

An Overview of Calvin’s “Institutes of the Christian Religion”

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A longer overview of John Calvin’s theology

Analysis of Calvin’s Prefatory Address to Francis I

The circumstances in which the book was first written rest on the original intention to set forth, especially for French countrymen, certain basics of religion for those zealous to keep the faith. However, there was a shift in the purpose of work due to the persecution of and false rumors about the Evangelicals, and thus there is a request for a fair inquiry by a truly Christian king to overthrow the persecution and restore the true faith.

There are a number of reasons why the King should come to the aid of the righteous and why those who would oppose the Reformation and the Institutes should heed Christian doctrine: 1) there are misleading claims that the church fathers opposed the Reformation teaching (Romans rites are of no consequence against the Word of God); 2) These antagonists have an appeal that custom is against truth, and most custom is the result of the private vices of the majority which become public error and wrongly take on the force of law; 3) they have many errors about the nature of the church (the true church eternal, wherein all believing folk worship and adore one God and Christ the Lord, is always observable, and contains the pure preaching of God’s Word and the lawful administration of the sacraments); 3) that there are alleged tumults that have resulted from the Reformation preaching a. shifting of Satan’s strategy; 4) that the king should beware of acting on false charges, for the innocent await divine vindication. Whatever the king does in these respects, the righteous will trust in the King of Kings to ultimately vindicate them.

Institutes of the Christian Religion,

BOOK 1

Chapter 1: The Knowledge of God and That of Ourselves Are Connected

Without knowledge of “self” there is no knowledge of God, for our real wisdom is confined almost entirely to how these relate to one another. We must have a solid knowledge of God and a right knowledge of ourselves. Everything we do, and all providences around us (all our rich blessings) are acknowledged as from God, reveal our poverty and ruin that “in turn compel us to look Godward.” There we seek what we lack and we learn humility. We cannot seriously contemplate the knowledge of God before we begin to become displeased with ourselves, for without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self. If we “hypocritically confine our contemplation to ourselves” and do not go beyond to contemplate God, we complacently praise our own virtues. The moment our thoughts rise to God and His excellences, we see our “virtues” as wicked, foolish, and weak.

What is man before God’s majesty? Man is in a painful and lowly state, and must be made aware of such things. Such an estate is clearly seen when God demonstrates His presence to men. Such is the case of the Old Testament patriarchs when confronted by God’s majesty: Job, Abraham, Elijah.

The proposed order of teaching, then, is to first begin with the knowledge of God, and then move onto the knowledge of ourselves. This is the acceptable and right manner for the Christian to come to understand God’s revelation of Himself.

Chapter 2: What It Is to Know God

The knowledge of God is, in practice, reverence to the majesty of his person. There are two aspects of the knowledge of God in this way: 1) to feel that God our creator sustains and blesses us (the present topic that he is covering), and 2) to embrace the reconciliation offered us in Christ (which Calvin will deal with later).

Where does piety come from? God does not only, by His power, create and sustain the world, but is also the source and cause of all that is good and right. Thus, the awareness of God's excellences teaches us piety, the source of religion. Piety is the reverence of God joined with love of God which the knowledge of His benefits induces.

The purpose of the knowledge of God is to teach us fear and reverence, and to guide us to seek every good from Him and give Him credit when received. Those who hold a pious mind toward God are utterly dependent upon Him for all things. Their minds are consumed by Him and Him alone. As Calvin says, "Even if there were no hell, it [the pious mind] would still shudder at offending Him"

Piety drives us to consider a formal definition of our attitude towards God in terms of our religion. The definition of pure and real religion is "faith so joined with an earnest fear of God that this fear also embraces willing reverence, and carries with it such legitimate worship as is prescribed in the law."

Chapter 3: Knowledge of God Has Been Naturally Implanted in the Minds of Men

The knowledge of God is a natural "endowment" that should be considered universal to all men. It is in all men by natural instinct. It makes the failure to worship God rightly inexcusable to them and their sin. It is found even among the most barbarous peoples of the world. It is found throughout all times and places. Proof s of this emerge form the blatant universal idolatry as proof, for no man willingly humbles himself to something outside, himself. The very fact that people worship wood and stone evidence the "intense and ineradicable impression of the divine" on their minds.

Religion is not an arbitrary invention as some charge that it was invented by subtle unbelieving men to enslave the simple. However, this would not have been possible if there were no natural awareness of deity in simple men's minds. The very fact that men worship something demonstrates the reality that God exists, for they would worship nothing if it were not implanted in their nature and God did not exist.

Men themselves had no inkling of religion though proofs of religion exist in even the most ungodly. For men often turn to religion when under stress or great fear (e.g., Gaius, Caligula). Like "drunken or frenzied persons" they are fitful in their slumber. For while their awareness of God varies in power, it is never totally absent.

Actual godliness is impossible by men. This demonstrates the ineffaceable sense of divinity as engraved upon men's minds, for even the perversity of the impious demonstrates this. The awareness of God is our endowment from birth, not a doctrine to be learned at school, for the worship of God alone distinguishes man from animals.

Chapter 4: This Is Either Smothered or Corrupted, Partly by Ignorance and Malice

Superstition is the real piety and true knowledge of God as absent in the world. It is a warping of this true knowledge into a twisted untruth. Some men intentionally revolt from God. Others become lost in superstition

Superstition involves pride and obstinacy, and measuring God by one's own "stupid measure", and wildly speculating about His nature and about how He should be worshiped. It is an invention of men taken from the truth. Superstition is the result of vain curiosity, an inordinate desire for too much knowledge and false confidence. It is therefore, inexcusable in terms of defiling true religion.

Men consciously turn away from God as [Psalm 14:1](#) states, "Fools feel in their hearts that there is no God." Here the hardened sinner repels all remembrance of God and some flatly deny God's existence, not in the sense of depriving Him of His being, but in denying His providence and government of the world.

We cannot conceive of God according to our own whim which become vague and erroneous opinions of the divine God. We cannot fabricate our own religion, for only true religion is right before God. Thus, if you forsake God, you have left only an accursed idol and hence, no religion is genuine unless it is joined with truth.

Hypocrisy is the result of all those that trample true religion for it emerges from a forced fear of their own devising of God's nature. Such irreligious men desire to overthrow God and His judgment. They are rebels at heart, and pretend obedience to God in their sacrifices and observances, but their lives are marked by sheer immorality.

Chapter 5: The Knowledge of God Shines Forth in the Fashioning of the Universe

The clarity of God's self-disclosure strips us of every excuse like the divinely implanted awareness of deity, the daily disclosure of God in the workmanship of the universe is intended to provide us with the knowledge of God; this is the ultimate goal of the blessed life.

God's wisdom remains secret to no one for we see it through the human arts and sciences, through close observation of nature, and it affords men a deeper insight into the mysteries of the divine wisdom, but even for the uneducated, there is more than enough in the natural world to reveal to them the divine wisdom; the structure of the human body will do this. What we see is that man is the loftiest proof of divine wisdom.

But man turns ungratefully against God despite the divine source of these endowments, and takes credit for himself and self-love suppress the impulse to praise God. Instead they confuse the creature with the Creator.

The creator reveals His lordship over the creation, but men despise it. God has government and judgment over all things, and is sovereign over the life of men. Men though rebel against such sovereignty and think they can escape the dominion of God by reprobate thoughts.

The purpose of the knowledge of God is twofold: 1) to arouse us to worship God and 2) to encourage us to hope for eternal life. However, such knowledge in natural revelation is not enough. All the evidences of God in nature speak to us in vain because our powerlessness is guilt, and our fallen constitution before God.

Chapter 6: Scripture Is Needed as Guide and Teacher

God bestows the actual knowledge of Himself upon us only in the Scriptures, not through natural revelation. Despite the universal disclosure of God in natural revelation, we require another and better help to direct us to its Creator. This help we have in God's Word which first kept the Jews from "sinking into oblivion," and now keeps Christians in the pure knowledge of Himself.

The Scripture gives us two stages in the knowledge of God as Creator: 1) not only that we should worship some God, but 2) that He is the God whom we should worship. We should not then misunderstand we need to know God as Redeemer (which will be dealt with in Book 2).

The Word of God is God's revelation of Himself to us and is His Holy Scripture. It is the unbroken transmission of truth throughout all ages. God spoke to the patriarchs through oracles and visions or by the works and ministry of men what they should hand down to posterity, and these oracles were subsequently recorded when the law was published. Later on the prophets were added as interpreters of the law. Here, then, true religion (faith and right knowledge) has its origin in heavenly doctrine, which we can know only through the reverent study of Scripture and obedient acceptance of what God has there been pleased to witness of Himself.

Without Scripture we fall into error and our sinfulness makes the written proof of heavenly doctrine very necessary. In this Word is described God to us from His works. This Scripture can communicate to us what revelation in works cannot.

Chapter 7: Scripture Must Be Confirmed by the Witness of the Spirit

Scripture has its authority from God, not from the church. Scripture has full authority only where men consider it as God's living words coming out of heaven. It is a horrible error that the authority of Scripture rests upon the determination of the church, which is Rome's position. This is based upon the absurd notion that the promises of eternal life given in Scripture consist in and solely depend upon human judgment, which, rather, they depend upon the Scriptures.

