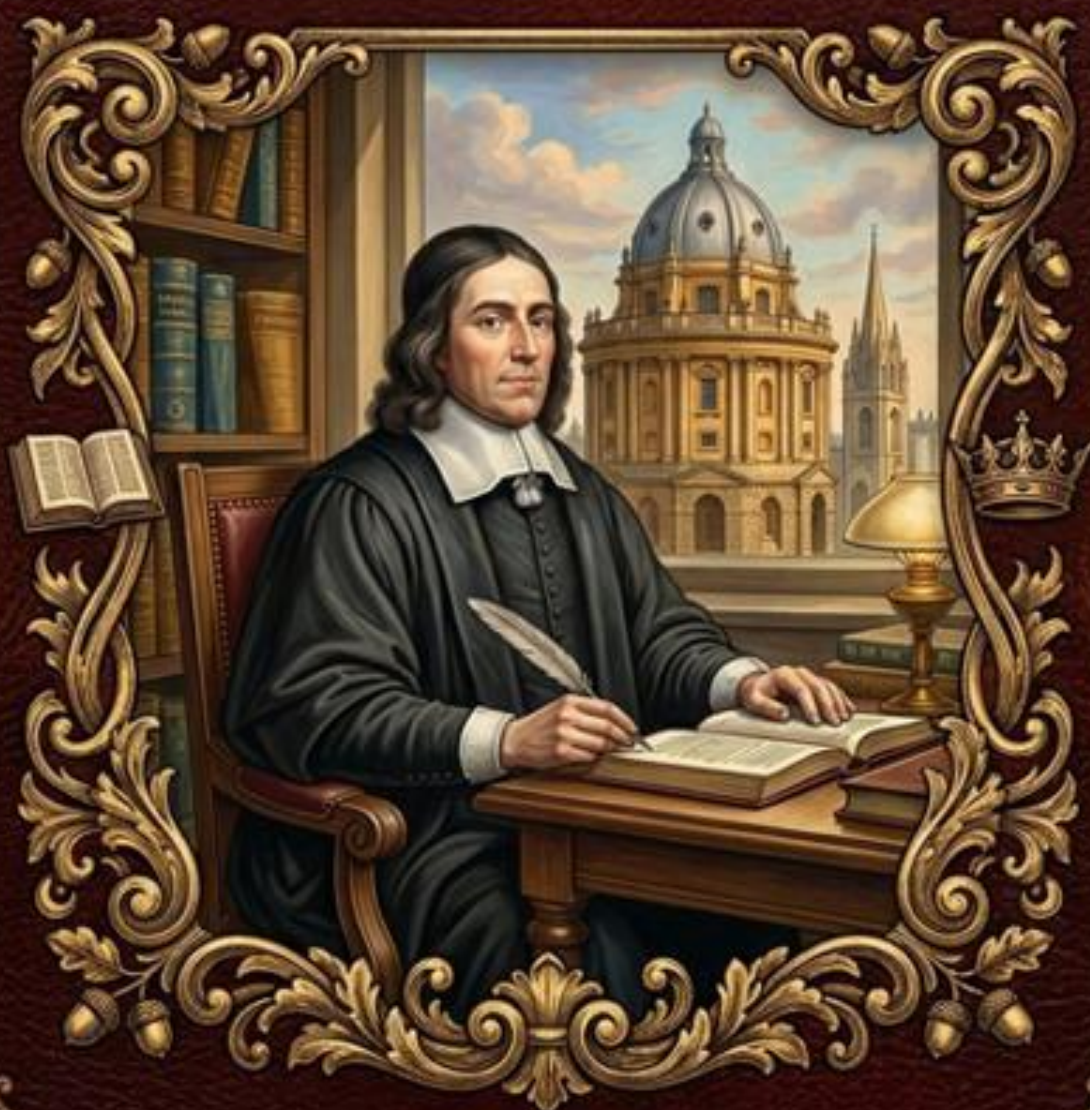


THE NATURE OF TRUE THEOLOGY

Volume 1: On Theology in General



JOHN OWEN



MONERGISM

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Monergism Books

The following work was fully transcribed verbatim by Claude. It was then thoroughly checked during the editing process to ensure accurate transcription throughout. Even so, please notify us if anything is found to be amiss, and we will work to remedy it as soon as possible.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

We generated this translation of the Latin original via Claude. It is part of a multi-volume republication of John Owen's classic work, *Theologoumena Pantodapa*. This translation is based on the edition of Owen's book found in W. H. Goold's edition of Owen's *Works*. Using a nineteenth-century edition was advantageous owing to the text's cleanness. We could have called these volumes *Theologoumena Pantodapa: Or Six Books Concerning the Nature, Origin, Progress, and Pursuit of True Theology*. Alternatively, we could have called this translation *Biblical Theology*, as Soli Deo Gloria did with theirs. The first title is a bit of a mouthful, though it is highly accurate to the original. The second title is much shorter, but could mislead the reader, as Dr Owen did not write a biblical theology in the modern sense. We decided that the best title for combining both accuracy and brevity is simply *The Nature of True Theology*. This volume, *Volume 1: On Theology in General*, comprises the front matter and the first three chapters of Book 1 of the Latin original. We originally intended to publish all of Book 1 as a single volume, but it would

amount to *c.* 73,000 words of text. This volume is *c.* 20,000 words long, making it much more manageable for both the editor and the reader.

The question may arise as to why we have produced another English translation of Owen's tome. There are several reasons why we have done so. First, the lack of a free eBook option means that those who do not have access to the Soli Deo Gloria translation are missing out on one of Dr Owen's most important writings. Second, the Soli Deo Gloria translation has been heavily criticised. We have read this translation twice and found the style pleasing and the contents edifying. Our production of a new translation should not be taken as a negative judgment on the existing one, but as providing the reader with an alternative. Even if the criticisms of the existing translation are unwarranted, having more than one translation of a major theological work may be useful. Just think of the number of translations of Augustine's *Confessions* or John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Third, scholars now have the opportunity to compare an AI translation with an existing translation and any future renderings of Dr Owen's tome that subsequently appear. Readers should note that the summaries of each chapter at the beginning have been placed in italics to distinguish them from the chapter text.

A text such as *Theologoumena Pantodapa* presented some unique editorial difficulties. Thanks go to Mark D. Patton for his help regarding generating lengthy AI translations. He provided us with a comprehensive set of translation rules for AI to follow. We hope these guidelines have resulted in a more uniform and consistent translation than Claude would have otherwise produced. All errors, however, are the fault of the editor. We hope that this translation proves edifying to the Christian reader and brings glory to the King of the Church.

ΕΠΙΣΤΛΗ ΤΟ ΤΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΗΝ

ΤΟ ΤΟΝ ΕΥΕΛΕΓΧΟΝΤΙ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΝ ΕΥΕΛΕΓΧΟΝΤΙ ΣΤΥΔΙΟΝΤΙ ΤΗΣ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΗΣ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ

ΕΥ ΠΑΤΤΕΙΝ [Fare well]

Were I not persuaded, learned reader, that it is in your interest to know with some accuracy at least certain of the matters which come under examination in this little book, I would rather have committed it to the flames it deserves than exposed myself to those dangers which the prejudices of many threaten against efforts of this kind. For whatever things are ordinarily capable of deterring any individual from these studies, all of them present themselves to us together at this time. But since for many years now this life has been in my wishes and thoughts — whereby I might in some measure benefit those devoted to heavenly wisdom and divine truth — I have resolved to steel my mind against those *μορμολύκεια* [bugbears], to which there is otherwise a ready access into the minds of men who are by no means wicked. I know the strength of that monstrous lion in the way (of whom the most excellent in both divine and human wisdom makes

mention) who terrifies the sluggish from their duty; and I am the less moved by them, the more I have long since proved them by experience. Nor is the business of one place or even one age, to which that lion attributes all his ferocity, at stake when one deliberates seriously about the increase of spiritual light advancing day by day toward the perfect day. Although therefore the prejudices of the many have slowed the minds of most from gathering the fruit of any praiseworthy undertaking, yet with those at least removed among posterity, there can be the highest hope and expectation that the things we undertake, relying on divine help and assistance for the illumination of truth, will not be destitute of their desired effect.

Each age has its own labour in this work; and it not infrequently comes about that men reap a richer harvest from the lucubrations of those who have passed from the midst, which they approach with no occasion for envy, rivalry, hatred, or party spirit, than from those who, looking only to them and their benefit, shall themselves also benefit posterity almost unawares. For it is not new that the equity of one's deeds should be the occasion of envy from one's neighbour. Yet truly, that infinite wisdom which governs all things has resolved, by the most gracious arrangement and inscrutable connection of all things and all ages, to meet the vices of mortals in such a way that they should in no manner block the road to the divinely appointed advances of divine truth. There is no reason, therefore, why anyone sincerely engaged in these studies should desist from an undertaking otherwise rightly instituted, whether fearing detractors or yielding to prejudices. The hinge of our duty does not turn on such things. Nor would he be a servant of Christ whose fixed purpose it was to please men. This also, by the good providence of God so arranging it, frequently comes conveniently to the comfort of those labouring in the Lord's field:

that seed cast into the ground, weeded by calumnies and covered with the dung of reproaches, grows more happily and abundantly than that which, from the most putrid excess of ἀμετρίας τῆς ἀνθολικῆς [disproportionate counterweight], has the popular breeze breathing upon it most sweetly. Since moreover from the time I applied my mind to writing these things, I have had nothing more at heart than to let the speeches of men flow past me, provided only I might benefit those who sincerely seek ἀληθεύειν ἐν ἀγάπῃ [to speak truth in love], I have both anticipated in thought and judged as things to be disregarded all those things which the δοκησισοφία [self-conceit of wisdom] of some, and the τύφος ζηλωτικός [zealot's vanity] of others, declare or portend as things to be feared. Nor indeed, as I hope, have I undertaken a matter odious and liable to detraction, or alien to the office which by God's grace I have for some time now sustained in the church.

The title of the book itself will, without my saying so, indicate the rationale of the work undertaken. It investigates the nature of true theology and sets out the way and manner in which that investigation can be holily pursued by others.¹ To what extent I have, in this or that part of the work, attained the mind of Christ, it is for you, pious and learned reader — for these things pertain to you — to weigh carefully. But in order that I may more fully communicate to you the rationale of my studies in this work, certain things must be taken up from somewhat further back, and those things recalled which, since they have been an impediment to many devoted to theological studies, have offered me the occasion — or even seemed to impose upon me a certain necessity — of bringing these thoughts into the open. For reason itself, by which we are men, teaches us that we are not born for ourselves alone; and the gospel foretells that we must at last give

account of all things freely given to us by Christ. If anyone thinks he has detected me having incautiously fallen into thorns anywhere, let him consider that I approached them with no other intention than to extricate those whom I had observed sticking at the boundary-posts within them, and he will perhaps not be an unjust assessor of our labours for that reason, where he cannot deny that we are pointing out the right road, as it were with a finger, to those who have gone astray.

Now there are, first of all — to speak of them in the first place — those to whom all careful investigation of divine wisdom seems altogether superfluous, who think there are no sufficiently weighty reasons why anyone should direct the sharpness of his mind to it. They also have certain shadows of reasons for their persuasion, or rather their folly, which it would be both too long and would draw us far from our purpose to pursue all of them here: whatever they advance outwardly, there lurks within a hatred of true piety and evangelical truth. To contend with one who, as the poet says, ἑτερον μὲν κεύθει ἐνὶ φρεσὶν, ἄλλο δὲ βάζει [hides one thing in his heart but says another], would be to spend one's effort all too unprofitably. These men, who lack the force of intellect for more profitable things and have nothing else at home to do or to feed upon, would have others give themselves as slaves to that pursuit, in order that those who by a vigorous and keen natural disposition are carried toward higher things might be depressed under its barren yoke — which they consider no fair thing. That divine wisdom should be sought by anyone for any other fruit or end than wealth, riches, honours, popular veneration, or the favour of princes, they never so much as dream of. Hence, they desire all inquiry into it to be confined within limits accessible to the most slothful, the most occupied, and even the most villainous of mortals; and whatever lies beyond these

they have determined must be numbered among vain, fictitious, curious, and uncertain things. For although they judge the matter itself to be in some measure necessary to the conduct of life, they nevertheless think that its exact and diligent pursuit brings with it those inconveniences which, if they are to be met in time, greatly concern the public peace and that religious disposition which ignorance produces.