The church is itself grounded upon Scripture, not Scripture upon the church ([Ephesians 2:20](#)). The Roman Catholics claim that the prophetic and apostolic writings remain in doubt until the church decides upon their authenticity is refuted by the fact that the acceptance of Scripture had to precede the founding of the church. Rather, Scripture exhibits clear evidence of its own truth and needs no external witness.

The witness of the Holy Spirit is stronger than all "proof" when we are convinced that God in person speaks in Scripture, we have the highest proof of the credibility of sacred doctrine. This conviction comes to us not from mere human reason or judgments, or conjectures, but from the secret testimony of the Spirit. It does not come from rational proofs, but the majesty of God shining forth from Scripture. It is of heavenly origin.

Scripture bears its own authentication. Our conviction is that in Scripture the unassailable truth rests upon the testimony of the Spirit in our hearts. He must witness to us. This self-attestation the faithful experience within themselves, for only the elect of God experience this singular privilege of the Spirit's testimony bearing witness.

Chapter 8: The Credibility of Scripture

Scripture is superior to all human wisdom. That which draws us to the Scripture is the grandeur of subject rather than grace of language. God wisely expressed great themes in lowly language to remind us that the power of Scripture rests not human eloquence but in its divine source. It is not the style but the content of Scripture that is decisive.

The truthfulness of Scripture is shown by many examples: Moses' miracles demonstrate that he was God's prophet. Prophecies [by Moses] were fulfilled contrary to all human expectations. God has confirmed the prophet's words as with Isaiah foretelling the fall of Jerusalem to the Chaldeans. Daniel prophesied as if he were writing the history. Here we see also that the transmission of the law is to be trusted, for the hand of the divine providence, seen in the preservation of the law and its rediscovery by King Josiah after the priest's negligence, is incontestable. God has marvelously preserved the law and the prophets for God chose the Jews, Christ's most violent enemies, to preserve for us the doctrine of salvation until it might be made manifest in Him. Even in the New Testament the heavenly mysteries were transmitted by unlearned men. The first three Evangelists, criticized for their lowly style, are discoursing on heavenly mysteries above human capacity, as of John's Gospel. These "rude and uneducated men" began to speak of heavenly mysteries—proof positive of their instruction by the Spirit. Even the blood of martyrs is grounds for assurance for theirs is not the faith of fanatic excess, but of firm and constant truth, and sober, zeal toward God.

Chapter 9: Fanatics, Abandoning Scripture Cast Down Principles of Godliness

The fanatics wrongly appeal to the Holy Spirit (such as the Anabaptists). The Libertines forsake Scripture in favor of the inspiration for they believe that by the Spirit, they have freed themselves from "the letter that kills" wrongly interpreting the Scripture.

The Apostles in the primitive church, illumined by Christ's Spirit, did not on that account treat God's Word with contempt, and acted quite differently in accord with the Scriptures. Their reverent attitude is foretold by [Isa. 59:21](#), and was witnessed by Paul, who despite his ecstatic experience ([1 Cor. 12:2](#)) insists upon knowing the law and prophets. Thus, the task of the Spirit is not to dream up a new kind of doctrine that leads away from the gospel, rather it should substantiate what has already been said.

The Holy Spirit is recognized on this point by His agreement with Scripture. In order to stay in tune with the Spirit in the same manner, we must apply ourselves to reading and hearing Scripture. Any spirit that presses another doctrine upon us than that of God's Word is vain and lying. The Libertines contend that it is not worthy for the Spirit (to whom all things should be subject) to be subject to Scripture. However, this is to judge the Spirit by standards inferior to His own when He is to be compared solely with Himself. The Spirit is the author of Scripture and on Scripture His image is stamped.

The Word and Spirit belong inseparably together for there the Holy Spirit so attaches to His truth, that only when its proper reverence and dignity are given to the Word does He show forth His power.

Chapter 10: Scripture Sets the True God Alone over Against All Other Gods

The Scriptural doctrine of God the Creator is the knowledge of God set forth in the created universe that is also expressed in the Word. The covenant with Israel eventuating in the coming of the Redeemer is not at presently considered, rather, those Scriptural passages which describe how God, the Maker of heaven and earth, governs the world—His goodness, His righteous vengeance, and His forbearance—are expressed.

The attributes of God according to Scripture agree with those known in His creatures, and Scripture shows us not as He is in Himself, but as He is toward us: in kindness, goodness, mercy, justice, judgment, and truth ([Exodus 34:6-7](#); Psalm 145; [Jeremiah 9:24](#) and [1 Corinthians 1:31](#) serve as good examples). The purpose of this knowledge of God is fear leading to trust, leading to true worship, leading to full dependence upon Him.

Scripture rejects all gods of the heathen as idols mute and dumb. Polytheists never completely lost the awareness that there was really only one God, rather they distorted the creature to become God. Their persistence in polytheism is evidence of their own vanity and of Satan's deceptions, and is inexcusable since they exchange the truth of God for a lie and worship the creature rather than the Creator. Everyone, from the rude multitude to the sophisticated philosophers, have corrupted the truth of God.

Chapter 11: It Is Unlawful to Attribute a Visible Form to God

We are forbidden to create any pictorial representation of God in any way. This is the sum of the Ten Commandments that prohibit idol making and directly follows upon the insistence of one God. Every figurative representation of God contradicts His being and Moses, Isaiah, and Paul speak out against visible images of God as dishonorable to His majesty. Even enlightened pagans like Seneca condemn this.

The direct signs of the divine presence (theophanies) give no justification for images. Such direct manifestations of the divine presence as appear in Scripture are intended to restrain men's curiosity, to teach God's invisibility, or to prelude God's future revelation in Christ b. the Cherubim of the mercy seat belonged to the pedagogy of

the old Covenant and have no place in our spiritually more mature age.

Some believe that pictures are "books to the uneducated." However, Scripture rejects images even in this way. The prophets of God taught that anything of God learned from images is futile and false, because the two are unalterably opposed.

The doctors of the church also partly reject them, and this due to the flagrant violation of images used by the papists which are entirely inappropriate. They desire to make images based on man's desire for a tangible deity, but this is and leads to idolatry and image worship in the church.

However, art should not be despised so long as it is used lawfully. Paintings and sculpture are gifts of God to depict things which the eyes are capable of seeing, not God who is invisible and who has forbidden any pictorial representation of Himself.

Chapter 12: God Is Distinguished from Idols, so That He Alone May Be Worshiped

True religion binds us to God as the one and only God. The definition of “religion” Scriptural insistence upon one God also implies that nothing of His divinity is to be transferred to another. Thus, both *religio* and *eusebia* suggest ordered worship, and the avoidance of confusion in this matter. The Scriptures also demonstrate that God combats the universal perversion of religion among men showing Himself as a jealous God. Thus, God desires a true religion made up of His law and right worship combined to conform man to His will. Men are restrained in this way from entering into rites with “lesser deities” under the pretense of worshipping the supreme God.

The “worship” and “veneration” of idols are the same thing a. the distinction between *latria* and *dulia* was invented to allow the transference of divine honors to angels and the dead. In Greek *dulia* means service, and *latria* means worship. Since service is higher than worship, the Papists are actually giving more honor to the saints than to God.

Idol worship is an attempt to rob God of His being and to appropriate it to the creature. Scriptural usage shows the invalidity of the Romanists’ false distinction between *dulia* and *latria*, and denies to men and angels the right to receive the highest worship. This is where saint worship originates and the transference of observances of piety to another other than God take place. In this way the divine honors the sun, stars, idols and vain men steal what is due God. They offer sacrifices indiscriminately to lesser deities, lesser gods, or dead heroes.

Chapter 13: God is One Essence, Which Contains Within Itself Three Persons

The orthodox position on the Trinity is bound up in the transcendence, unity, and spirituality of God, though limited by theological terms. There are three “persons” in the Godhead which distinguish God more precisely from idols. There is one essence or *ousia* in God, but three persons, hypostases, substances, or better, subsistences, each distinct from the other. Various heretics such as Arius, Sabellius, Servetus and others have corrupted this doctrine surrounding the Christ and a twisting of his divinity into something other.

The deity of the “Word”, or the Son, is mentioned in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament and is not a mere utterance but rather the everlasting wisdom, residing with God, and the source of all prophecies. The unchangeable, the Word, abides everlastingly one and the same with God, and is God Himself,. This witness is both attested by the Old and New Testament, even demonstrated by the miracles of Christ as He lived on earth..

The deity of the Spirit is demonstrated in His work; His activity seen in tending of the chaotic mass [[Gen. 1:2](#)] and then in the adorning of the universe with order and beauty in creation. The Spirit shared with God the sending of the prophets and is the cause of essence, life, and growth in created things. He is the author of regeneration into incorruptible life, by His very own energy, and the bestower of wisdom and speech, as well as the giver of justification, power, sanctification, truth, grace, and every good. Through Him we enter the fellowship of God to enjoy these d. therefore the Spirit shares in God’s power and resides hypostatically in God.

In attempting to distinguish the Father, Son, and Spirit shows our inadequacy of human comparisons. We must simply rest on Scripture: Father = beginning of activity; fountain and wellspring of all things; the Son

= wisdom, counsel (plan), and ordered dispensation of all things and the Holy Spirit = power and efficacy of that activity which is a distinction of order, not of time. In each hypostasis the whole nature is to be understood, but to each belongs His special characteristic.

Chapter 14: Scripture Marks Distinguishes the True God from False Gods

The work of the six days shows God's goodness toward men a. the six days make allowance for our brief attention span and bid our reason contemplate, in obedience of faith and looking to the quiet of the seventh day, the works of God b. the six days also show us God's fatherly care in providing for man's every need before man's creation. In either the created order, or in the invisible realities of the heavenly hosts, we should give God glory for His works around us.

God also created actual angels. In Scripture they are known as messengers: intermediaries whereby God manifests Himself to men. The angels are protectors of believers as the Old Testament shows instances of angels protecting men from harm. Even in the New Testament Christ was ministered to by angels in His tribulations, and His coming and resurrection were announced by them. However, angels must not divert us from directing our gaze to the Lord alone and are intended to lead us to God.

As angelic host help in God's plan, so demons are in opposition to His work, though under His control. Scripture warns us against the adversary and equips us for combat against the adversary. Scriptural references to devils (in the plural) remind us of the vast host of enemies against us, that we may not slacken our efforts and the references to Satan (in the singular) set the kingdom of wickedness over against the kingdom of righteousness, the church of the saints over against the faction of the impious. Yet, the devil stands under God's power and Satan can only act with God's permission and sufferance.

Chapter 15: Discussion of Human Nature as Created

Man proceeded spotless from God's hand; therefore he may not push the blame for his sins on the Creator. He is the noblest example of God's justice, wisdom, and goodness and such a knowledge of ourselves is required for us to come to a clear and complete knowledge of God.

Man was created in diversity: of body and soul. The soul is an immortal yet created essence, man's nobler part (the spirit being a synonym for "soul" except when the two words are used together). Men were created in God's image, in a spiritual sense. God's image is the perfect excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before the fall, but was subsequently so vitiated and almost blotted out that nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, disease-ridden. Therefore in some part it now appears in the elect, insofar as they have been reborn in the spirit; but it will attain its full splendor in heaven. This soul is created by God and is not a sort of emanation of His nature.

The soul is an incorporeal substance that dwells as the animating principle in the body. It is a reasonable soul where the understanding and will are the fundamental powers distinguishing between objects to be approved or disapproved. Such a will is the leader and governor of the soul. It chooses and follows what the understanding pronounces good and eschews what it disapproves. The mind was given to man to distinguish good from evil, right from wrong, what should be followed from what should be avoided.

Chapter 16: God Nourishes and Maintains the World by His Providence

Creation and providence inseparably joined for God who once created all things, and who gives them sufficient energy to carry on by themselves thereafter is the preserver of all He has created. This is the doctrine of providence. God's Providence includes all things on earth, including human affairs, for there is no such thing as fortune or chance. Scriptures tells us that all things happen in accord with God's will – events, inanimate objects, which do act according to their own properties and under God's ever-present direction including the sun, in all its power and glory, is at God's command.

The nature of providence is not mere foreknowledge but active governance of events. God not only watches over but exercises a special care over each of His works. God actively regulates all individual events, so that nothing takes place by chance.

God's providence also directs the individual and especially relates to men. Even as the universe was established especially for mankind, so also is this the purpose of His governance of it for no man can act, or even speak, except as God wills.

God's providence also regulates natural occurrences such as the wind (no wind ever arises or increases except by God's express command) or the power of procreation, or nourishment. For all this God continues the order of nature.

The true causes of events are hidden to us for the limits of the human mind see as fortuitous those things which are actually ordered by God's purpose. In this sense "fate" and "fortune" are used in Scripture to explain events seemingly contingent, but known by faith to derive from a secret impulse of God.

Chapter 17: How We May Apply the Doctrine of Providence to Our Greatest Benefit

Divine providence must be considered with regard to the future as well as the past; sometimes through an intermediary, sometimes without an intermediary; sometimes contrary to an intermediary. Through it God reveals His concern for the whole human race, but especially His vigilance in ruling the church

God's providence does not excuse us from due prudence for he has set limits to our life by his eternal decrees, though this does not hinder us from using the means and remedies He has given us for the preservation of our life (for even folly and prudence are instruments of his plan). Nor do the wicked acts of men overthrow providence. In His Word, God requires of us only what He commands; if we go against His will, we are obstinate and disobedient; yet He uses even our evil deeds to achieve His good end.

God's providence is solace of believers in times of prosperity or poverty. All things are under God's power; His care is to govern all creatures for their good and safety. Thus in any condition we ought to have gratitude for prosperity and patience in adversity with a freedom from worry about the future. Since we know that God is watching over us in His providence, this should help us in all adversities allowing us to raise up our hearts to God, and to receive patience and peaceful moderation of mind.

Without the certainty of God's providence life would be unbearable. Countless misfortunes meet us at every turn. What a miserable life we would spend if we were tossed and thrown about by blind fortune! Rather, the certainty about God's providence puts joyous trust toward God in our hearts and relieves us of fear and anxiety, and gives us comfort and assurance. It teaches us that even the devil and his angels are bound to God's service.

Some believe that since there are passages which make it seem as though “God repents” in the Old Testament that God has not determined the affairs of men by an eternal decree, but decrees at each moment according as He deems man fair and just. However, God is not to be charged with repentance or with ignorance or error or powerlessness. Scripture speaks of God’s “repentance” to make allowance for our understanding and accommodation. In the limits and weakness of our minds we cannot understand God as He truly is, hence He must represent Himself to us not as He is, but as He seems to us. He does not really repent, it only seems that way to us.

Chapter 18: God Uses the Works of the Ungodly, and He Remains Pure

God does not simply allow wicked men by “permission” to accomplish His ends. This is often said to “preserve” God from the defilement of committing evil. However, this distinction would suggest that there are areas of existence over which God has no knowledge or control, or at least acquiesces in a motion not directed by Himself, which is unscriptural. Rather, all the impious are so under God’s power that He directs their evil intent to whatever end seems good to Him, and uses their wicked deeds to carry out His judgments—without any defilement or blame on His part. Such is the case of Job recognizing that God is the source of his trials, or the blinding and insanity of Ahab ([1 Kings 22:20,22](#)) or the apostles recognize Pilate and the Jews as merely carrying out what God has decreed ([Acts 4:28](#); cf. [2:23](#)) or Absalom’s incest was God’s own work ([2 Sam. 16:22](#)) or the Chaldeans’ cruelty toward Judah was God’s work according to Jeremiah ([Jer. 1:15](#); [7:14](#); [50:25](#)).

God’s “rod of His anger,” and like expressions in Scripture attest the same thing, therefore God does not sit idly in a watchtower awaiting chance events as if His judgments depended upon human will [which is the Epicurean view]. But then we must ask, “How does God’s impulse come to pass in men?” This is notably seen in the “hardening of Pharaoh’s heart”. It would be absurd to say that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, rather, God’s will is the cause. Man while he is acted upon by God, yet at the same time himself acts.

God’s will is not divided but a complete unity. It is only our incapacity of understanding that supposes that there is any contradiction in God’s will, any variation in Him, any change in His plan, or disagreement with Himself. Even when God uses the deeds of the godless for His purposes, He does not suffer reproach. This does not make god the author of wickedness. God has decreed, thus, they will obey His will. This is not wrong for God to do, for some men confuse “will” and “precept”: “while God accomplishes through the wicked what He has decreed by His secret judgment, they are not excusable, as if they had obeyed his precept which out of their own lust they deliberately break.”

Institutes of the Christian Religion,

BOOK 2

Chapter 1: Human Race Delivered to the Curse

We must have a right view of the knowledge of self, for what God gave us at the creation and still gives us we must exercise, in holiness. Man, by nature, is inclined to a deluded form of self-admiration. Our carnal judgment suggests that we can know ourselves very well, but if the standard of divine judgment is used, man is emptied of self-confidence, driven to utter dejection and powerlessness. We should consider the purpose for which we were created and endowed— meditation upon divine worship and the future life and our own lack of abilities which leads us into confusion since we are fallen.

Adam's sin entailed the loss of man's original endowment and ruin of the whole human race since he was our representative. Adam was unfaithful and disobeyed occasioned by Satan's temptations. Man, then, had a contempt of the truth and an irreverence toward God's Word. Thus, unfaithfulness was the root of the fall. All men, then are fallen as [Ps. 51:5](#) states. All men are endowed and imputed with original sin and have all "died in Adam." Original sin is defined as a depravity of nature, which deserves punishment, but which is not from nature as created. Its nature "is a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul, which first makes us liable to God's wrath then also brings forth in us "works of the flesh" thus, we stand justly condemned and convicted before God, even infants, for all are guilty not of another's fault but of their own in Adam.