The defence of our cause against the assaults of these beasts is easier than that I should greatly sweat in it. I will say it in a word: ὅς' οὐκ οἶδασι βλασφημοῦσιν [what they do not know they blaspheme], neither understanding what the nature of theology is, nor what its end, nor how great a thing it is not to perish eternally. Old it is, I confess, that hypocrites should say, "What weariness is this?" and "What profit?" Mal. 1:13; 3:14. Those, however, who seriously consider that God nowhere employs greater severity in his precepts or greater grace in his promises than when he requires this knowledge of himself from us, will not think the same as these, unless they too are pressed under the dominion of sin. Very few indeed there are — and those either the slaves of a little labour, or openly impious — who openly and γυμνῇ [without covering], as they say, τῇ κεφαλῇ [with bare head], condemn all industry employed in the study and investigation of heavenly truth. But those who, in reality, count whatever time is spent on it among their losses are neither few nor would they wish to appear impious. Nor do I speak only of those whose interest in not being strangers and pilgrims in this matter is as great as the salvation of souls, which is the condition of all men, but also of those who professedly devote themselves to the study of this wisdom and profess to be its initiates. Hence, after the name of theology has served as a cover for various other studies for some years, out come politicians, physicians, poets, orators, historians,

philosophers — or would that they came out, since they are nothing less than what they most desire to appear. For we have long since discovered by experience that peculiar habits or garments, a gait, a countenance composed and feigned into a false and shadowy semblance of modesty — through which the empty covering of pride, insolence, and contumacy shines more often than a sieve — together with degrees and dignities and other designations of leisure, wealth, and dominion, do not make theologians. And these things come about from the fact that they neither care for nor love the mysteries of this wisdom; and although they most shamelessly use the pretext of its name for other ends, they maintain the most intimate enmity with its heavenly and spiritual power, purity, and efficacy.

But let us dismiss this number: they have their reward. As for the speech that should be addressed to those who are variously impeded in the study of theology, it does not pertain to those who are their own sole impediment. What most stands in the way of students in this matter is the native and corrupt blindness of the human mind; and unless he who once said “let light shine out of darkness” removes it by the efficacy of his Spirit, whoever devotes his study and effort to the investigation of this wisdom will be hunting the winds with a net. Since, however, we must treat this at length and expressly in the book itself, passing over it here, we shall pursue only those things which, from various particular causes, chiefly impede those who are devoting themselves to these studies. Since these pertain to two heads — of which one regards the students, the other the studies themselves — touching the former with one or two examples, we shall treat the latter as far as may satisfy our purpose and intention.

In the first place, there presents itself to us that sloth by which we see no small part of the students torpid and growing numb. It would indeed be easy

to accuse this vice, and if I were to try to bring forth what can be said to that effect, the speech would be immense. But since it blazes with such notoriety that even the most slothful consider it necessary to consult their own reputation and that of their name by disparaging it at least in words, we shall gladly relieve ourselves of that burden. Its hidden causes, so that whoever does not think the damage of a whole life's fruit is to be compensated by the softness of one vice, may the better meet them, I shall briefly bring to light. The chief of these is the efficacy of innate concupiscence, itching with love for pleasures. For it cannot be that a mind devoted to lust, hindered by love, desire, appetite, and wantonness, should seriously think of any of those things in which one will labour in vain unless he is diligent and sober. All servitude softens minds, especially that which is servitude to sin. Since, moreover, a mind addicted and devoted to concupiscence recoils from all labour of intellect, because vice occupies the nature itself and holds it bound in darkness, it most profoundly abhors the one who undertakes to handle divine and spiritual things. Hence it comes about that after many have in the servitude of sin contracted for themselves a fresh appetite for vices, in addition to that which is innate in depraved nature, you may see many bound to the study of divine truth under many an obligation, whom, like worn-out horses, no spurs can drive to proceed on the appointed road; especially those who have attained the things for the sake of which they perhaps sustained that heavy burden for a time. For it is impossible that one should be at once φιλήδονος [a lover of pleasure] and φιλόθεος [a lover of God]. And yet such is the most foul defection among the many from the most holy doctrine of Christ, that they are not at all content to offer themselves carelessly, securely, and negligently to those incentives of lust which the world lying in wickedness continually supplies

to all; but over and above this, they carefully and diligently pursue those things which are kindling for pleasures for themselves and others, and enticements to sin. From the pernicious offspring which sprouts from this root in the whole of human life, this sloth is born, which, having first cast down souls from all things arduous, excellent, and divine, and made them slaves to things vain, putrid, and perishing, compels them to perish eternally.

I know that some, while they burn with an excessive desire for earthly things, are willing to undergo the tedium of studies, and draw courage for a time from that which will soon cut all the sinews of industry. And some of these persist in their resolution until they attain their purpose — that is, until they have obtained the wealth or honours which are for them the goal of all their studies; but far more, gradually falling away, give themselves over to the most slothful and shameful idleness. The reason why we see so many of those who profess to have devoted themselves to the study of the liberal arts, and indeed to divine wisdom itself, growing torpid in uncultivated sloth, arises chiefly from this: that they do not care to subdue their vicious and carnal affections of mind by the Spirit and grace of Christ. For it is in vain to expect that a mind sick with vices should devote itself to any honourable effort, or long apply itself to anything worthy of praise. And nothing can be imagined more absurd and more contrary to the nature of things than that one who indulges pride, arrogance, ambition, avarice, or any depraved concupiscence of corrupt nature, should suppose that he is capable of devoting himself to the study of the most holy revelation of the mind of God in Christ rightly and with fruit, or of persevering in that shadowy exercise which, with a thoroughly unrighteous mind, he tolerates for a time. Furthermore, there is in many an incurable deficiency of intellect

which, being without hope of progress, ends in senseless idleness. For the selection of intellects among students by those whose interest is greatest in it is exceedingly rare. Pedagogues hired for pay offer their services to all indiscriminately, and it matters not who is brought to school, provided only that there be money to pay. The same rule obtains in the academies.

Hence, very many go about in gowns, as fitted for studies as a fox for the plough. There are innumerable things which consign these men — sterile and barren, having experienced some few fruitless efforts of nature — to idleness and sloth. And it would be well if they gave up the liberal arts, which they have taken up in vain, if they did not proceed to bad ones. But having been driven from those occupations for which they might perhaps have been suited, by taking up those for which they are wholly unsuited, since in these the tedium of labour weighs upon them, and they are ashamed to return to those, they for the most part plunge themselves into villainy. To these we may add the example of the age, openly defecting from all the institutions of the most holy religion of Jesus Christ, and not so much inclined as headlong into vices. As soon as its contagion, like a pestilence, has seized the youth devoted to studies, with scorn for all care for industry, modesty, piety, self-denial, and preparation for bearing the cross, their supreme desire forthwith is — distinguished from the dissolute dregs of the age by some garments, I know not what — to be in all other things as like to it as possible. Hence to flow away in luxury and idleness, to be proud, to consume, to make little of the examples of the good, to despise the evangelical life — indeed all moderation — and yet not to doubt that such wisdom as they desire will roll down from heaven into their laps. What else indeed ought to be expected from men of this sort than that, gradually relaxing all the labour of their studies, they should overlay their intellectual

powers with sloth? Unless students diligently watch over and early resist these causes of pernicious idleness, however much, from a certain empty swelling of the mind which the vanity and custom of the age inflates, they may be Suffenus to themselves, no prudent person will ever allow himself to entertain hope in their progress of any value or moment.

Furthermore — to speak of them in the second place — the pursuits of sects and parties carry many astray, those whom pleasures and sloth do not ruin, and greatly impede them in the investigation of truth. Diversity of opinion constitutes parties in religion; many other reasons increase and strengthen them. But in these things there is the greatest making sport of intellects. For you will find none more slavishly addicted and enslaved to a sect than certain persons who, because they belong to the numerically dominant party in that corner of the world where it falls to them to spend their days, think there is nothing more to be admired in themselves than that they condemn all sects as criminal and foolish. So it has seemed to most that what constitutes sects is not the disposition of men's minds but a deficiency of numbers; and that that name produces distinctions not of things but of places; when in reality where, with a servile and, so to speak, sectarian mind, there is agreement for whatever secular reasons in a formula of concord, the perniciousness of the sect is increased by the number of those consenting. But I am not now engaged in expounding the nature of a sect or inveighing against its vices; I shall say only this: how its pursuit throws obstacles in the way of the pursuit of true wisdom. This comes about from the fact that most of those who make up sects reckon it impious to be wiser than the opinions of the sect, since they include in the sect to which each belongs, as in a cornucopia, all knowledge, piety, doctrine, and wisdom. It cannot be told what evils, springing from this source, assail

weak minds, prone to corrupt affections and liable to unjust suspicions; all of which slow men's judgments in the investigation of truth; and, what is worse, introduce into the mind that habit which is depraved, proud, and contentious, with which the Holy Spirit is unwilling to mingle his gifts. "The man who fears Jehovah, him will he teach what way he shall choose; the secret of Jehovah is with those who fear him, that they may know his covenant," Ps. 25:12, 14. Those who, in reality, are not the homebred servants of the sect's opinions but use it for advancing themselves and their affairs, enjoy the blind zeal and folly of its members sweetly, and yet favour the honour of the sect and swear by its interests no less, nor display a greater contempt of others than the members display hatred.

There is no more serious prejudice in the study of divine truth, nor one that more beclouds a mind impeded by corrupt affections, than that which arises from a person being enrolled — whether as it were by the condition of his birth, or by the instruction of others, or by the desire of earthly things, before he has learned to exercise sincere, free, and mature judgment — in a numerically large sect in religion, whose practice is especially served by the allurements of wealth, dignities, and popular veneration. That sect is for such people the norm and measure of truth and of all studies; nor do they use any more trustworthy guide in their undertakings than the most religious caution lest they inadvertently fall into the opinions of other sects, and thus perhaps borrow light from others at the cost of the most gratifying and frequently most useful errors. Meanwhile, they think themselves alone to be learned, intelligent, prudent, and pious — by some kind of sense, wisdom, and piety of the common sect, that is, by a collier's faith. Hence too arise quarrels, hatreds, strifes, and endless disputes, from which all Christian charity and gentleness are very far removed. Kings return to

favour with one another after great mutual disasters more quickly than theologians, inflamed by party spirit. Nor can anything so absurd, unlearned, futile, or even almost impious be vomited forth in matters of religion, but if it proceeds from one who leads or follows a numerous company, the sectarian hangers-on immediately embrace it as the sacred shield fallen from heaven; these watch keenly for one thing alone: how to defend the bad sayings of their own and assail the good sayings of others. If they are at last persuaded — which happens very rarely — that someone who is not of their party is not talking nonsense or is not a scoundrel, immediately all of them maintain a quarrel with him; and there is no one who would not most gladly have triumphed over him, even in the most trifling matter, or would not rejoice at his being triumphed over by others. Most miserable little men, who while they command for themselves the worst servitude, and while with great superciliousness they condemn others for errors, ignorance, even heresy and schism, relying on their sect — perhaps the worst of all, which is not a sect only to themselves — very frequently claim all of those things as their own peculiar property, unless perhaps nothing of this can be said against them because their folly exceeds all of it.

With men of this sort, I do not suppose I shall have anything in common in the business with which we are engaged, of advancing divine truth. They all know the limits of wisdom and how far the bounds of divine truth extend — that is, the opinions of the sect. For they will not venture to sail into lands unknown to them, who have gold enough at home, or what they esteem more precious than gold. Our purpose, therefore, diverges so far from the institutions of these men that I never came into any hope that the things we have determined to discuss would be of any benefit to them, or

would taste to their palate. I have judged those in particular to be either omitted or disregarded, in whom the blind love of self and sect has so extinguished the light of reason that they do not understand that they maintain quarrels with all sects — as indeed they profess — for no other reason than that the one to which they have given themselves in slavery alone may reign. Nor are these things said by me as though every believer did not need to join himself to some assembly professing faith in Christ and the worship of God as prescribed by him, lest he be reckoned ἄτοπος [out of place] and ἄτακτος [disorderly]; but between this and the other there is almost infinite difference — with what spirit one joins himself to any of them. He who, having first given himself to our Lord Jesus Christ, attaches himself to some one of those who together with the study and profession of divine truth, and the observance of the commandments of the Lord Jesus, holily cultivates true piety, sobriety, justice, modesty, and separation from the world — he attaches himself in order that, made a partaker of the spiritual privileges of the church and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in it, he may himself also do his utmost in advancing the edification of the body of Christ in faith and love, which is his part — he, in my judgment, has acted rightly and according to what the reason of our duty owed to Christ in the gospel requires. We are charging only those with obstructing the course of truth who, carried by wrong, or secular, or no reasons — or as it were by some chance, or by the impulse of external things in which they are entangled — into the territories of a sect, perhaps elated by its carnal prerogatives, look down upon all others as if they had never been born. But let us dismiss the further consideration of these men, whose disease of mind is without special divine grace altogether incurable; since in this they are not only most highly pleased with themselves, but triumph in earnest; and

they think that those who would free them from the superstitious frenzy by which they are agitated want not to save them but to kill them.

Let us proceed to those studies by which the minds of men are polished, to be some day devoted to the investigation of heavenly wisdom. For ἀρχὴ παντὸς ἔργου μέγιστον [the beginning of every work is the greatest part]. I fear, however, lest there lurk in these studies vices by which minds occupied therein are burdened in the study of divine truth. I am unwilling to recall here anything of those things which men thoroughly learned and practiced in affairs have written about transmitting the disciplines in a way different from the common one; since I am weary of the custom of the age, whereby if anything of this sort is produced, it is immediately seized upon as material for the περιεργίας [meddlesomeness] of quarrels and talkative idleness, and if it raises itself a little higher, even for envy. To deal with those things which are in use everywhere pertains to our purpose. Since moreover the student of theology — besides those things which we shall say elsewhere concerning the grace and Spirit of Christ — needs a trained judgment, a candid, sincere, and unprejudiced mind, pious affections, and honest manners, here we shall briefly speak of those vices commonly found at the entrance to studies which, unless they are early restrained, are apt either to deprave the affections and corrupt the manners, or to ensnare the mind itself in the traps of errors and vain reasonings from which anyone will not easily extricate himself. Let us begin with poetry, which once laid the foundations of letters, and from which still many commence their studies. It has its praises and its ivy-wreaths, which it will carry away without my objection. That holy men of old were pleased to use it in singing the praises of the living God has procured for it a praise which eternity will behold. There is also a certain authority and reverence

belonging to antiquity itself, especially since it has found the most excellent intellects to exercise themselves in it through so many ages, in order that it should not fall into disuse. It must also be acknowledged that the ancient cultivators of it were versed with lively and subtle sagacity in portraying the vices of men's manners aptly and dexterously, and further with such skill in feigning verisimilitudes by the imitation of which the intellects of others may be exercised in the investigation of truth itself, that it is no wonder if they diffused the fame of their name widely through almost the whole world. There is also undoubtedly the greatest enchantment for the mind situated in the art itself, which, however, the wisest of the pagans did not hesitate to compare with the pleasure of flute-girls, whom ignorant men hire for payment to enliven their spirits at banquets when they cannot be agreeable to one another by reason of their want of proper conversation. But all the blandishments of speech that serve to soothe the senses and enchant the minds of men, having encompassed them in its embrace, prepares easy access to the affections of the mind for things themselves, and fastens them tenaciously to the memory.

But my business now is not to say what is the use of poetry or of the ancient poets, which I confess to be great; but what is the abuse of both, which I reckon to be greater. For I have not gone over to the opinion of the orator who acknowledged no solid utility in poetry and affirmed all its pleasure to be puerile. But I think there is no man who does not know with what stain — indeed with what filth — it has been polluted from its very beginnings among the wise men of the pagans. For if you take away the ἀποθέωσιν [deification] of shameless men, the adulteries, slaughters, quarrels, rapines, and unspeakable sins of ἀνθρωποφυνεῖς [men-begotten] gods who have a human nature; the lies, impure loves, cunning, cruelty,

ambition, tyranny, villanies, nefarious and superstitious rites of idolatry, and the worship of the devil himself, attributed to the men whom they hold up for imitation — the books over which ancient poetry reigns, which now move with gigantic bulk, will be dwarfed and diminutive. The old comedy added βωμολοχίαν [ribald buffoonery] to these; in which, along with the disparagement of innocent men, τὸ γελοῖον [the ludicrous] held sway; which impertinence, or rather slander, of the most wicked of bipeds — in which today many take the greatest delight — the power of the Macedonians suppressed. He who has set forth these things with art and care, shamelessly and immodestly, so as to leave stings in the minds of his readers and kindle similar affections, is reckoned, if not to carry off the first prize, at least to stand out among the rest. With villainous tales of this sort, unhappy youth is imbued from infancy, which, while they meditate, breathe, and bring forth incautiously, they introduce into their minds a vicious (and not infrequently invincible) ἔξις [habit]. Those are commanded to be held dear from the tenderest years, to be cherished in the bosom, to be turned over by night and by day with the hand, whom all the pagans who in any way set themselves in opposition to the age rushing toward worse things — lest the morals of the human race should be utterly ruined — judged ought to be removed far from the company of all good men. The naked philosophers denied that anyone among the Greeks could have been either wise or just, however much he might have wished it, since they had given their ears to poets teaching everything else — as Philostratus reports in the *Life of Apollonius*. For in what manner most young men make use of the vices of others, the Comic showed in his Chaereas; concerning which example, Augustine has much to say in his books on the *City of God*. It is also most well known that Socrates drove the poets out of that city of

good men, which Plato was founding; the act was approved by others no less learned than he. “Do you see,” says Marcus Tullius, “what harm poets cause? They introduce the bravest men lamenting; they soften our minds; and so sweet are they that they are not only read but even committed to memory. Thus, when poets have come in addition to the bad discipline of the household and the life of the shade and ease, they break all the sinews of virtue. Rightly, therefore, are they expelled by Plato from that city which he devised when he was seeking the best manners and the best constitution of the state. But we, learned forsooth from Greece, learn these things from boyhood and think this liberal education and culture.” But either these things were said by those men carelessly and without reason, or most of us think less rightly than they and are less solicitous for the decency of manners, or the reasons upon which they relied do not pertain equally to us as to them — of which the controversy as to what ought to be said is easy and light, and any person may settle it without difficulty.

It is true that the Stoics twisted the poetic fables to a natural interpretation, others to a moral one, most absurdly ascribing to the fabulists things that had never entered their minds — as Eusebius demonstrates in those most learned books which he wrote on the *Praeparatio Evangelica*; and before him Marcus Tullius: “Whether the poets corrupted the Stoics, or the Stoics gave authority to the poets, I could not easily say; for monstrosities and villanies are spoken by both.” But what have these things to do with boys barely just taken from the cradle, who, while they hunt for pleasure and praise in these most putrid fables, very often pour out their miserable souls corrupted with deadly poison, to the applause of those whose duty it was to instil into their tender years true veneration of God? But in one word, they say, it can be taught that the things they learn are

fabulous monstrosities, and that very many things which the authors they read celebrate with praises are to be avoided. But I think there is no one so unhappily stupid as not to prefer to be without a festering ulcer rather than with a poultice, or without deadly poison rather than with an antidote. If the things the poets relate are most false, and what they celebrate most base, why do we hasten to corrupt rather than instruct tender age with a knowledge of the former and praises of the latter? The efficacy of evils is more certain than that of remedies; so this business is conducted at the very well-head. “The heart is deceitful above all things and deadly sick.” We know what the human mind is before it is illuminated by divine grace; with what impetus it is borne toward the embrace of the enticements of lusts; how sluggish, tardy, and obstinate it is when better and more wholesome things are suggested; and with what facility it slides into the habit of the most putrid imaginations. He who would deny that its innate vanity is to be restrained in every possible way from all incentives of pleasures and lusts would be altogether unworthy of the Christian name. For I am ashamed of that kind of Christianity which has nothing in common with the genuine article except the name.

“But,” they say, “it is necessary that we imitate the ancients.” But to contaminate minds not yet mature in judgment with a flood of fables and vices is a scandal and the greatest folly, not useful instruction for imitation. Μὴ πλανᾶσθε [be not deceived], says the apostle, 1 Cor. 15:33: Φθείρουσιν ἥθη χρηστ’ ὁμιλίας κακάς [Evil communications corrupt good morals]; which words he quoted from Menander — or rather, as Jerome says, from Euripides — as a proverb known to themselves, in order to slaughter them as it were with their own sword. Many indeed deny that they have admitted any stain or embellishment from their first instruction in the books of the

poets, and accordingly think they ought to continue learning for themselves until old age what it is disgraceful only for boys not to have learned. But not everyone has the advantage of being equipped with such an amulet that they may at will mingle with the plague in safety; nor does the Homeric cloud veil everyone placed between the sacred and the stone. Those who know or care about themselves, about the innate depravity of the human mind, about evangelical holiness, and who believe that they must at last render account to God of all their studies, will perhaps be of a different opinion. Indeed, either that is not the gospel which we read, or the pride and δοκησισοφία [self-conceit of wisdom] of those men, exalting themselves with contempt of divine grace and self-denial, will go to judgment without sincere repentance.

That poetry itself may have some use among other secular disciplines — which is no other than the culture of the natural faculties of the soul, consisting in the eliciting and distinct exercise of innate principles, whereby the mind's comprehension of things may be broadened, perception and the power of discernment sharpened, and memory increased — we do not deny. But unless shaved of its nails and hair, we do not think it right to admit it to Christian citizenship. How this can be done, and the legitimate use of this art restored — setting aside those enticements to depraved affections and all the teachers of impurity, on whom most seem to spend their time either too long or too carelessly, neither sufficiently cautious against the poison they administer, nor sufficiently instructed in their right use, if there is any — is not the place here to set out. We have shown, if I am not mistaken, nor does the reason of our present purpose require anything further, that incautious youth, employing little or no judgment in the discrimination of truth, engaged in the reading and study of the poets without discrimination, more

often sustains from the contagion of fables and villanies a loss not easily repaired. It would be easy to copy out here what the most learned among the ancients — Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Jerome, Augustine, and others — have written on this matter; but these things are not unknown to the learned. And this is that great literary preparation, from whose impure ardours most apply their smoking minds to the study of the mysteries of the gospel and of heavenly wisdom. That divine truth would open her inmost rooms to be defiled by knockers of this sort, that her august oracles would be held in contempt, is none but the last folly to come into any hope of. Nor will the sacred dignity of theology ever be so abandoned to vain men as to share her mysteries with those who are so far from earnestly seeking to experience her heavenly power, that they give themselves almost entirely to affections and pursuits which drain all the blood, sap, and vigour even of common honesty.

Nor is the philosophical herb without its serpent. It is an old complaint of learned men that some of the ancient Christians put on Christ in such a way as not to put off Plato sufficiently. Nor can it be modestly denied by anyone that they twisted the most hidden mysteries of the gospel into philosophical senses, not without great loss to divine truth and harm to the church. But that disaster to the faith was light and tolerable, since few were implicated in that fault and used that excessive licence in very few matters, compared to what she afterwards suffered from the mixture of Aristotelian philosophy by almost all in almost everything. This we have shown elsewhere. What vices are rubbed off from the common method of its study upon the minds of studious youth, hastening through its tortuous windings and prodigiously stitched-together centos to other matters, I have determined to say here by one or two examples. And here first there present themselves to us the

unsound theorems of the common ethics: that all happiness which we pursue by virtue — to attain whose entrance human genius once laboured variously and in vain — is to be obtained in this mortal life: this is the foundation and basis of the whole structure. For to call anyone happy only after he is dead is pronounced by Aristotle to be παντελῶς ἄτοπον [altogether absurd]. But the same man, while repudiating a laborious happiness, in whose pay virtue and industry would serve as common soldiers, establishes it as in need of τῆς ἐκτὸς εὐημερίας [external prosperity] and thus unequal to the burden of sustaining calamities, and capable of being snatched away from the unwilling and the innocent — uncertain meanwhile (as though these things were in conflict with one another) whether to ascribe it to some god or to virtue. He would, without doubt, think our Job laborious, wretched, and unhappy, unlike the way Marcus Tullius says he thought of his Regulus. But there is almost no one who does not know how far whatever can be understood of that happiness he extols is removed from that communion with God by which alone the future blessedness of the saints has its beginning here; and from all that on account of which the gospel pronounces us blessed, except to him to whom the gospel itself is veiled. Furthermore, for virtue, which in a manner bordering on madness he imagines to consist ἐν κακιῶν μεσότητι [in a mean between vices], he applies that rule and prescription which will most certainly ensure that no one will ever know with certainty what virtue is and what vice is. For rejecting the proper agitation of the rational soul and the careful investigation which pleased Socrates, and referring students to I know not what arbitrary definitions of prudent men, he has taken abundantly sufficient care that they should find nothing firm or stable on which to plant their foot, nothing which could arrest the perpetual

vacillation of the human mind. That he fell into a greater vice in avoiding this one, when he declares that a man can be perfectly wise, will be judged by those who do not fail to know that he who is perfectly wise is God. He must be deemed to have composed himself rather more to the limits of modesty and the sense of the human condition, that Roman Fabricius, to whom, as ambassador at the court of King Pyrrhus, the speech of Cineas the Thessalian was like a prodigy, reporting that I know not who among the Greeks had sustained calling himself wise. And to pass over innumerable other things wrongly said about the virtues: whoever goes over to his opinion restricting the exercise of fortitude — the most divine of virtues — to military affairs, will be compelled to adjudge its praise not only to the most σπουδαιοτάτοις [serious] and wisest of the pagans but to Christ himself and the holy martyrs. He establishes δίκαιον νομικόν [legal justice] — placed in the arbitrary decision of legislators and distinguished from φυσικῷ [natural justice] — as the principle and norm of divine worship, a fiction devised to the reproach of religion and its ruin, from which men are to learn who God is and how he is to be worshipped. We know also to what end, not without loss to heavenly truth, very many sayings of the same philosopher — on involuntary actions, on justice, and others — are drawn, not unwillingly, by some into theology.