Chapter 2: Man Has Now Been Deprived of Freedom of Choice

Men desire to be free, and the freedom of the will is asserted by all philosophers. They are mainly concerned with the relation of will to obedience to divine law. All agree that free will does not suffice to enable man to do good works, unless he is helped by special grace (received only by the elect, through regeneration). That man necessarily, but without compulsion, is a sinner, establishes no doctrine of free will, for it is wrong to give man's willingness to sin the inflated label and Augustine rather defines it as *liberum arbitrium*. However, it would be better to abolish the term, and rid the church of this contention.

Self-knowledge rests on the awareness of our own powerlessness and the slightest credit given to one's own effort impugns God's honor. Rather, true humility gives God alone the honor. This does not mean that the natural gifts of reason and will are removed but corrupted by sin. If reason were completely removed, man would be indistinguishable from the beasts. Such is the reality of the social order as seen in the arts—liberal and manual, the sciences, and by His general (common) grace for God limits the corruption of nature by a special grace, and He endows each man according to his calling. Spiritual discernment, though, is wholly lost until we are regenerated. This limits our understanding with regard to God's kingdom and spiritual insight for spiritual insight consists in knowing God's fatherly favor on our behalf of our salvation, as well as how to frame our life according to the rule of His law which men fail at upholding.

Chapter 3: Just Damnable Things Come from Man's Nature

The corruption of man's nature is such as to require a total renewal of his mind and will. The blindness of fallen men makes their unrenewed understanding "stupid, frivolous, insane, and perverse" in thought. ([Rom. 3](#)).

God's grace sometimes restrains where it does not cleanse: the problem of the unregenerate is that they do not have virtues that cleanse inwardly, but they do at least inwardly restrain them from sin. The restraining grace of God is necessary to make human life and society possible. It is accomplished by modes: restraint by shame, by fear of the law, and because honesty is considered profitable in society.

Uprightness is God's gift; but man's nature remains corrupted, for man sins of necessity, without compulsion. Man is powerless to move toward good by himself: Scripture ascribes such movement entirely to God's grace, for in man's fallen state his will remains eager to sin. The conversion of the will is the effect of divine grace inwardly changing his heart where he is "created anew" because God is the author of spiritual life from beginning to end.

There is the erroneous teaching of cooperation where the will, having been prepared by God's power, then has its own part in the action of being made new. Rather, God is the sole source of good to give grace and faith. Not only does this change come from God, but its continuance also is by Him alone: perseverance is exclusively God's work. Thus, man's will is not eliminated, as Augustine says, but makes it wholly dependent upon grace.

Chapter 4: How God Works in Men's Hearts

Though men are under Satan's control as the god of this world, Scripture Shows God making use of man in hardening the heart of the reprobate. Man stands under the devil's power willingly. He is held by a yoke of slavery that he cannot escape from and is in bondage to. But the question remains, what is the devil's and what is man's part in the action of sin? And does God have any role in the evil works in part ascribed to Him by Scripture? There are Scriptural examples of how God treats the godless: the first way is to take away something they may need ([Job 12:20](#); [12:24](#); [Isa. 63:17](#)). The second way is through active hardening, such as with Pharaoh. As Augustine says, "The fact that men sin is their own doing; that they by sinning do this or that comes from the power of God, who divides the darkness as He pleases." In this use of the wicked, Satan must also serve God. God makes these evil instruments, which He holds under His hand and can turn, wherever He pleases, to serve His justice.

God's providence, then, overrules men's will in external matters, for numerous Scriptural examples demonstrate that men's minds were more subject to the Lord than ruled by themselves (Jacob's blessing on Joseph when he thought him a heathen Egyptian, Saul impelled to war by the Spirit of God, Absalom turned from Ahitophel's counsel, Rehoboam persuaded by the young men's counsel, Rahab's confession that it was God who caused nations to tremble at Israel's coming, etc.). In each case God's dominion stands above our freedom.

Chapter 5: The Knowledge of God Shines Forth in the Fashioning of the Universe

The clarity of God's self-disclosure strips us of every excuse to reject his ways. The daily disclosure of God in the workmanship of the universe is intended to provide us with the knowledge of God; this is the ultimate goal of the blessed life.

God's wisdom remains secret to no one even for the uneducated, there is more than enough in the natural world to reveal to them the divine wisdom. The structure of the human body will also do this. Both Scripture and the pagan writers alike assert God's fatherhood over men, who as His offspring exhibit His great gifts. We must, then, be drawn to love and worship Him in return, but man turns ungratefully against God.

The confusion of creature with creator; nature is not God, but the order prescribed by God. God as Lord of creation and giver of every gift wills that we will look to Him, direct our faith to Him, and worship. God's sovereign sway over the life of men, for His power and wisdom are seen in His destruction of the wicked and of their works, His restoration and elevation of the humble and oppressed—both dealings being timed and tempered to the human situation. The purpose of this knowledge of God the purpose is twofold: to arouse us to worship God and to encourage us to hope for eternal life.

The tidings of God that we gain from creation do not achieve their purpose for they are choked by human superstition and the error of the philosophers not only nations, but individual men, in the blindness of their minds, came to have their own gods. Here the Holy Spirit rejects all cults contrived by men who corrupt pure religion by embracing their own opinions to be apostates who substitute demons for God.

Chapter 6: Fallen Man Ought to Seek Redemption in Christ

Through the Mediator, God is seen as a gracious Father. Only the Mediator helps fallen man since the whole human race has fallen from life into death in the person of Adam. As a result, our knowledge of God the Creator, derived from the universe, is useless unless faith is added. As a result of this we have profited little from our contemplation of the created order. This faith is added to our estranged situation when we humbly embrace the preaching of the cross. At no time was this different. Even the Old Covenant declared that there is no faith in the gracious God apart from the Mediator. God never showed favor toward the ancient people without a Mediator. This is really to say, then, that the blessed state of the church always had its foundation in the person of Christ; the Old Testament always looked forward to its one Head, realized in Jesus.

Jesus Christ is essential to the Covenant and to true faith. The faith and hope of the Old Covenant fed upon the promise. This promise is the banner of trust and hope in Christ Himself which was prefigured and what gave stability to the covenant. This faith in God is faith in Christ, for from the beginning of the world, continuing through the promise made to David, Christ had been set aside before all the elect that they should look to him and place their trust in him. Even if many men once boasted that they worshiped the Supreme Majesty, the Maker of heaven and earth, yet because they had no Mediator it was not possible for them truly to taste God's mercy, and thus be persuaded that He was their Father. The Mediator must come in order for the fallen sinner to experience the fullness of God's attributes.

Chapter 7: The Law was Given to Foster Hope of Salvation in Christ

The Moral and Ceremonial Law are significant in leading fallen men to Christ. They contain promises for men even in the shadows of Moses' giving of the law and David's founding of the kingdom, because Christ was set before ancient Israel as a mirror. We cannot, though, fulfill the moral Law by our own efforts. The law renders us inexcusable and drives us into despair since complete observance of the law is perfect righteousness before God. We cannot fulfill the Law by our obedience. Even though fallen men cannot keep the Law, the promises in the law are not without meaning. The law promises a blessedness that we cannot reach, yet it leads us to realize that God freely bestows His gifts upon us, overlooking our imperfect obedience.

The first use of the law: the law shows us the righteousness of God. The second use of the law restrains malefactors and those who are not yet believers. Even believers have need of the law and it profits them in two ways: 1) it helps them to learn more each day the nature of the Lord's will and 2) exhorts them to continuing obedience, thus aiding them in avoiding reversion to sin.

The so-called "abrogation" of the Law has reference to the liberation of the conscience, and the discontinuance of the ancient ceremonies. But "To what extent has the law been abrogated for believers?" The law is now an exhortation, not a curse, and both Paul and Jesus both emphasize that the law has not been set aside, but remains inviolable. The law is abrogated to the extent that it no longer condemns us, yet by his coming Christ has abrogated in use, not in effect, the ceremonial law.

Chapter 8: Explanation of the Moral law (The Ten Commandments)

At this point, we come to the explanation of the law, to confirm points already made. The law is necessary, as a written law, to prescribe the worship of God as that which is still in force, to teach the true nature of godliness, and to demonstrate the contrast between God's majesty and our nothingness. The relationship we have with the Law is that it is a witness of conscience as accuser and a demonstration of the failure of our failure of conscience because of our fallen condition to uphold God's holiness. We learn from the law that God is our Father, that He is merciful and Holy, and in kindness requires obedience of us. The law is spiritually to be understood and interpreted with reference to the purpose of the Law-giver.

The two tablets of the Law requires the duties made to God (which are the first four commandments) and the duties required by us to our fellow man (which are the last six). The first commandment teaches the Lord desires to be preeminent among His people, and to exercise complete authority over them. The second commandment teaches what sort of God He is, and with what kind of worship He should be honored. The third commandment teaches us how God wills that we hallow the majesty of His name. The fourth commandment teaches [I disagree with Calvin here] that we ought to be dead to our own inclinations and works and should meditate on God's kingdom in the ways He has established. The fifth commandment teaches that God-established degrees of preeminence should be inviolable for us. The sixth commandment teaches that the Lord having bound mankind together in a certain unity, each man ought to concern himself with the safety of all. The seventh commandment teaches us that because God loves modesty and purity, all uncleanness must be far from us. The eighth commandment teaches that since injustice is abominable to God, we ought to render to each man his due. The ninth commandment teaches us that God as truth abhors a lie. The tenth commandment teaches us that God wills our soul to be disposed to love, therefore we must banish all desires contrary to love.