If, finally, we may contemplate the very account of virtue which he sets out, by which alone access to happiness is obtained, we shall perceive it to be a proud conceit peddling some shadow of virtue, rather than the disposition of mind becoming one who is sensible of the human condition and of dependence upon the most high God. For it fares excellently well with that virtue which is preferred to vices, whose end is not the glory of God and whose beginning is not grace; whose rule is neither the nature of

things themselves nor the revelation of the divine mind; but which, taking its rise from men, rests solely on their own industry in its progress and at length terminates in themselves. The mind of youth entangled in the net of such hypotheses will not easily find how to extricate itself from its bonds and snares. The gospel teaches everything differently. But truly it is a task too laborious, and not a man's who lacks diligence, to root out from the bottom the persuasions of dogmas with which the mind has been freshly imbued; especially where there is no one who expressly teaches them to be false. Nor is it possible that the mind should assent at the same time to principles and arguments that are mutually at war with one another. Hence, minds wavering in a certain surge and reciprocal flux of various thoughts and uncertain of truth, assailed as it were by opposing blasts of winds, would be hurled by *δυσωπία ἀμφίβολος* [ambiguous awe] into the quicksands of atheism, were it not that — as is the condition of most — they cling on both sides to the bark of words, and never seriously take pains to experience the power and efficacy of the things themselves. For since the most celebrated theorems of moral philosophy and the mysteries of the gospel are in no way at peace with one another, it is necessary that those who, adding faith to the former, render their minds conformable to them, should be altogether incapable of the latter. It is indeed a miserable kind of consolation that among so great a multitude of students so very few are intimately imbued with that moral doctrine. But so it is, learned reader, so it is indeed; the studies of youth are so composed for the ghosts of quarrels and the shadows of dreams that, full of terms, distinctions, and definitions, they scarcely taste the things themselves with the tips of the lips, as they say; and those who come to ethics with the intention of themselves

becoming prudent, just, sober, courageous, and truly σπουδαῖοι [serious men] —

“In number, they are scarcely as many as the gates of Thebes or the mouths of the wealthy Nile.”

The moral philosophy of the pagans was a practical and serious institution in the honesty of manners according to the best rules of virtue they knew — slippery and most uncertain rules indeed, but yet the best they could devise. For they were not like us, who, having found wheat, would prefer to eat acorns. Οὐ γὰρ ἴν’ εἰδῶμεν τί ἐστὶν ἀρετὴ, σκεπτόμεθα, says Aristotle, ἀλλ’ ἴν’ ἀγαθοὶ γενώμεθα· ἐπεὶ οὐδὲν ἂν ἦν ὄφελος αὐτῆς. Ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι σκέψασθαι τὰ περὶ τὰς πράξεις, πῶς πρακτέον αὐτάς [For we do not inquire in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good; since otherwise it would be of no use. It is necessary to consider the matters relating to actions, how they are to be performed]. And again: ἅμα γὰρ εἰδῆσαι βουλόμεθα, καὶ αὐτοὶ εἶναι τοιοῦτοι [For we wish both to know and to be such ourselves]. And how many are there who, in the study of that science, have this already settled in their minds? A raw youth, inexperienced in things, intent on everything else, perhaps full of wine, sleep, and vices, hastens to complete I know not what ethical course — rapid and headlong indeed — in a year and a half, or even in the space of a semester, in order to make a learned noise in schools after the usual fashion. But let us leave these things, the fault of which lies in the men themselves; we are treating of the matter itself. If therefore any person, ignorant of the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις [recapitulation] of all things in Christ, should attach his mind to those false opinions we mentioned above — the sum of which agrees with the native pride of the human mind and its most foolish αὐτοθεισμῶ [self-deification] — he will scarcely believe the gospel when it

instructs him otherwise in all things, and teaches him that he is nothing, can do nothing; but that blind, foolish, depraved, and wretched, he must receive all light, wisdom, virtue, and happiness from God through Christ. And if he does not embrace them by faith, nor care to order his life according to their rule, it would be well if, having spent his efforts diligently in them, he lost nothing else but his labour and oil. Although therefore I confess the use of those things which some of the ancient philosophers elaborated in that moral discipline with admirable compass of intellect and varied industry to be most great and beautiful — for those who have διὰ τὴν ἔξιν τὰ αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα πρὸς διάκρισιν καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ [because of practice, their senses are exercised for the discernment of good and evil] — yet he will not act rightly in my judgment who has driven those who, by the greatest benefit of God, may use the most certain and infallible rule of all virtues, and the only one powerful to engender them in the minds of men, to uncertain, fluctuating, and most empty studies of true wisdom — those investigating the holy and honest manner of living to God. But Aristotle himself would not tolerate one transmitting moral doctrine unless with the intention of at the same time ordering the manner of life according to its rule. But I am unwilling to say more of these things here, the consideration of which will again meet us in the course of our progress. Let the discourse proceed, therefore, to other things.

There is no one, I think, with a little more discernment in these matters, who is not displeased by the common method of transmitting philosophy, most full of contentions and wranglings. Rejecting all other ancient philosophy, that is retained almost alone, which is most fitted for the circles of brawlers. For after a man placed beyond all hazard of intellect had resolved to overturn the opinions of others in philosophy, he was

excessively provident and cautious in all his doctrine, lest by chance he should inadvertently fall into those snares which he could easily foresee his successors would construct for themselves on his example. And so in all philosophy, he proceeds carefully, as through treacherous ashes; and he forges definitions by which he took far more care that they should be safe from the objections of others and fortified on every side, than that they should bring into the light the things themselves which he undertakes to explain. Hence, very many things in his philosophy are designed for the perpetuation of fights and strifes. This philosophy, therefore — especially as cultivated by the Arabs — after it pleased men very acute in their own judgment and intent solely on dominion in the schools through infinite wranglings, all knowledge was immediately entangled with thorny subtleties and converted into the material and occasion of brawls and contentions. For the study of philosophy for several centuries was nothing other than the most absurd apparatus for that futile cacoethes of disputing which reigned in the schools. Nor did that empty method of captious litigation ever have Aristotle for its author. He indeed handed down certain theses to his disciples for defending, as did his successor Theophrastus also, so that they might have a contest of eloquence and acumen; but in their disputes there was nothing resembling those contentious λογوماχίαι [word-wranglings] and captious entrapments by which, as a most learned man observes, unhappy youth is today trained to hardness of brow. But whatever is still sweated over in philosophy by many is nothing but a preparation for victims to be sacrificed to that art of litigating. Whether what they read, learn, and teach is true or false; whether it has a foundation in the nature of things, or is the idle speculation of men of leisure — they care nothing about, provided only it be fit for altercation, and increase (which they must

unlearn if they wish to be wise) the skill of brawling. But if anyone at last, well exercised in sneers, taunts, insults, and spittings, has ascended to that degree of knowledge — or rather impudence — that he puts no end to altercation, he is, greatly to his own damage, accounted learned. Many of these we see daily who, from their past life in the exercises of disputation, you would suppose to be abundantly furnished with the precepts of dialectic and philosophy; yet when it comes to serious matters, in the treatment of which proficiency in those sciences is most of all needed, they fall into the most profound silence. This I often greatly wondered at within myself, until I discovered that, among other causes, this also had contributed: that they were most profoundly ignorant of the true and sound use of the art of logic and of all solid philosophy, while in their contest of thorny subtleties and heaps of futile terms they were endeavouring to fasten a cross upon themselves and others.

From this also arises another vice in studies, and that by far the greatest. Students do not propose to themselves as the ends and limits of knowledge those which the nature of things exhibits, but the writings of a few men, who would never have been even a whit wiser than themselves had they not used to their own advantage that very benefit of relying on their own mental perceptions, of which they deliberately defraud themselves. They pass the age of learning what others have thought; always trusting others, they never return to themselves, never take themselves into counsel. For the corrupt nature of the human mind is constituted with the greatest disadvantage to itself in such a way that men most readily trust themselves against him on whose help and assistance they ought to depend in all things, and give themselves entirely in slavery to others like themselves, as if they themselves were endowed by God with no gifts — betraying in the one vice

infidelity, in the other folly, and in both ingratitude toward God. But it cannot be told how greatly this, and other things of this kind which accompany the common method of studies — by which many think they are being pre-formed for wisdom — in reality impede a mind occupied with vain reasonings in the investigation of truth; the barriers of which, though vigour of intellect, industry, and practice of affairs break them down in some, yet being an impediment to all, they keep the slower and more sluggish shut up under the shameful yoke of ignorance, at least in the vestibule of letters.

Let us finally look at theology itself; few are those who propose to themselves in its study a legitimate aim and a right end. For many devote themselves to this study to no other fruit than to seek wealth, riches, honours, and a certain popular veneration. This, therefore, is their only desire: to draw from theological books that expertise by which, in their own judgment and in others', they may be deemed equal to the attaining of these earthly things. Hence, they approach divine things and the most hidden mysteries of the gospel with the same minds and the same resources by which they set about acquiring knowledge of the secular sciences; and meanwhile, they do not doubt that they are Christians, when no one can receive into himself anything more alien from the gospel. We shall teach that theology is a spiritual wisdom conversant with the mysteries of the gospel. Nor was the theology even of the pagans themselves anything other than a certain wisdom in the mysteries of the religions they professed. It is necessary, therefore, that whoever proposes to himself in this study any other end than to become wise and spiritually proficient in the mystery of the gospel misses the mark. But how many are those who aim at this goal? I fear there are more who will despise these things, not knowing that by the

same act they insult the gospel. Where, however, students have not a right end constituted, it is impossible that they should not also sin in the choice of means. Indeed, even if they should fall upon those means which are by their nature sufficiently suited to that end, yet since they are destined by them for something else, they defraud themselves of their true use and benefit. But the most necessary of all means they, for the most part, count as nothing; indeed, they spurn them with the greatest contempt. From the darkness of these errors, an artificial knowledge long since came forth in the place of evangelical theology, not unlike those which common philosophy transmits. For theology is called a certain systematic framework of theses, definitions, arguments, objections, responses, and distinctions, which is a confused *μειζοφιλοσοφοθεολογία* [mixture of philosophy and theology]. Nor are the things in it transmitted “in words which the Holy Spirit teaches,” so that “we may compare spiritual things with those that are spiritual”; but in terms and notions of distinctions, without the least loss to themselves of which all wisdom, both human and divine, could have done, had it not come into the mind of Aristotle by some chance. Let theologians most practiced in that science teach what the gospel is, what faith, regeneration, justification, adoption, holiness — immediately a definition is coined, not one most fitted to convey spiritual light to the intellect of the faithful, but one that, with much caution and clipped words, is so stitched together that those of a different opinion will not easily find how, according to the placita of the philosophy which reigns in the schools, to fall into it; in which alone the chief artifice of Aristotelian definitions consists.

And so at last they call philosophy the handmaid of theology, when in reality it dominates her and wantonly insults her as a captive. Where indeed it serves to polish the mind and exercise, practice, and strengthen the

intellectual faculties; where it scrutinizes the traces of the characters of divine wisdom and power impressed in the natures of things — it may be said to be the handmaid of all wisdom, and of theology itself. But the dragging into the ends of theology of the thorniest questions concerning matters pertaining nothing to the knowledge of God; the depressing of spiritual truth bound in the chains and fetters of subtle terms; the prejudicing of the mind itself by the introduction of the habit of the most vain reasonings — which among other innumerable evils accompany the common use of it — denote not servitude but dominion. From this it comes about that the most excellent glory and comely beauty of divine truth are in many ways obscured for most. We know how thin and obscure was that shadow of truth which the philosophers once venerated. And yet we know that they were seized with such love and admiration for it that they sometimes suffered a certain ἔκστασις [ecstasy] in the contemplation of it; and yet they did not behold it naked and open, indeed scarcely any semblance of truth at all. For the rays of natural truth which shone upon them bear the same relation, when compared to all those most profound mysteries of truth which he expounded to us from the bosom of the Father who went out from him and who is “the way, the life, and the truth,” as the nightly twinkling of the tiniest little star bears to the meridian rays of the sun.

Let us therefore fearlessly pronounce him a stranger in theology who is not inflamed with love of divine truth. Let it be that he has wearied himself long and much in the ventilation of thorny questions, indeed that he has been the greatest glutton of theological books; that nevertheless is a most powerful argument that the native beauty of truth itself has never so much as shone upon his mind even through a lattice — because he does not burn

with love for it, is not carried away in admiration of its beauty. But where, I ask, among students, are affections of the mind of this kind to be found? How many are there who do not seek the allurements of their studies from elsewhere? Who is of this mind and has this fixed as his sole purpose: how he may render truth — lovely, most beautiful, most beloved — known and familiar to himself, and himself conformable to it? Most are plainly of another opinion; they think themselves taking a heavy burden upon their back in its study, from which they may have something to live on; if any more expeditious road to wealth and honours should present itself in any way, that ungrateful labour will immediately hear, “Hail, and farewell forever.” Alas, the wretched condition of theology! which, driven from the noble, heavenly, spiritual contemplation of supernatural truth and of the mysteries of the gospel, is compelled into a dry, barren, quarrelsome science, and is sought and cultivated by those who are in reality most bitterly hostile to her, for the most putrid reasons — those who pursuing others’ futilities all their days and years seek her alone as the procuress of wealth and dignities. Moreover, while they knock at the doors of this divine wisdom, first fleeing hunger and poverty, then gaping for riches and vain glory, they strive to take in only what she holds in common with other sciences in her vestibules and propylaea, and what is remotest from her divine inner chambers; utterly neglecting those things which pertain to life, soul, and heavenly δύναμιν [power], the spiritual knowledge of which would be salutary for themselves and useful in them to others.

I will at last say freely and without hesitation what I think: those engaged in theological studies are very few who seem to have devoted themselves to them, allured by the beauty not of this time but of eternity, as the daughter thereof, or who care to experience her heavenly power and efficacy with a

pure heart and sincere mind. And from this it comes about that after long and vain hopes, instead of “grapes” most “gather wild grapes”; and that those “who by reason of the time ought to be teachers, very often need again to be taught which are the first principles of the oracles of God.” But from these men, while the faithful Christian people expect that they would announce the mysteries of the gospel and the unsearchable riches of Christ, piously, solidly, learnedly, in words which the Holy Spirit teaches, for the conversion, instruction, edification, and consolation of souls — they thrust upon them I know not what empty little declamations, adorned with the most absurd jingles of words. These men, I should reckon theologians? Who neither know how to investigate the mind of the Holy Spirit, nor are willing to use his words, nor have αἰσθητήρια ἐν τοῖς μυστηρίοις τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγυμνασμένα [senses exercised in the mysteries of God];² but desire with all their wishes this one thing only: how they might tickle the levity of the ignorant crowd, and of those others who with a hostile mind oppose the power of God in the gospel, by a certain empty tinkling of words, drawn from every correct institution of human life, to be banished to the stage. The Lord Jesus will, at the appointed time, require an account of this contamination of his most holy institutions and of this contempt of the gospel. But I am unwilling here to add what just indignation has almost extorted; the reader will find, I hope, these things considered elsewhere with the greatest calmness of mind.

What, therefore, will you say, reader? Do you put yourself forward as equal to uprooting these noxious tares from the Lord’s field? Are you planning a new method of transmitting the disciplines, the abolition of old institutions, a reformation of studies? Good words, Christian reader; the apostle taught us to shun ὑπονοίας πονηράς [evil suspicions]. If indeed it

pleases you to suspect, no one can prevent you, since your suspicion is not in another's power; you will safely one day render account for it to God, even as I for these lucubrations, of which I am now communicating the rationale to you; only see that you take it in good part. For that alone is your concern. I am not undertaking ἀκίνητα κινεῖν [to move things immovable]; I am not putting forward a new method of studies; οὐχ' οὕτως τετύφωμαι [I am not so puffed up]; nor yet because I am of no account or skulk in an obscure corner, do others therefore not sin or err in the investigation of heavenly truth. Nor is it forbidden to me alone, as far as I know, to communicate my thoughts on the nature and study of theology with the learned and pious; others have done so, and those good men. I will say of the best matter what the orator said of the worst: "When was this not done? When was it censured? When was it not permitted? When finally was it the case that what is lawful was not lawful?" I will, therefore, if you permit, learned reader, give you full information of my whole purpose. Leave off evil suspicion and evil speaking; I will state the matter itself.

When I first applied my mind to writing these things, I had nothing else resolved than to propose to your judgment certain lemmata on the nature of evangelical theology. The things I had meditated to that end you will find collected in the last part of the work. The things which had to be premised to their exposition, and which I had resolved to dispatch briefly at the beginning, have grown — though contrary to my intention, yet by no means, I hope, contrary to the matter itself — into that mass which you see. The whole order and rationale of the work, I judge it not necessary to review here in detail at length. I will compress everything into a few words. Having premised the general notions pertaining to the name and nature of all theology, beginning from the first origin of true theology — which we

set out — we have determined to narrate in the former books the advances it made in the various degrees of divine revelation, together with the defections of many from them and the errors arising therefrom, and the variation in the worship of the church constituted according to its norm, together with the manifold apostasy and gracious restoration of that same church, down to the last and final rejection of the Jewish people, attending to the actual succession of events, which we divide into more solemn periods.

In pursuing this design, many things most worthy of consideration presented themselves to us on every side; especially that διαβόητος [famous] Ezraic reformation of the Jewish church on returning from captivity, on the occasion of which we found it necessary to discuss many things concerning the antiquities and rites of that church. In the last place, we undertake to set forth evangelical theology itself: what it is and in what its nature consists; who are fitted for its study, who alone attain it and by what means; what chiefly obstructs it; together with the nature, institution, and fortunes of the church resting and founded upon it — all of which we show from the Scriptures themselves. And the whole work is closed by a dissertation on its study. Whether you determine to deal with me on these matters by the strictest right or with equity and goodness, learned reader, be that your option; for it is all one to me, provided only, mindful of that evangelical instruction, Matt. 7:21, you weigh the things themselves; for word-catchers I do not regard. But whatever they are that, overcome by love of truth, I bring into the open, in these and in all things else — I, a most wretched sinner, wearied with the evils of the age and with my own — committing myself to the grace, mercy, pardon, and divine forgiveness in Jesus Christ the only Saviour with all the wishes, prayers, sighs, tears, and

faith by which through his grace I am able, I willingly submit to the judgment and censure of his saints everywhere in the world militant.
FAREWELL.

Since some pages here were vacant, I was unwilling to withhold from the reader this poem of a most distinguished fellow-minister, offered to me voluntarily and unexpectedly — although many things which its subject matter (namely myself) acknowledge are forbidden by modesty and the sense of my own smallness — since it elegantly sets out the argument of the work:

ON THE ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΥΜΕΝΑ OF JOHN OWEN, S.T.D.

Go now, Purple that knows not to blush, say
That Thou wast born when he was born, diest when he dies:
What does the holy name of Jesus signify, what does it signify,
Such an order of the triple mitre did the Lord bear?
Alsted strives to rival alone, and Sandaeus,
Both in sacred titles and in books to surpass:
Owen's one title and one book devours them all,
As that serpent of Moses — the viper of the Magi.
That part once his, presently this, and finally
the whole Sacred sphere sees itself illumined in his light.
Here, the knowledge and worship of God,
and the assembly of those who worship him,
The order of assemblies everywhere of place and time stands plain:
To Pythagoras, by the master's right, not one pagan rite
Was known as all rites are known to Owen:
What truthful Judaea, what lying Greece,
What barbarian nations taught, he teaches:

Nor merely records, but weighs on the even scale
Of holy Scripture, with solid Reason:
What parts Nature claims; what parts Grace supplies;
What the light of Faith does, what that of Reason:
What age was in its infancy with sacred assemblies?
What was its boyhood with them, and what was its manhood:
All ages, therefore, you would think he lived through the times he wrote of;
Learning is divine, sense is divine, mind too is divine in its place:
Thus, you might rightly call him the man of every age; of every hour,
Envy cannot declare otherwise.
What church pleased while the flesh was yet unclothed, he delivers,
And what things greatly pleased God when Incarnate?
Whorish Babylon does not bring forth such daughters;
The Dragon does not claim these as his own brides, nor does Christ:
A company of pure souls which the Spirit calls to the world;
And Christ himself summons to his bridal chambers:
This is the genuine daughter of chaste Jerusalem, and this
Is the established form of the sacred evangelical assembly.
He institutes the Theologian, to whom he proves
That the use of the name is spurious, if not taught from heaven:
He errs, or I fear lest he who is called a Fanatic
May alone hereafter be heard as a Theologian.
This work would have recalled to mind, as it slipped,
That Adam's light while he stood upright on firm foot:
It sings of Adam first falling; then a second time, and better,
Raised by the second Adam, than he once stood:
The quarrel sent to the last descendants, not to die,

Between the serpent's and the woman's seed:
And with just limits, it distinguishes the two Covenants;
Those whom the Covenant of Works claims, those whom Faith's.
It insists on the steps by which, deleted in darkness,
This light of the Gospel, just now born, perishes:
By which, unstained, it stood; ever owing salvation
To Janus, to the Ark, to the Sacred, and giving it:
Thence it explains how many times, all but dying, it revived,
Filled with a new outflow of light from the Father:
As first it shone in the dwellings of believing Abram;
As presently it was the glory of Abram's race:
As this race of linen, as this race commanded
To their tasks — was not only Goshen but of the whole world:
What kind of theologian was Moses,
Who kept the tremendous commands better, or gave them better?
He diligently inquires with what light the Spirit of God
Irradiates the minds of the holy Prophets:
The virgin birth is sung; the masculine Pallas,
Not born from the whirlpool of feigned Jove, eternally:
Phoebus of justice, light from light, whose
Body of shadows is the shadow of that light, the flesh:
Both sponsor and herald of the covenant, and the path of life
Which he was, he taught, and which he taught, he was:
By the apostle led of Christ's mystery, which he opens,
Performing the office of the divine afflatus:
What is the church gathered by the apostolic office?
What gifts would be established for the gathered church?

How this new church, no less, having become apostate,
 (Telling it with mourning) than the old, he relates:
 How this crafty vicar of the true Shepherd arose
 And corrupted the offices and members by his tricks:
But that there would come times, appointed first by God,
 For all these things to be restored to their splendour:
And the people has as a pledge of the promises of God to be performed
 (First-fruits, pledges of the full harvest);
With these words, let us comfort others with others, expecting
 That unjust things will be shaken by equal faith:
With the darkness of the temple expelled and the way opened,
 The Ark of God in the temple comes to be beheld.
Would that India alone might despise her own gems;
England, born in the bosom, might cherish what is worthy of the bosom:
And let it be a disgrace not to have read it, unless it be an ostracism;
And let the pulpits render by merit the press to the man:
 What God kindles, given to illumine the house, who
 Of men will dare to put the light under a bushel?
Yet be blessed in your virtue, most learned man, may Owen remain,
 If anything there be by which he may be yet more enriched.

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1. This sentence is one reason why we chose to call our edition of this tome *The Nature of True Theology*.
 2. John Owen uses a mixture of Latin and Greek where Claude has given the whole clause in Greek.

Contents

1. Book 1. On Theology in General. Chapter I
2. Chapter II
3. Chapter III

BOOK 1. ON THEOLOGY IN GENERAL.

CHAPTER I

*O*n ὀνοματολογίας [nomenclature] — *The danger of introducing foreign words into religion, and its twofold occasion* — *The words θεολογία [theology] and θεολόγοι [theologians] are ἄγραφα [unscriptural]* — *The Jewish names for theology* — *The origin and use of that word among the Greeks* — *Who first among them wrote θεολογικά [theological works]* — *The first theology was a fabulous description of θεογονίας [the genealogy of the gods]* — *The introduction of the names “theology” and “theologians” among Christians* — *John so called first* — *The title of the Apocalypse* — *The foolishness of the Ethiopic version of the New Testament* — *How the evangelical doctrine is called in the Gospel itself* — *The term “theology” is accepted.*

I. Those who undertake descriptions of things begin with the very names of their subjects, lest what they treat be ἀνώνυμα [nameless], and lest the fault of ὁμωνυμίας [ambiguity] be incurred, which frequently produces confusion in subject matter. Someone has rightly said, Πρὸς τὸ ὀρθῶς διδάσκειν, δεῖ πρῶτον ἐξετάζειν τὰ ὀνόματα [In order to teach rightly, one

must first examine the names]; and another, Ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν ζητουμένων, εἰς λόγον χρή μεταλαμβάνεσθαι τοῦνομα [In all matters under inquiry, the name must be taken up into the discussion], Galen, *On the Method of Medicine*, ch. 5; for words are τύποι καὶ μιμήματα [images and representations] of things. In sacred matters, however, regard must be had to ὀνοματολογίας [nomenclature], since names have been assigned by the Holy Spirit. The apostle has taught us to shun all Βεβήλους κενοφωνίας [profane and empty chatterings] and λογομαχίας [word-strivings]. We also know at what great cost in words men have fought, often bitterly, over terms that the judgment of uncertain individuals has introduced into our religion. Nor does that confusion which is seen in the Christian religion owe a small part of itself to the introduction of foreign words into ecclesiastical use, and to the twisting of those proper terms which the dictation of the Holy Spirit has given, into a τεχνικόν [technical] and ἑξωτικόν [exotic] sense. Hence, it is an old complaint that the native simplicity and purity of evangelical doctrine — flowing as it does from the perennial fountain of all purity — has been adulterated from the very beginnings of the churches, whether daubed with adventitious colours or mingled with dross. That subsequent ages have struck upon the same rock, especially after it came to pass, as is the way of men, that whatever pleased the majority was reckoned right, until error grew to such immensity that within the Christian religion itself one would search almost in vain for the Christian religion — this is too well known to require proof. Indeed, that very confusion and uncertainty which is seen to have flowed through nearly all the sciences appears to have arisen from either ignorance of words used by the ancients, or from the audacity that twists them to alien uses and meanings.