The sum of the law demonstrates how we ought to form human life to the archetype of divine purity.

Chapter 9: Christ Was at Length Clearly Revealed Only in the Gospel

The Grace of Christ was anticipated and manifested by the old economy of symbols and types. Here there is a great advantage to the community of the New Covenant, for God was known to the people of the Old Testament in the same image in which He with full splendor now appears to us. This does not mean that the Old Testament saints are excluded from heaven who died before Christ came. But it does mean that the mysteries which the Old Testament figures only glimpsed in shadowed outline are now manifest to us. The New Testament Gospel preaches to us the revealed Christ. The word “gospel” may be taken in a two-fold sense: as “forgiveness” and as “fulfillment.” The Gospel as fulfillment is to be received as a higher definition.

We must also make some refutation of the errors surrounding the relation of Law and Gospel. The promises of God are not abrogated for us, for believing in Christ we at once pass from death into life. We are pressed by the Holy Spirit to live in hope for the full enjoyment of Christ’s spiritual benefits and must note a difference in the nature or quality of the promises: the gospel points out with the Finger what the law foreshadowed under types. The Gospel did not so supplant the entire law as to bring forward a different way of salvation.

John the Baptist stood between the law and the gospel, holding an inter-mediate office related to both. And in this way, he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John because as yet John had not witnessed the gospel in its greatest power, the resurrection and ascension.

Chapter 10: The Similarity of the Old and New Testaments

The Covenant in the Old Testament is really the same as that of the New. All men adopted by God into the company of His people since the beginning of the world were covenanted to Him by the same law and by the bond of the same doctrine as obtains among us. The covenant made with the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same.

In the Old Covenant justification derived its validity from grace alone, “and since the very heart of the gospel is the justification of sinners apart from the works of merit, and since the Jews are those to whom the doctrine of righteousness of faith was imparted, who dares separate the Jews from Christ?” Proof of this occurs with the covenant signs that are similar. The Israelites are equal to us not only in the grace of the covenant but also in the signification of the sacraments. For instance, there are similarities between our spiritual baptism and the Jews crossing the sea. The Jews ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink, that is, Christ.

The Old Testament saints had the hope of eternal life. God’s Word quickened the soul. Since God bound the Jews to Himself by this bond, there is no doubt that he set them apart to the hope of eternal life. God gave His people fellowship with Himself and thus eternal life, for even in the Old Covenant, God’s goodness was stronger than death. The blessedness of the ancient people was not earthly, for spiritual Abraham is the father of our faith. Such is also the case with the examples of Isaac and Jacob. And everywhere we find David as herald of hope, as well as Job, and the prophets.

Chapter 11: The Difference between the Two Testaments

The Old Testament differs from the New in five respects: 1) there was a representation of spiritual blessings by temporal blessings. The earthly promises corresponded to the childhood of the church in the Old Covenant; but were not to chain hope to earthly things. 2) The truth housed in the Old Testament was conveyed by images and ceremonies. In the absence of the reality, it showed an image and shadow in place of the substance, where the New Testament reveals the very substance of truth as present. 3) The Old Testament is literal where the New Testament is spiritual. Here we see the Old Testament is the ministry of condemnation, for it accuses all the sons of Adam of unrighteousness, while the New Testament is the ministry of righteousness because it reveals God's mercy, through which we are justified. 4) There was the bondage of the Old Testament and in contrast to the proclaimed freedom of the New Testament. Scripture calls the Old Testament one of "bondage" because it produces fear in men's minds; but the New Testament, one of "freedom" because it lifts them to trust and assurance. 5) The Old Testament has reference to one Nation, and in the New Testament there is reference to all Nations. Until the advent of Christ, the Lord set apart one nation within which to confine the covenant of His grace, but in the fullness of time, God was revealed as the reconciler between Himself and all men and called the Gentiles as well.

Chapter 12: Christ Had to Become Man in Order to Fulfill the Office of Mediator

It was necessary for the Mediator to be God as well as Man. Only He who was true God and true man could bridge the gulf between God and ourselves and not by simple necessity but by divine decree. The reason is that man and God could only come together in this way.

The Mediator must be true God and true man for He must restore men to God's grace—and this is something only the Son of God Himself could do. Only a human being can atone for the sin of the human nature of Adam's posterity. Our Redeemer had to be both God and man to swallow up death and to bring life.

Only He who was true God and true man could be obedient in our stead, for a fallen man could never accomplish this. It was only the perfect obedience of Christ to the Father's will that could overcome our disobedience. Christ, the Son of David, overcame death for us in this way. The purpose of Christ's incarnation was our redemption the proof of which is manifested in the testimonies of Scripture.

Would Christ have also become man if Adam had not sinned? No. Osiander is wrong when he believes that Christ would have become incarnate to show His love for men, even if Adam had not sinned. This line of thinking overthrows the eternal decreed plan of God. But Osiander's doctrine of the image of God is what drives him to believe this, for he believes man was created in God's image—the pattern of the Messiah to come and thus infers that if Adam had never fallen, Christ would still have become man. Osiander is overthrown in that without an immutable decree concerning the incarnation of the Son, God is become a liar, and that if Christ had not been born as First Man (not as Redeemer) everything would have been tied to historical contingency—this is in opposition to Paul's teaching on the first and second Adam and the doctrine of imputation.

Chapter 13: Christ Assumed the True Substance of Human Flesh

Christ truly and actually took upon himself the nature of a man. Proof of Christ's true manhood is contrary to the heretical teachings of Menno Simons, the Marcionites and the Manichaeans. Scripture, though copiously asserts the reality of Christ's incarnation. It is easily shown that Marcion and Mani both demonstrate Scriptural twisting in order to prove Christ was no human. They have a wrong interpretation of "Son of Man", and a wrong interpretation of statement that Christ received human, not an angelic, nature. They rather turn into a form of universalism instead of the Scriptural reality of the incarnation. The whole controversy surrounding this is resolved by [Gen. 3:15](#)—that the seed of woman will crush the serpent's head. This means that we must acquire victory through Christ, and that Christ was begotten of mankind.

Some of them say that Christ simply used Mary to descend into this earthly realm, not that He became human. This, though, distorts the idea surrounding the term "seed" of Abraham. Paul, on the other hand, understands this in the sense of literal, biological descent from Abraham. When Matthew says that Christ was begotten of Mary he does not mean that the virgin was a mere channel through which Christ flowed. He is true man, but he is also true God.

The question arises – could the Word be confined within the narrowness of an earthly body? The "extra-Calvinisticum" states, "the Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, he willed to be borne in the virgin's womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross; yet he continuously Filled the world even as he had done from the beginning!"

Chapter 14: How the Two Natures of the Mediator Make One Person

We must explain, helpfully, how the two natures of Christ reside together in one person. There is a duality in this sense as well as a perfect unity. "The Word was made flesh" means that the Son of God became the Son of man, not by confusion of substances, but by unity of person. The best human analogue of this mysterious union is that of soul and body. Some characteristics of the body and of the soul are distinct from one another, other parts are in common, and others are capable of being transferred. But it should be noted that two diverse underlying natures make up the one human person. The interchange between the human and divine natures is called the *communicatio idiomatum*. The unity of the person of the Mediator is proven by the Scriptures demonstrating that both natures at once comprehended in the same person of the Son.

There are those who attempt to overthrow the incarnation because of certain heretical ideas. The two natures may not be thought of as either fused or separated. Nestorius taught a double Christ (the natures were pulled apart). Eutyches taught a unity of person destroying one nature or the other (the natures are commingled). Servetus supposes the Son of God to be a figment compounded from God's essence, spirit, flesh, and three uncreated elements. He denies the God-man, holding that before Christ came in the flesh there were only shadow-figures in God which were made plain only when the Word truly began to be the Son of God. In answer to all of these we assert the traditional view of the church: that the preexistent Logos, eternally God's Son, took human nature in a hypostatic union (and Scripture proves that Christ is Son according to both natures).

Chapter 15: Christ's Offices – the Prophetic Office, Kingship, and Priesthood

Jesus Christ's saving activity is seen in His threefold office. First concerning the prophetic office, there are Scriptural passages applicable to this idea. God provided an unbroken chain of prophets to teach salvation—but all these looked to a full understanding only with the coming of Christ. The name of Christ supposes three offices, all done by anointing with oil: prophet, priest, king. His Messiahship is especially connected with the kingly office, but should not be overlooked in the other two. Christ, as Scripture states, was anointed as prophet, but not only for Himself as teacher; His anointing as prophet applies also to His whole body, the church, in which the preaching of the gospel is to continue.

Secondly, the Kingly Office has a spiritual character. The eternity of Christ's dominion a. spiritual kingship, therefore, it is efficacious and beneficial for us in two ways: 1) in the church we will weather all the storms and so be preserved, and 2) in the individual believer this office inspires us to hope for blessed immortality. It is the reality that happiness promised us by Christ does not rest in earthly prosperity, but in a heavenly life after death.

Thirdly, the Priestly Office demonstrates reconciliation and intercession. The purpose and use of Christ's priestly office is that our Mediator reconciles us to God. Thus we see that Christ's sacrifice is the sacrifice of our high priest, and it is once for all—not respecting the nonsense of the papist resacrificing of the Mass.

Chapter 16: How Christ Has Fulfilled the Function of Redeemer

Though we were alienated by sin from God, we are reconciled by Christ to God who loved us. 1. The Redeemer makes us aware of God's wrath as well as thankful for His loving act in Christ. God's wrath is set against unrighteousness, but His love precedes our reconciliation in Christ. Such a work of atonement derives from God's love for us. Here, Christ has redeemed us through His obedience, which He practiced throughout his life, and died as a sacrifice for us. He was "Crucified", was "Dead and buried", "Descended into hell" and rose again from the dead as the Creed says.

Did Christ actually descend into the nether world? The "descent into hell" is an expression of the spiritual torment that Christ underwent for us, for a mere bodily death on Christ's part would have been ineffectual for us (and Scripture testifies of this). Jesus Christ had to go through the sense of complete estrangement from God the Father, through a lively fear of death, in order to completely to bear our nature, and our sufferings.

The Creed also says that "on the third day He rose again from the dead." Here it is in Christ's resurrection alone, not His death, that the victory of our faith over death lies. Then He "Ascended into heaven," and is now "Seated at the right hand of the Father." This place of authority and "sitting" is taken from comparison with assessors at a king's court. Here there are benefits imparted to our faith by Christ's ascension.

Then Christ will come to judge the world. Because Christ's kingdom lies hidden in the earth under the lowliness of the flesh (despite His clear indication of His present power to those who believe), faith is called to ponder the visible, bodily presence of Christ which He will show in the Day of Judgment. But the blessing is that the Judge is the Redeemer! He is our strength, purity, gentleness, redemption, acquittal, remission from the curse, satisfaction, purification, reconciliation, mortification of flesh, newness of life, immortality, inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, protection, security, abundant supply of all blessings and untroubled expectation of judgment.

Chapter 17: Christ Has Merited God's Grace and Salvation for Us

Christ's merit does not exclude God's free grace, but precedes it. Some men accept the view that we receive salvation through Christ, but in denying the idea of "merit" they make Christ a mere instrument, not the author and prince of life. But the order of understanding should be as follows (in following Augustine): God's good pleasure appoints Christ as Mediator to obtain salvation for us, thus we are freely justified by God's mercy alone, but at the same time, Christ's merit (subordinate to God's mercy) intervenes for us.

Scripture places together God's grace and Christ's merit for us. It teaches God's love as the highest cause. Many passages of Scripture attest to the reality that Christ merited and acquired grace for us with His Father (such as [Rom. 5](#)). God, to whom we were hateful because of sin, was appeased by the death of his Son to become favorable to us. By the sin of Adam we were estranged from God and destined to perish, but through Christ's obedience we are received into favor as righteous.

As a substitution for us, grace was imparted to us by Christ's merit. By His blood we were cleansed, and His death was an expiation for our sins. It was His death that paid the price of our redemption, which the apostles affirm rigorously.

Christ acquired no merit for Himself, and those that ask such a question are asking a foolish question (seen in Lombard and the Schoolmen). In opposition to this, God's plan, as Scripture shows, demonstrates that Christ gave away Himself, forgot Himself, for our sake.

Institutes of the Christian Religion,

BOOK 3

Chapter 1: Christ Profits us by the working of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the bond that unites us to Jesus Christ. He is the cause by which we receive the benefits that the Father bestowed upon Christ. Outside of Christ men cannot benefit from anything of Him, for only those in Christ benefit of His work. Here we see that the agent of uniting us to Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The root of life in us is the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ was endowed by the power of the Holy Spirit not to give Him sanctification of life, but to give the fullness of the Spirit to Him to dispense to men as He so needed.

There are various titles in the Scriptures for the Holy Spirit that help us have a more clearly defined understanding of His person and work. He is called the Spirit of adoption ([Romans 8:15](#); [Galatians 4:6](#)); a guarantee and seal of our inheritance ([2 Corinthians 1:22](#); [Ephesians 1:14](#)); life ([Romans 8:10](#)); water ([Isaiah 55:1](#); [44:3](#); [John 7:37](#); [Ezekiel 36:25](#)); oil and anointing ([1 John 2:20, 27](#)); fire ([Luke 3:16](#)); spring ([John 4:14](#)); and the hand of God ([Acts 11:21](#)).

Faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit in the life of men. His activity and power are often referred to as "faith" working. The Spirit of God is the source of faith, the inner teacher of promised salvation, the energizer of Christ in us.

Chapter 2: Faith: Its definition and properties explained

The object of our faith is Jesus Christ. More specifically, faith has as its object God through the person of Jesus Christ. Christ as God is the destination of our faith and Christ as man is the path of our faith to God as our object.

Faith involves knowledge, not upon pious ignorance. To have implicit faith is to have nothing and the Romanist doctrine of implicit faith is in error. There is a great difference in understanding a portion of Scripture, and not understanding the Christ of the Bible. Rather we ought to have a lively faith that believes the propositions of the Bible.

Faith rests upon God's word, and here we find the Gospel leading us to faith. The Word of God and faith are inextricably bound together. Without the Word of God faith falls into mere credulity. Faith arises from the promise of grace in Jesus Christ. We should reserve this true faith for the faith that one receives as a result of a true study of the Word of God and the working of the Holy Spirit in them. It is a higher knowledge and implies a certainty about what is being believed. Even the lowest degree of real faith is real faith. The Christian struggles with degrees of faith but that does not make them ignorant or without it. Even the Apostle Paul struggled with faith at times (Romans 7). In any case, the Word of God acts as a shield to us no matter how deep our faith may be. Such a faith lies in the basis of God's free promises in Christ Jesus, and the communication of faith, hope and love in the Christian's mind.

Chapter 3: Our Regeneration by Faith: Repentance

Repentance is a consequence of faith, and has its foundations in the Gospel which faith embraces. The priority of faith to repentance means that the recognition of God's grace precedes the sense of belonging to God (which equals faith), which in turn leads one to repentance.

Repentance does not stop at first turning, by way of regeneration, but also continues in the life of the believer through the mortification of sin, and the vivification of the life of the believer in Christ.

Faith and repentance are permanently bound together and demonstrate a conversion of the mind and a changing of the mind. It is a turning to God, first by fear in order to arouse the mind of the sinner of the judgment of God. Here we see that repentance is regeneration as our mortification is preparation in Christ's death, and our vivification is participation in Christ's resurrection.

Believers experience sanctification in this life, but they do not experience sinless perfection. For believers, sin has lost its dominion, but it still dwells in them and they struggle with it in mortification. These believers exercise an earnestness and carefulness towards following the Holy Spirit and to keep away from the devil's snares.

The fruits of repentance are holiness of life, confession and remission of sins, and lifelong mortification. Repentance is God's free gift given to sinners and should be exercised. It is given by the Spirit to regenerate whom He wills and then the sinner acts in accord with that in the reflex act of faith to new life.

Chapter 4: Discussion of Confession and Satisfaction

The scholastic doctrine of penance is an aberration of the truth, and falls into error. It torments the conscience since it does not truly remit sins, and is calculated by the flesh instead of the Spirit of God. Confessing our sins to one another does not justify the Scholastic interpretation of auricular confession since this practice is not towards “priests” but other believers.

There are ample examples in the Bible of men confessing their sins to God and the necessity of it. There are also directives to confess our sins before men if there is a need for public confession (but only if it is required based on some scandalous sin). In this public confession it is seen in two ways: to the congregation – if they partook of a sin that affects the church, or of extraordinary confession when all the people are guilty of some sin before God (as Israel had done many times).

The power of the keys is provoked when the entire church sins and needs pardon, when an individual has committed a common offense, and when one discloses a secret sin to a minister of the Gospel. Such sins are to be forgiven in their respective situations, over and against the Romanist doctrines of confession. The Romanist confession has become a plague in the church creating a false sense of security for the people in their sin and not allowing them to be forgiven in reality, but rather work for their forgiveness, which is a delusion. Rather, absolution is conditional upon the sinner’s trust that God is merciful to him, provided he sincerely seeks expiation in Christ’s sacrifice and be satisfied with the forgiveness offered to him there.

Chapter 5: The Supplements they Add to Satisfaction – Indulgences and Purgatory

Indulgences are the distribution of merits of Christ and the saints to supply for us the satisfactions we lack. They profane the blood of Christ and are pious frauds that deceive men into a false assurance. This mingles the blood of the martyrs with the blood of Christ, and makes His work debased in light of the saints ability to help us as much as Christ. The proof text for this is [Colossians 1:24](#) where Paul says that in his own body he supplies what is lacking in their sufferings. However, this does not refer to the suffering of Christ on the cross, but of the daily sufferings that the church must bear as it lives in the world. Thus, either indulgences must be false, or the Gospel of Jesus Christ is false. They cannot mutually coexist.