II. Furthermore, of those terms whose use, emerging from an almost infinite mass of writings, has come to occupy some celebrated place in our religion, yet which are not found ῥητῶς [expressly] in holy Scripture, there are two kinds: first, those which necessity pressed out in order to refute the importunate ἀντιλογίας [contradictions] of heretics; and second, those which men of some learning either invented themselves, or adopted from others' inventions, under the pretext of illuminating truth or teaching it ἀκριβεστέρως [more precisely], relying on their own ingenuity. Now, as you will perhaps find very few who would wish to banish these terms from the altars and hearths of the church — except those who are at war with truth itself — so to wrangle stubbornly about retaining them is nothing other than to sacrifice perpetually to inveterate prejudices and party spirit.

III. Some persistently attack the ὀνοματολογίαν [nomenclature] of theology and theologians; nor does it please us to contend sharply about it, since both terms are εὔρημα [inventions] of heathen men, and there is no ἰσοδυναμοῦσα [equivalent term] in holy Scripture. For just as every honourable, indeed magnificent, name will prejudice the thing of which it is the name when it carries more weight than the thing itself: so when names can only be vindicated by means of many reasonings, the unlearned will judge the things themselves to be placed in no less jeopardy — especially where there is ἀμετρία ἀνθολκῆς [a disproportion of counterweight]. Moreover, since the practice has prevailed to such a degree among those by whom the right and standard of speaking has formerly been and still is held, that by these terms a certain discipline is designated as it were, along with a certain class of men trained therein — both of which the mystery of evangelical simplicity recoils from — they can seem, with respect neither to their origin nor their use, sufficiently fitted to express that of which

complaint is made. But since in every συζητήσει [disputation], the τὸ ἀμφισβητούμενον [matter in dispute] must have some name: come, let us — with nails and hairs shaved clean — be content with that which use, by the consent of the majority, has introduced; remaining nonetheless entirely free in the investigation of the nature of the thing itself, which we have undertaken to expound. Concerning its designation among others by various names, we may first set down a few remarks.

IV. The Jews designate theology variously: חֵכְמָה הָאֱלֹהִית [divine wisdom], Buxtorf, *Lexicon Talmudicum*, p. 752; הַיְדִיעָה הַתּוֹרִיית [legal knowledge], *ibid.* and p. 984; and תְּלִמּוּד תּוֹרָה [study of the Law]. They call the theologian אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִי [a man of God]. Theology is divided by the most learned of their theologians, Maimonides, into two parts: *Preface 2 to the More Nevukhim*, and the *Preface to the Third Part* of the same work. It is either מַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית [the work of creation], that is, natural theology, or מַעֲשֵׂה מֶרְכָבָה [the work of the chariot], that is, mystical theology, a name drawn from Ezekiel 1; he teaches that the former is to be set forth publicly, the latter only to a few. For the rest, there is in the Old Testament no word that can be rendered “theology,” nor any other term ἀνάλογον [analogous] to it.

Generally, θεολόγος [theologian] among Greek writers is one who discourses concerning God; hence οἱ Δελφῶν θεολόγοι [the theologians of Delphi] in Plutarch, *On the Obsolescence of Oracles*. Θεολογούμενα [theological matters] are “things disputed concerning God.” Suetonius, in his *Life of Augustus*, mentions the books of Θεολογουμένων [theological discussions] by Asclepiades of Mendes; in these that monstrosity of a man brought to light and defended foul atheism, and the ἀθέμιτον μίξις [unlawful union] of the Egyptians with the goat they worshipped in the city of Mendes. Nichomachus of Gerasa also wrote two books of ἀριθμητικῶν

θεολογουμένων [arithmetical theological discussions]; an ἔργον πόρρω τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς διερριμμένον [work far removed from its title], says Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Codex 187 — that is, a worthless thing. Now θεολογία [theology] from the usage of the Greek language signifies rather “discourse concerning God” than “the discourse of God”; and thus Augustine expounds that term, *City of God*, Bk. VIII, ch. 1: “It is,” he says, “discourse or reasoning concerning God.” Yet examples of the other signification are not lacking. Θεοπρόπιον is “an oracle of God,” or what God declares; and θεοσημεία is “a sign which God exhibits.”

The most ancient writers of Greece who dealt with the gods and the worship of the gods were the first to be called θεολόγοι [theologians], and their knowledge θεολογία [theology]. Lactantius, *On the Wrath of God*, ch. 2, — these were poets; and they were accordingly commonly distinguished by that name. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. III; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Bk. III; Isidore, Bk. V: Pherecydes of Syros is said to have been the first among the nations to have treated “theological” matters in continuous prose. Moreover, they affirm that his doctrine was of the symbolic and cryptic, or αἰνιγματικήν [enigmatic], kind which the Pythagoreans afterwards employed. He was himself the principal teacher of Pythagoras, and was called a “theologian.” Diogenes and Hesychius Illustrius testify that Heraclitus wrote θεολογικά [theological works] of this kind; hence, he is called σκοτεινός [the obscure]. Now this Pherecydes flourished in the age of Cyrus; to such a degree were the Greeks infants in every branch of knowledge, if compared to the Orientals. This was reproached to Solon by a priest of Sais: Ω Σόλων, Σόλων, ἔφη, Ἕλληνες ἀεὶ παῖδές ἐστε, γέρον δὲ Ἕλλην οὐκ ἔστιν. Ἀκούσας οὖν, πῶς τι τοῦτο λέγεις, φάναι. Νέοι ἐστὲ, εἰπεῖν, τὰς ψυχὰς πάντες· οὐδεμίαν γὰρ ἐν αὐταῖς ἔχετε

δι' ἀρχαίαν ἀκοὴν παλαιὰν δόξαν, οὐδὲ μάθημα χρόνῳ πολὺν οὐδέν [O Solon, Solon, said he, the Greeks are always children, and there is no such thing as an old Greek. When Solon heard this and asked what he meant by it, the old man replied: You are all young in soul; for you have in your souls, through ancient tradition, no old opinion, nor any knowledge grey with time] — Plato, *Phaedo*. For it is well known that theology had attained splendour, indeed had passed its ἀκμήν [prime], long before the times of Cyrus. See Pliny, *Natural History*, Bk. VII, ch. 1, “what each person discovered in life.” Τοῦτον φησὶ Θεόπομπος πρῶτον περὶ φύσεως καὶ θεῶν Ἑλλησι γράψαι [Theopompus asserts that he was the first of all to write for the Greeks concerning nature and the gods] — Diogenes, in his *Life* of Pherecydes. This also appears from the letter of Thales to the same man, which begins thus: Θαλῆς Φερεκύδει· πυνθάνομαί σε πρῶτον Ἰόνων μέλλειν λόγους ἀμφὶ τῶν θείων χρημάτων εἰς τοὺς Ἕλληνας φαίνειν [Thales to Pherecydes: I hear that you are about to be the first of the Ionians to make public discourses concerning divine matters among the Greeks]. Moreover, Hesychius Illustrius thinks that Pherecydes was called “Syrius” from the island of Syra· ἔστι, he says, μία τῶν Κυκλάδων νήσων, ἡ Σύρα [There is, he says, one of the Cyclades islands called Syra], in his *Life* of Pherecydes. Others hold that he was a Syrian, which is the more probable view. In the preface to his work, however, he himself affirmed that Musaeus, son of Eumolpus, was πρῶτον θεογονίαν ποιῆσαι [the first to compose a theogony]. The Platonists emphatically called him τὸν θεολόγον [the theologian], and he was always esteemed the most excellent theologian. But concerning Homer, Philostratus says in the *Heroicus*: Ὀρφέα ἐν πολλοῖς τῶν κατὰ τὴν θεολογίαν ὑπερῆρε [He surpassed Orpheus in many things pertaining to theology] — he added to what had

been discovered. Their θεολογία [theology], however, was the exposition of θεογονίας [the genealogy of the gods]; for they maintained that all the gods had been begotten. Thus Herodotus on the Persians in his *Clio*: Οὐκ ἀνθρωποφυέας ἐνόμισαν τοὺς θεοὺς καθάπερ οἱ Ἕλληνες εἶναι [They did not regard the gods as having a human nature, as the Greeks did] — for the Persians worshipped natural gods. I speak of the Greeks after the introduction of Hellenism; for Eusebius demonstrates that the most ancient Greeks, after the manner of other nations, first worshipped the heaven and the stars, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, Bk. I, ch. 9: Οὐκ ἄρα, he says, τὶς ἦν θεογονία ἐλληνικῆς, ἢ βαρβαρικῆς τοῖς παλαιοτάτοις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λόγος, οὐδὲ ξοάνων ἱδρυσις, οὐδὲ ἡ νῦν πολλὴ φλυαρία τῆς τῶν θεῶν ἀρρένων τε καὶ θηλειῶν κατονομασίας [There was, he says, no account among the most ancient men of either Greek or barbarian theogony, nor the setting up of images, nor the present-day abundant nonsense of naming gods both male and female]. And long before him, Plato in the *Cratylus*: Φαίνονται μοι οἱ πρῶτοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων περὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα τούτους μόνους Θεοὺς ἡγεῖσθαι οὕσπερ νῦν πολλοὶ τῶν βαρβάρων, ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην, καὶ γῆν, καὶ ἄστρα, καὶ οὐρανόν [It seems to me that the first men in Greece held these alone to be gods, which many barbarians still do — the sun, moon, earth, stars, and heaven]. But more on these matters later.

At what time this term received Christian citizenship is uncertain. In the title of the Apocalypse, John is called ὁ θεολόγος [the theologian]. In the royal copy of Montanus, it reads □Αποκάλυψις τοῦ ἁγίου ἀποστόλου καὶ εὐαγγελιστοῦ Ἰωάννου τοῦ θεολόγου [Revelation of the holy apostle and evangelist John the Theologian]. In the remaining copies, it is stated absolutely in this manner. To this is added in the Ethiopic version: “Who was John, bishop of the metropolitan city of Constantinople, when he was

about to suffer persecution” — foolishly enough, and as befitted that translator. Furthermore, since that ἐπιγραφή [title] is of most uncertain origin and rightly οἴχεται [has vanished], it may seem to have been drawn from the second verse of the book: “John ἔμαρτύρησε τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ [bore witness to the word of God]” — that is, the word *of* God, not *concerning* God. But the other, more common, signification of the term is as we have shown. And it was not because he bore witness to λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ [the word of God], but because he expounded with the greatest clarity λόγον τὸν Θεὸν [the Word who is God], that the ancients called John κατ’ ἐξοχὴν [preeminently] the Theologian. The first to do this was Origen. Dionysius the Areopagite, ch. 3 of *On the Divine Names*, makes mention of theology and theologians as familiarly as if those τεχνικά ὀνόματα [technical terms] were at that time in most frequent use; but nearly all agree that that writer is ὑποβολιμαῖον [a spurious substitute]. And so, as far as holy Scripture is concerned, these terms are ἄγραφα [unwritten — not found in Scripture].

Indeed, the evangelical doctrine is called λόγος ζωῆς [the word of life], Phil. 2:16; ὁ λόγος ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ [the word of the cross], 1 Cor. 1:18; λόγος τῆς πίστεως [the word of faith], 1 Tim. 4:6; ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ [the word of Christ], Col. 3:16; λόγος Θεοῦ [the word of God], 1 Thess. 2:13. Having regard for these and other similar expressions, we do not reject a sober use of such terms; although we are well aware that their τεχνικόν [technical] sense cannot be retained without prejudice to truth. Let us therefore call this matter of which we are to speak, together with Eusebius in his work *To Marcellus*, θεολογίαν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν [ecclesiastical theology].

CHAPTER II

The abstract notion of theology — In what sense the scholastics contend that it is a science — Their opinion rejected — The apostle proves that theology is alien to all human knowledge, 1 Cor. 2 — μύω [to initiate], μυστήριον [mystery], τελειόω [to consecrate], τέλειος [perfect/initiated], τέλη [mysteries] — Who is a Pauline theologian — The fruitless labour of the many in forcing theology into the rules of human arts and sciences — The foolishness and ἀμαθία [ignorance] of the scholastics.

I. There is no reason for us to delay over those discussions which are agitated among the many concerning the abstract and, as they say, artificial notion of theology, since they do not appear to pertain to an exposition of its nature. For whether it is an art or a science; and if it is to be called a science, whether it is theoretical or practical, or rather a mixture of both; what its proper and immediate object is; what its genus, what its difference, what its end — and very many other entirely frivolous questions of this kind — theologians of every sort have disputed variously and subtly, mixing the philosophy of Aristotle's school with the simplicity of

Christianity: by their manner of understanding, they manage to understand nothing. For since Aristotle made mention of θεολογικῆς ἐπιστήμης [theological knowledge] and taught that it is the most excellent of τῶν θεωρητικῶν ἐπιστημῶν [the theoretical sciences], the scholastics — especially those for whom Thomas stands next to God — to whom it was a kind of impiety to dissent from him, contended that Christian theology is a science, and a speculative one at that. That the name of “art” ought to be banished from this business is at last the consensus of all. It remains to be seen what the definitions of the sciences — by which, of course, whatever a science is is variously declared according to each person’s pleasure — have in common with theology. Since the things themselves, namely the arts and sciences, and their descriptions and definitions, are uncertain and arbitrary, fashioned in different ways according to the different capacities of certain men; and since there is no habit of mind, whether theoretical or practical, which is an ἐκτύπωμα [impression] of some art (since every science, as Plato testifies in the *Epinomis* appended to the *Laws*, is μιμητικὴ τὸ πλεῖστον [for the most part imitative], that is, an imitation of things themselves) or of some science, which can represent the matter we are treating of — all labour and ingenuity will be wasted in attempting to bring these such varied things into order. Furthermore, concerning the sciences τεχνηταῖς [technical/according to the rules of the craft] so-called in the strict sense — which regard conclusions derived from better-known principles and receive their designation from their proper objects — attention is given either to the doctrine itself by which the matters they treat are systematically arranged, or to the mental faculty or habit by which we comprehend that doctrine. Now, between a doctrine which always rests upon certain foundations and theorems that are not merely consonant with

human reason but also kindred to it — as every science is — and a mystery surpassing all purely ψυχικόν [soulish] or natural comprehension, there can be no communion. For it is the πρόληψις [common presupposition] of all that God cannot be rightly known except through God. The scientific habit, as they call it, is the conformity of the mind to a doctrine of this kind, arising from the disciplined reflux of kindred principles; so that it cannot express that divine power of mind which theology is, and which rests upon the truthfulness of the one who reveals. Moreover, since the object of theology is in some sense God himself, it is infinitely more distant from the objects of all sciences than those sciences are from bare nothingness; so far is it from being the case that theology could, in any respect, share anything in common with the other arts or sciences.

II. The apostle also, in that passage where he treats these matters deliberately and expressly, renders the character of Christian theology alien to all human wisdom and science in the plainest manner — Ο λόγος μου, he says, καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου [my word and my preaching] — that is, both the knowledge and the doctrine — οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς (or πειστοῖς or πιθανοῖς) ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις [not in persuasive words of human wisdom] (in which all human art or science so called consists), ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει Πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως [but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power] — (Ἐν διὰ δυοῦν [one idea through two words]) — (for just as mathematicians have their ἀποδείξεις [demonstrations] and dialecticians have theirs, so also our doctrine consists ἐν ἀποδείξει [in demonstration], but of a spiritual and powerful kind, which stands as far from those ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας [of human wisdom] ὅσον οὐρανός ἐστ' ἀπὸ γαίας [as heaven is from earth]). Then he adds the reason and the end of this distinction: ἵνα, he says, ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν [that your faith] (or the assent given

to our doctrine) μὴ ἢ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων [should not be in the wisdom of men] (as it would be if theology consisted of the same or similar principles, form, or end as the arts and sciences of the philosophers), ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει Θεοῦ [but in the power of God] (effectively working this wisdom through his Spirit). Σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις· σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου [But we speak wisdom among the perfect — wisdom not of this age] (not a wisdom which has proceeded from human learning): ἀλλὰ λαλοῦμεν σοφίαν Θεοῦ ἐν μυστηρίῳ ἀποκεκρυμμένην [but we speak the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery] (and what agreement can there be between the μυστηριώδης [mysterious] wisdom of God and any human disciplines? That wisdom, however,) ἡμῖν ὁ Θεὸς ἀπεκάλυψε διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος αὐτοῦ [God has revealed to us through his Spirit] (human wisdom teaches these things in various ways) — 1 Cor. 2:4, 5, 6, 10. Whether, therefore, you regard the origin, the subject, the end, the manner of learning and teaching, or finally the entire nature and use of theology, it is evident that it can in no way be numbered among the human sciences, whether speculative or practical, in such a manner as to be bound by their rules or methods. Indeed, the very terms μέθοδος [method], μεθοδεύειν [to proceed methodically], τέχνη [art], which are οἰκεῖα [proper] to the sciences, have no place here according to Scripture. μυέω [to initiate] and, derived from it, μυστήριον [mystery] — of which the apostle treats in the most sacred sense — consistently denote among the pagans themselves something sufficiently alien from all other sciences: it is a mystery. Μυέω is to initiate, or to instruct in sacred rites; and μυοῦμαι in the passive. Somewhat differently but to the same effect, the author of the *Etymologicum Magnum*: Μύστης, he says, παρὰ τὸ μύω, τὸ καμμύω· μύοντες γὰρ τὰς αἰσθήσεις καὶ ἔξω τῶν σαρκικῶν φροντίδων γινόμενοι,

οὕτω τὰς θείας ἀναλάμπεις ἐδέχοντο [The word “mystes” derives from “myo,” meaning “to close the eyes”; for by closing the senses and becoming free from fleshly concerns, they thus received the divine illuminations] — as if in ecstasy they received divine irradiations. And Jamblichus, as cited by Photius, Codex 94, says that τὰ μυστήρια [the mysteries] are derived ἀπὸ τῶν μυῶν [from the initiated], but foolishly, as the reasoning of the etymology he offers makes plain.

III. Laërtius affirms concerning Pythagoras, instructed as he was in the wisdom of nearly all nations, that πάσας ἐμύθη τάς τε Ἑλληνικὰς, καὶ βαρβαρικὰς τελετάς [he was initiated into all the sacred rites, both of the Greeks and the barbarians]. For that wisdom which those ancient philosophers went out to seek in their travels was nothing other than the rational understanding of the worship of religions, as Lactantius testifies; “I am accustomed to wonder,” he says, “that although Pythagoras and afterwards Plato, out of love for investigating truth, penetrated as far as the Egyptians, the Magi, and the Persians in order to learn the rites and sacred customs of those peoples (for they suspected that wisdom resided in religion), they nevertheless did not approach the Jews,” *On True Wisdom*, Bk. IV. Hence, when Apollonius wished to be μυεῖσθαι [initiated] at Athens, ὁ ἱεροφάντης οὐκ ἐβούλετο παρέχειν τὰ ἱερά· μὴ γὰρ ἂν ποτε μυῆσαι γόητα, μηδὲ τὴν Ἑλευσίνα ἀνοῖξαι ἀνθρώπῳ μὴ καθαρῷ τὰ δαιμόνια [the presider over the sacred rites was unwilling to admit him to them; for he would never initiate a sorcerer, nor open Eleusis to a man who was not pure from daemons] — Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, Bk. IV, ch. 6. Μυεῖσθαι is therefore to be instructed in sacred rites, which is made yet more plain from Apollonius’ reply: Περὶ τῆς τελετῆς, he says, πλεῖον ἢ σὺ γινώσκω [Concerning the sacred mysteries, I know more than you]. And

among the Fathers, as Budaeus testifies, μεμνημένος [one who has been initiated], by itself and without addition, signifies one who is learned in the sacred scriptures. Chrysostom says that μυστήριον [mystery] in Paul denotes τὸ ἀπόρρητον, καὶ θαυμαστὸν, καὶ ἀγνοούμενον [that which is secret, wonderful, and unknown] — that is, by nature: others say it denotes things secret and known to few, not to be communicated except to the initiated — that is, Σοφίαν λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις [we speak wisdom among the perfect].

IV. Not as though our sacred things were secrets which it were unlawful to set forth except after some oath and pledge of silence had first been given — since Christ took care that all things, even the most μυστηριότατα [deeply mysterious] which he himself taught privately in accordance with the manner of his ministry, should be publicly proclaimed ἐν τῷ φωτί, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν δωματίων [in the light and upon the housetops] before men, Matt. 10:27.

V. Among the ancient pagans, it was indeed a sin to disclose mysteries to the common people: “They do not think it lawful to commit to writing what they teach concerning sacred things,” says Caesar of the Druids, *Gallic War*, Bk. VI. For this reason, those to be initiated were everywhere bound by oath not to divulge anything. Hence Herodotus, concerning himself, after he had learned the Egyptian sacred rites from the people of Heliopolis: Τὰ μὲν νυν θεῖα τῶν ἀπηγημάτων, οἷα ἤκουον, οὐκ εἰμὶ πρόθυμος ἐξηγέεσθαι, ἔξω ἢ τὰ οὐνόματα αὐτέων μοῦνον· νομίζων πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἴσον περὶ αὐτέων ἐπίστασθαι [The divine matters of the narratives, such as I heard them, I am not inclined to set forth, except only their names, since I consider that all men know equally concerning them], Bk. II — that is, “But those things which they narrated to me pertaining to

the gods, I am unwilling to commit to writing, since I consider that all men” (namely, the initiated) “know the same things concerning them.” The evangelical doctrine was not designated by the name of mystery for any such reason, but because the things themselves revealed in it exceed all purely human and natural comprehension, 1 Cor. 2:7, 14.

VI. In order that one may receive and understand σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ ἀποκεκρυμμένην [the wisdom hidden in a mystery], it is necessary that he himself be μεμνημένος [initiated] — that is, instructed in the secrets of the divine will through the Holy Spirit. And no others are τέλειοι [perfect] in Paul’s usage than the initiated — that is, those instructed by the Holy Spirit of whom he treats. For τελειώω [to perfect] is to consecrate and to initiate; hence, among the ancients, baptism is also called τελειώτης [the initiating rite]. The Septuagint uses it for consecration or dedication in Exod. 29: Τελειώσαι τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν [to consecrate their hands], vv. 33 and 35; and it appears that the word ought to be expounded in no other way in the Epistle to the Hebrews 2:10: Τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας διὰ παθημάτων τελειώσαι [to perfect the author of salvation through sufferings]. And also τέλη [ends/rites] are mysteries, as Budaeus demonstrates from Plato; and τελεταί [sacred rites] are sacred observances of every kind; and τετελεσμένοι [the perfected] are the initiated and those purified by sacrifice, in Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, Bk. IV, ch. 6. He, therefore, who is τέλειος [perfect] — that is, instructed by the Spirit through whom we are initiated into the Christian sacred rites — and μεμνημένος [initiated] by him who alone discloses to us τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ [the mystery of his will], and that through πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως [a spirit of wisdom and revelation], Eph. 1:9, 17 — he is the Pauline theologian. Something will be said later about the use of the arts and sciences in

learning divine truth. In the meantime, it did not escape even the pagans themselves that theology is a certain μυστηριώδης [mysterious] and divine wisdom, and is not to be circumscribed by those terms or conveyed by those rules within whose barriers all the arts and sciences are confined.