The holding and purging place of the dead, Purgatory, is a “deadly fiction of Satan.” It nullifies the cross of Christ, shows contempt on the mercy of God, and overturns and destroys our faith. Scripture proofs they sue to purport this are [Matthew 5:25-26](#); [12:32](#); [Mark 3:28](#); 1 Corinthians 3; [Revelation 5:13](#) and [Luke 12:10](#). These interpretations fail based on Scriptural twisting and poor exegesis of the given texts. Though the Romanists say this has been the custom for 1300 years, this is no argument. By what revelation or authority is such the tradition of the church? The appeal to the early church in this way cannot help by distorting the texts given, and appealing to the traditional view of “baptism for the dead.” Even the church fathers can be quoted against prayers for the dead, including Augustine.

Chapter 6: The Life of the Christian Man

The object of regeneration is man. It is granted in order to restore life in a human being and to bring him back into fellowship with God. Here adoption is confirmed and these regenerate are received as sons. Men cannot keep the Law of God in their fallen state, so this act of regeneration will enable them to obtain a pattern of living through the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are two chief aspects of Scripture's motives for the Christian life: 1) to instill the love of righteousness in our hearts, and 2) to provide us with a rule to keep our zeal for righteousness in the proper path. Scriptures calls us to be holy, but with a holiness that is infused into us when we turn to God.

The Christian life receives its strongest motives to God's work through the person and work of Jesus Christ. God gives us a pattern to follow in being conformed to the image of Christ. To fail to pursue this is to rebel against God. It is a rejection of Christ as the Savior of the world.

The Christian life is not a matter of talk, but of holy living stemming from a changed heart within. Some may be Gospel hypocrites and say they are Christians, but they have never been touched by the Gospel. We must learn doctrine first, but it also must enter into our daily lives. We strive for perfection, but in these earthly tabernacles, we are imperfect. This does not hinder our work, but presses us to work harder in the grace of God.

Chapter 7: The Sum of the Christian Life – The Denial of Ourselves

Since we are not our own masters as Christians, we must deny ourselves to follow the will of the master, and bring our will into conformity with His. We are to present ourselves as living sacrifices before Him, and to be transformed into the image of Christ, not after the pattern of the world.

Christians are to be wholly devoted to God. They seek His will not their own will. This self-denial is crucial to the life of the Christian. If we do not deny ourselves then we fall into the sin of self-love, which is detrimental to our well being as a Christian. In this denial we are to remove from ourselves two chief things: ungodliness and worldly desires. We are to strive after life as sober, righteous and godly Christians.

Self denial is seen both in our relationship to our fellow man as well as to God. In terms of our fellow man, we ought to cast off all pride and envy in order to "get out of ourselves" and have the spiritual ability to share with others. This is the only way works of love will be evident and seen. All our gifts, all we receive both spiritually and temporally is seen in this act of love. It is not only the act that is pleasing, but the intention behind the act that matters. This is the same in terms of following God's will. We must trust in God's blessing alone, and not in our own works. This kind of self-denial will help us in adversity when God's will is hard upon us. We ought not to act like the pagan hoping for a bit of good luck, but rather rest on the providences of God for His perfect will to be done and our conformity to it.

Chapter 8: Bearing the Cross – Part of Self denial

Christ had a cross to bear and we have a cross to bear in following Him. God's will is that His adopted children lead a hard and unquiet life, just like Christ's own. In our sufferings we share in Christ's sufferings, following him from earth to heaven. The cross of Christ leads us to perfect trust in God's power.

Bearing a cross in this way is needful in order to teach us patience and obedience. It permits us to experience God's faithfulness and gives us hope for the future. It is the source of all blessing and strengthens the hope we have in God. We trust in him, see our incapacity, our minds are cleansed through His love, we begin to distrust ourselves, we persevere to the end by grace and our hope becomes stronger in Him. We do not live according to our whims and fancies, rather we live according to God's will.

The cross can also be Fatherly chastisement from God for our good. Our present afflictions remind us of our past afflictions and how we might correct them for the future. Though this can be the case, it is used most for our salvation, for which we should be eternally grateful. We may suffer for righteousness sake, but in the end we will find consolation in God.

In such tribulations, we ought not to follow the Stoics who simply bite their upper lips to make it through difficulties. We are allowed to give expression of our pain and sorrow, and there is a true sense in which real pain and real sorrow fit together to form emotions that cause us to cry out to God for deliverance.

Chapter 9: Meditation on the Future Life

God uses tribulations to wean us from an excessive love of this present life. God fashions each tribulation for us as a perfect means to treat each individual's need for transformation. We are often placed in such circumstances because it is our tendency to leave unnoticed the vanity of this life. We need to be purged of it by force, and such tribulations and difficulties in cross-bearing help us to do this.

If we have a right conception of this life – which is transient and fleeting – we will then be forced to meditate upon the life to come – which is permanent and everlasting. We should have a gratitude for our earthly life, for the very benefits we receive while here are testimonies to the eternal benefits we will receive upon entrance into glory. We should not have an inordinate longing for heaven, in which our present duties fail as a result of complacency or depression.

There is a great comfort given to believers as a result of such a meditation on the life to come. Our present happiness is dependent upon hope, and hope persists to contemplate heaven and all its realities. After having such a hope, we can, without difficulty, bear the earthly travail while we live in the midst of the temporal prosperity of the wicked. In gazing upon the resurrection, we will experience in our hearts the final triumph of Christ' cross over all wickedness, and cultivate in our heart the hope of eternal glory yet to come.

Chapter 10: How we must use the Present Life and its Helps

The good things in this life are to be enjoyed as the goodness of God lavished upon the earth. We use these God-given blessings to help us in our pilgrimage in this life. However, we must be sure to avoid extreme necessity (where we only use the basic minimum) and also the case of lavish riches (where we get everything we can get). Both extremes should be guided by the Scriptures teaching to keep all things in a healthy moderation. God created earthly gifts for our good, not for our ruin. We should use them to delight in them as gifts from God as the Scripture so teaches, as well as the natural qualities of beauty they house in themselves as created helpful by God.

We are not to use these blessings to become gluttons of indulging in riches, or to seek wealth greedily, but rather use them as a tool to help in our calling. If we would meditate on the Giver of the gifts instead of the gifts themselves, we would have a right comprehension of their use and purpose. When we do not do this, and use these gifts in excess, our minds are turned away from God to temporary items that are not beneficial to the soul.

We should hold a sense of frugality in our possession and that which we acquire. Thus we are to sue the Scriptural rule of moderation in both poverty and prosperity. And we should not forget that all our possessions really belong to God. In the end, we will have an account of all this which was used for our stewardship. God appoints for us the times and places of our work, so we should yield to His providence over us. He lays burdens or prosperity on us, so we should remember that no task is too small.

Chapter 11: Justification by Faith: First the Definition of the Word and the Matter

Faith is that which enables us to grasp and possess Christ. Then God justifies us, which means that one is reckoned righteous in God's judgment and has been accepted on account of his righteousness. It is the acquittal of guilt of one who is accused as if his innocence were confirmed. It is an interpretation of forgiveness. Justification houses within it the manner of acceptance before God, the imputation of righteousness to the sinner by Christ, and reconciliation between the sinner and God.

Osiander believes that righteousness is essential, but it does not come from Christ, rather it comes from God. One cannot get it by faith, rather, God must infuse it. He does not believe that the human nature of Christ can communicate such a righteousness and that only the divine nature can do this. All of this is against the Scriptural account of justification, and a confusion of a number of other doctrines in which he mixes up. He nullifies the certainty of salvation because he overthrows justification as a term that has any legal bearing before God whatsoever. In response, Christ is a Mediator on our behalf as the Scripture accounts Him as our high priest in his human nature.

Works cannot justify us because we are fallen. Only faith justifies. The works of the regenerate cannot produce justification because salvation is by grace not works. The Romanists and Schoolmen believe it is by works that one is justified, but justification is by grace as a free work. Sins are remitted not by what we do, but by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 12: Lift our minds to God's Judgment Seat to Understand Justification

No one is righteous before the Judgment seat of God. We cannot measure our standards by what men do here on earth because in heaven the perfect tribunal stands in all its majesty waiting for us for judgment. Scripture demonstrates God as the Supreme Judge who is able to perfectly judge men in comparison to the divine majesty. There is a great difference between the righteousness we would see among men and the perfect standard of righteousness in heaven.

The reality of the judgment seat of God puts an end to any self-deception we may have about our standing before God. The stars themselves lose their brilliance before his majestic throne, how much more, then, will fallen man cower at the tribunal? We cannot, then, admire ourselves, or think too much of ourselves. Humility consists in acknowledging that we are fallen sinners who are poor and destitute of righteousness, and therefore need God's mercy. Christ calls to Himself those who are sinners, not those who are righteous. Only those who are heavy laden will find rest for the weariness of their souls.