And perhaps it is for no other reason that those who have spent much labour on this matter — in describing theology ἀκριβῶς [precisely] according to the rules and methods of the other sciences — have, in their opinions concerning its definition, genus, differences, proper object, subject, immediate end, and very many other such matters (concerning which holy Scripture says not so much as a γρύ [grunt]), come apart from one another to the most remote distances and engage in remarkable combat. For while they strive to render the mystery of divine truth — revealed from the bosom of God — something hewn and shaped to fit the pliant and arbitrary rules of human arts and sciences, and to impede it with I know not what philosophical terms (without which, and without whose aid and support, all truth both natural and supernatural could very happily have done, had it not seemed otherwise to Aristotle) with which it refuses to have any communion, they effect nothing other than this: that a matter most certain, most evident, and most accessible to the rational mind in itself and by its own nature, becomes most uncertain, ambiguous, manifold, and obscure. Learned men indeed, relying on divine revelation in holy Scripture in the place of innate principles, have — in a progress not unlike that of the other sciences, with some discovering something and others adding to their discoveries with less effort — constructed a certain doctrine, comprising principles, theorems, theses, and conclusions after the pattern of the other sciences, which they call theology. But that doctrine, since it possesses neither αὐτοπιστία [self-evidencing authority] as such, nor requires

supernatural faith in order to be received, nor attains any end of theology either theoretically or practically, is not theology in the proper sense. From the investigation of this doctrine, a certain habit of mind is acquired, consonant with the impression received from it, which the scholastics contend is neither faith nor natural knowledge. And this is the theology of the schools, of whose nature and use more will be said below. Let us therefore dismiss those innumerable and laborious disputations, which, if truth be told, are not worth purchasing at the price of a trifle — if only we are willing to permit theology to enjoy that freedom with which holy Scripture has claimed her with a liberal hand.

VII. Whatever terms it has pleased the Holy Spirit to employ in setting forth this matter, the scholastics have rendered every one of them more than sufficiently vexed by their disputations. It is agreed that Scripture calls that knowledge — which directs men in the contemplation of God and his works, and in the obedience to be rendered to him — by the names of science, prudence, wisdom, and doctrine; and also that knowledge of himself with which God wishes to imbue us. Hence, seized by the itch for disputation, they contend persistently — as has been said — whether theology is a science, and a speculative or a practical one, or prudence, or wisdom. And whatever term they decide to subject to examination, they all immediately weigh its philosophical characteristics and subtly inquire whether it can be fitted to theology. Those who maintain that theology is wisdom — so that from this one instance the entire labour of these men may be assessed — consider it their business, having fished out everything that is attributed to human wisdom in the writings of the philosophers, to show that all of it fits appropriately into theology. Now, when they imagine they have accomplished this work, whatever it amounts to, through long

digressions, subtle fabrications, and conclusions of the most reckless ineptitude — as though the matter were well settled and the opinions of all others, and especially those who lead or follow a different school, had been routed — they conclude that theology is wisdom.

And so, being most profoundly ignorant of the mind of the Holy Spirit in those terms — science, prudence, wisdom, doctrine, and the rest of that kind — they strain all the sinews and eyes of their intellect (as most of them are ingeniously stupid) in order to change the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery into that miserable, imperfect, indeed foolish wisdom of this world, and to circumscribe it within I know not what limits — a fiction than which nothing more dangerous or more diametrically opposed to apostolic doctrine could ever have been devised. Those thorny scholastic and other controversies, therefore, which they lay as a foretract before their theological treatises — fixing a cross upon their wretched readers who would not wish to spend their study in vain, or indeed to wander — the candidates for sacred wisdom ought to despise; since the very truth that must be sought out from them at infinite labour, by reason of the ἀλλογενία [alien character] of the subject proposed, is not the true theology.

CHAPTER III

The most intimate union between the intellect and truth — Theology denotes both a habit of mind and truth itself — The knowledge of God cannot be called our ἀρχέτυπος [archetypal] — Theology, as doctrine, is from God alone and immediately — In what sense the Word of God is our theology — The classifications of theologians: angels, men — Men are either θεάνθρωπος [the God-man] or ψιλοί [mere men] — Mere men are either viatores [wayfarers] or possessores [those in possession] — The theology of the former is to be investigated.

I. Having set aside those things which, though they make up much of the page in the inquiry into the nature of theology among some, yet in truth throw up an obstacle to those sincerely investigating the truth, let us look more directly at the matter itself with respect to its general nature, to which we are devoting this labour. Now since there is between any known thing and that faculty and δύναμιν [power] of our mind by which we apprehend it — or the intellect itself considered with its σχέσει [relation] to the thing itself — by virtue of the intervening conformity of truth, so close a union

and connection that they mutually communicate their names to one another, the affections proper to the one are often ascribed to the other; for a matter or doctrine is often called certain from that certainty which is an affection of the mind, and our apprehension is called true from the truth of the thing we apprehend. Hence arises no small confusion in definitions, while it cannot easily be discerned whether it is the doctrine, or the faculty of mind by which we apprehend the doctrine itself by its own proper light and for its own proper end, that is being defined. Since therefore it is agreed that by theology is denoted both the doctrine concerning God, his worship, and the obedience due to him, and the power and faculty of our mind by which we perceive it, or the habit of mind conformable to it, these must be treated of distinctly in order to avoid the confusion arising from ὁμωνυμία [ambiguity of terms].

II. It belongs to the infinite αὐτάρκειαν [self-sufficiency] of God that he alone knows himself perfectly: Ps. 147:5, לְתַבִּינָתוֹ אֵין מִסְפָּר [his understanding is without number]. And so that knowledge by which God most perfectly knows himself and all his attributes, being infinite and necessary, is nothing other than God himself infinitely knowing and wise. This knowledge, therefore, of the first truth most perfectly comprehending and loving itself is improperly called by some theologia ἀρχέτυπος [archetypal theology]. What indeed they would wish to be understood by theologia ἀρχέτυπος, I very much doubt they understand themselves. For neither is our knowledge of God the expressed image (character) of that infinite divine knowledge — which is proper to the Son alone as partaker of the divine nature, Heb. 1:3 — such that it could be called ἑκτυπος [ectypal] in relation to it; nor can we know anything of God by the power or virtue of that knowledge, except through the intervening free counsel of the divine

will. Indeed, our mirror is not immediately God himself, but his word or gospel, in which, with unveiled face through Christ, we behold the glory of the Lord, 2 Cor. 3:18. God has in his own mind the eternal idea or concept of that truth concerning himself which he wills to be known by us. And upon this all our theology depends — not immediately, however, but upon that act of the divine will by which it pleased him to reveal that truth to us: “For no man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him,” John 1:18. The revelation therefore of the divine mind and will — that is, the Word of God — is the doctrine of which we treat, to which all the concepts of our mind concerning God, his worship, and the obedience due to him ought to be conformed. And here again theology agrees but little with every science that is a derivative of human wisdom. For that σύστημα [system] of principles and conclusions by which any science is transmitted is not the norm of the concepts of the mind, or of the acts of the intellect concerning the proper object of that science; but since it is posterior to them and their effect, it ought to be regulated by them. So the most excellent philosopher: Αἱ δὲ ἐπιστήμαι ἐν ψυχῇ λογικῇ οὔσαι, αἱ μὲν τῶν αἰσθητῶν, εἰ δεῖ ἐπιστήμας τούτων λέγειν, πρέπει δὲ αὐταῖς τὸ τῆς δόξης ὄνομα, ὥστεραι τῶν πραγμάτων οὔσαι, εἰκόνες εἰςὶ τούτων, Plotinus, *Enneads*, V, lib. 9; that is, “And so the sciences which are in the rational soul, those at least which pertain to sensible things — if indeed we are to call the knowledge of these things sciences, since it is more fitting to call them opinions — these, being posterior to things, are images of those same things.” But the doctrine of which we treat anticipates every concept of our mind concerning its peculiar and proper object; and it is the infallible and immutable rule and norm of all our knowledge and cognition, Ps. 19.

III. Theology therefore is the very divine truth itself as revealed by God — namely, the word, doctrine, or light that is ἀξιόπιστον [worthy of belief] and αὐτόπιστον [self-authenticating]. No one can worthily think or speak of God or of divine things except through God. No one rightly knows God except from his own exposition of himself through his Son; nor does he will to be worshipped except as he himself has prescribed. All our obedience also depends purely upon his will. And all theology concerns itself with God and his worship and the obedience due to him. Therefore, that doctrine can be from none other than God himself. Since theology is the principle and norm of all divine worship, faith, and obedience, it is necessary that it be also of heavenly origin, of infallible certainty, ἐξ οὐρανοῦ [from heaven] and not ἐξ ἀνθρώπων [from men], Matt. 21:25. For divine faith would rest upon no principle that is not in every way divinely αὐταρκές [self-sufficient] and ἀξιόπιστον [worthy of belief]. The worship of God, moreover, is so called no less from the divine commandment than from the divine object. Lest therefore the whole human race should perpetually waver and stumble in all its obedience, God willed that the doctrine which is the norm of all his worship and of our obedience should be from himself. In this sense, therefore, theology is the doctrine of God concerning himself, his works, his will and worship, and our obedience in every condition, together with the reward of the obedient and the punishment of the disobedient, revealed and set forth to the glory of his name — that is, the very Word of God itself. Now, since the Word of God is either ἐνδιάθετον [internal] or προφορικόν [expressed], and the latter again either ἄγραφον [unwritten] or ἔγγραφον [written], we shall set forth in order how each of these stands in relation to this matter. What is to be thought of what they call theological theses, catechisms, confessions, commonplaces, and such

collections of credible propositions — and in what place they are to be held — seeing that in learning or even teaching these things, many people (unless I am mistaken) suppose theology to consist, will be seen below.

IV. After therefore all the Word of God, whatever has been committed to writing — and I add this here κατὰ πρόληψιν [by way of anticipation] — that Scripture is our theology in such a manner that we attribute authority to it wholly, and to every part of it and to each truth contained in it, not because one proposition is established from another by evident reasoning, or because conclusions to which we assent are rightly derived from whatever principles; but we embrace each truth or proposition of truth considered separately with sure faith, on account of its immediate divine revelation, upon which all theology rests. But that habit which the scholastics call discursive — by which from propositions, one of which is from Scripture and therefore divinely revealed, and another of which shines by its own natural evidence, we elicit conclusions (concerning whose nature, whether they are, as they say, matters of faith or not, they contend sharply) — inasmuch as it is something different (if it is something different) from the gift of interpreting Scripture, lies outside our present purpose.

V. This being premised — namely that theology considered objectively, as they say, and in the abstract is the pure and simple Word of God — that light of the mind of the rational creature which is also called by that name is next to be carefully considered. But in order that we may arrive more easily at our destination, a certain classification of the subjects capable of receiving this light must first be set out; and then the relation of that light to the doctrine of which we have treated, and its union with it, is to be explored. First, then, with respect to the subject, as they say, theology may

seem capable of being divided generally into that which belongs to angels and that which belongs to men. For upon angels and men, inasmuch as they are endowed with intellectual light, it is incumbent to know God and to obey God freely; and their ultimate end consists in that enjoyment of God to which one proceeds through obedience; and this οὐρανίδης [heavenly] doctrine requires such a nature, condition, and state in all who would receive it or use it for its proper end. What innate knowledge of God and of his will the angels had — those τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὸ ἴδιον οἰκητήριον [their own principality and their own dwelling-place] preserving — and with what light they were furnished, such that with respect to degrees of increase that light was capable of growth as regards the mysteries ἀποκεκρυμμένα ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐν τῷ Θεῷ [hidden from the ages in God], made manifest at last ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας [to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places through the church], Eph. 3:10; and what knowledge they now possess through the continuous vision of God, especially those who in Christ have now obtained their reward — this is not the place to inquire.

VI. Θεάνθρωπος [the God-man] Jesus Christ and ψιλοὶ ἄνθρωποι [mere men] comprise the whole human race. What is to be said concerning the theology of Jesus Christ — “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Col. 2:3 — and concerning that knowledge which he possessed and possesses through the personal union, and the revelations given to him by the Father, Rev. 1:1, and how the whole fullness of the Spirit dwells in him, John 3:34, whom he received not ἐκ μέτρου [by measure] — since these cannot be comprehended within the scope of the dissertation upon which we are presently engaged, we have thought it advisable to omit them entirely here. Those who are mere men are either

still living a mortal life, or at least may be considered as such, and are commonly called viatores [wayfarers] (“For among all the living there is hope,” Eccles. 9:4), or, released from the bonds of the body, they are called possessores [those in possession]. The theology of these latter — those namely who, having by God’s will completed the course of faith and obedience, have mercifully obtained their end and rest in the enjoyment of God — is, to dispatch it in a word, that light of glory by which, beholding divine things πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον [face to face] and God himself καθὼς ἔστι [as he is], filled with ineffable joy, they are occupied eternally with the praises of God and the Lamb. These things had necessarily to be premised in order that we might arrive at our destination.

VII. According to the varying condition of those who are called wayfarers, their theology also varies; and here it is generally twofold — namely, that of integral nature or creation, and that of fallen or sinful nature. Other considerations and classifications of men fallen into sin are to be employed below. Of the first man, we must treat in the first place.