When men are prideful, arrogant or complacent in seeing their wickedness, it blocks the way for them to come to God and to Christ. Arrogance rises up in thinking one is righteous in some way, deserving of merit. Complacency exists in thinking that they do deserve the mercy offered. In either case justification is overthrown due to a wrong idea concerning the self, and God.

Chapter 13: Two Things to Be Notes in Free Justification

The Justification of men serves to glorify God's honor, revelation, and justice. The righteousness of God is not set forth properly if it is not understood in the framework of God being righteous and acting righteously as a result of His nature. He alone is able to be righteous and then at the same time to communicate that righteousness to the unworthy sinner.

If we glory in our righteousness (which in fact we have none) then we do a dishonor to God because our exaltation of our own righteousness is a debasing of the true righteousness found in him. Whoever glories in himself, then, glories against God.

When we look at our own righteousness it ought to provide no peace for us in terms of being satisfied with our low estate. We should become afraid that we are so lowly rather than trying to exalt something that ought not to be exalted. When we are able to be sure we can stand on the Day of Judgment in the righteousness we have found in Christ without wavering, then, and only then, do we know we have found the true righteousness that saves.

If we bring attention to our own righteousness, we are failing to realize the importance of faith in the righteousness of another. Faith looks upon the promises of God to receive an inheritance not our own. The promise is then confirmed to us when it rests on God rather than on man. We should rest in God's free grace alone, and our confidence is now built on being engrafted into Christ, rather than being changed. In Him alone we are freely accounted righteous by His blood and work.

Chapter 14: The Beginning of Justification and its Continual Progress

In his natural state, man is dead in sin. He needs to acquire justification to salvation from an outside source, which is Christ. There are four kinds of men in regards to justification: 1) those with no knowledge of God and steeped in idolatry, 2) covenant breakers who have been initiated by the sacraments but do not live by them, 3) hypocrites, and 4) those regenerated by God's Spirit.

Without Jesus Christ there is no true holiness though wicked men may, by God's working, accomplish some virtues in the sight of their fellow man. Righteousness, though, does not come by works that men do, but by the grace of God. Man can contribute nothing to salvation in terms of righteousness.

Those who are hypocrites, or nominal Christians, are under the just condemnation of God for righteousness is not an outward act, but an action of the heart. The idea, then, of supererogatory merit (as the Romanists believe) is a fantasy.

Those who regenerated are justified by faith alone, and they do no good works in and of themselves. It is all wrought by God's grace. If one thinks himself to be righteous, then he misunderstands the nature of the Law itself. The believer's righteousness is always a faith-based righteousness, not something they can conjure up by their own merits or abilities that are truly fallen.

Good works are the fruits of a regenerated heart, not the cause of a regenerated heart. Good works have no reason for receiving "divine benefits" rather they demonstrate a person is truly regenerate.

Chapter 15: What Boasting About Good Works Does to Us

When we look at the doctrine of human merit in Justification, even the early church fathers opposed it as seen in Augustine and Bernard, as well as by Scripture. They teach that no man is justified by works unless he is free of the least transgression. Therefore this question arises: though works may by no means suffice for justification, should they not yet deserve favor with God? But, "merit" is really an unscriptural and dangerous word, for it usurps men's works over God's judgment.

The whole value of good works comes from God's grace, for even in the regenerate, good works, in and of themselves are full of uncleanness. Yet, good works are "good" because God's kindness has of itself set this value on them. Everything given to the godly, even blessedness itself, is of God's beneficence and is intended to make both us and the gift given to us worthy of Him.

The Semi-Pelagian doctrine is a rejection of the substitution of man's merit for Christ's. Christ is the sole foundation of salvation as Author and Perfecter of our faith. Because all benefits of Christ are ours and we have all things in Him, in us there is nothing good. Rome, in contrast, curtails Christ's might and honor and misrepresents the truth in discovering "moral" good works whereby men are rendered pleasing to God before they are engrafted into Christ. Roman theology misunderstands Augustine and Scripture. It mistakenly derives good works from free will, through which, they say, all merit exists. Therefore, Roman theology actually discourages confidence in God's favorable disposition to the works of people.

Chapter 16: Refutation of the False Accusations by the Papists

The first objection is this: Does the doctrine of justification do away with good works? Charges that the Romanists brought against the doctrine of justification are 1) it abolishes good works, 2) it seduces men from the pursuit of good works, 3) it makes the path to righteousness too easy and 4) it lures into sin men who are already too much inclined to sin. This is a fantasy though. Good works are not destroyed by the doctrine of justification by faith, because you cannot grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also. Christ does not justify anyone whom He does not sanctify.

The second objection: Does the doctrine of justification stifle zeal for good works? There are two reasons why the second charge is false. If the only reason good works are performed is the hope of ultimate reward, the whole foundation of such good works is completely in error. The right foundation of good works is gratitude by which

we reciprocate the love of Him “who first loved us,” which Scripture abounds to prove. Rather, God’s honor and God’s mercy are motives for action, for it is the remembrance of God’s benefits that will amply suffice to arouse men to well-doing.

The third objection: Does the doctrine of justification incite man to sin? It is the most worthless of slanders to say men are invited to sin, when we affirm the free forgiveness of sins in which we assert righteousness consists. While righteousness for us is free, it was not so for Christ, who bought it at the cost of His own blood. When men are so taught, they are made aware that they cannot do anything to prevent the shedding of His most sacred blood as often as they sin.

Chapter 17: The Agreement of the Promises of the Law and of the Gospel

How do works relate to the Law? The scholastic argument states the charge: justification is not by faith alone if we are to be keepers of the law. But they misunderstand this, for the freedom from the power of the law of which we speak is not carnal freedom which incites license, but spiritual freedom, which comforts the stricken conscience, showing it to be free from the curse and condemnation with which the law pressed down. We cannot bring the promises of the law to fulfillment through our works. The promises of God are based on the complete fulfillment the conditions of the law, conditions which will never be filled. The righteousness we tried to attain through fulfilling the law is accomplished not by our efforts but by Christ’s.

In what sense is the Lord pleased with the good works of the regenerate? Good works are acceptable because God is their source. The godly are still sinners, and their good works need to be embraced in Christ.

Justification by faith is the basis of works-righteousness, for works are acceptable only when sins have been pardoned. A good work begins to be acceptable only when it is undertaken with pardon. So when we are engrafted into Christ, we are righteous in God’s sight, so are our works, despite their faults, are covered by Christ’s sinlessness. James does not contradict Paul on this. James was making a careful distinction between a dead faith and true faith, for Paul and James use the word “justify” in two senses. For Paul, we are justified when the memory of our unrighteousness has been wiped out, but James is speaking of the declaration, not the imputation of righteousness.

Chapter 18: Works-Righteousness Is Wrongly Inferred from Reward

There are passages in the Bible that refer to rewards, but this does not make works the cause of salvation. The word “to work” is not opposed to grace, but rather refers to the good work of God accomplished through believers. Reward is better seen as “inheritance”, and is a means of grace. Still, the Lord does not mock us in saying He will reward works with what He had given free before works, for they are “training” which points a finger forward to the fruition of the promise.

The purpose of the promise of reward signifies compensation for miseries, tribulations, slanders, etc. Recompense refers to the contrast between repose and toil, joy and sorrow, affluence and poverty, glory and disgrace, marking the inheritance into eternal life from life in the world – they are “treasures in heaven”. But will we receive reward for tribulation endured? Tribulations are sent in order that we may be worthy of God’s kingdom, and to stir up our sluggishness God has assured us the trouble we have borne to the glory of His name will not be in vain.

Justification is not given correctly by the scholastics who say that to “keep the commandments” is the “royal road” to salvation. If we seek righteousness in works, we should keep the law perfectly; unable to do so, we must turn, humbled, to faith in Christ. Righteousness and unrighteousness are not comparable with each other by the same rule. Faith embraces God’s mercy, and seals upon our hearts Christ’s righteousness, not our own. It is foolish reasoning to conclude from the statement that death is the just payment for each sin, that man can be reconciled by a single good work.

Chapter 19: Christian Freedom

Christian Freedom has three parts. The first is freedom from the Law. There is a need for a right understanding of the Christian doctrine of freedom a. Christian freedom is a necessary part of the gospel and an appendage of justification. Freedom from the law demonstrates to us how we may be reckoned righteous. The law never stops teaching even believers: the whole life of Christians should be a practice of godliness. This is what Galatians teaches us. In Christ is a perfect disclosure of what was foreshadowed in the Mosaic ceremonies. Believers, then, cannot obtain righteousness before God by any works of the law. Only through the cross of Christ, believers are free from the universal condemnation by the law.

The Second part is the freedom of conscience in which we willingly obey without compulsion of the Law. The freedom from the constraint of the law establishes the true obedience of believers a. consciences, once freed from the constraining necessity of the

law, willingly observe it. The law requires that we love our God with all our heart and this perfection is not attainable by any of us in this life. This freedom from constraint makes us capable of joyous obedience.

The Third part is freedom in “things indifferent”. There are some things which we are not religiously bound to use, but can use or not use them as we please a. some persons resent our stirring up discussion about ritual regulations (fasting, holidays, vestments, etc.). Here Christians have freedom in the use of God’s gifts for His purposes, rather than hoarding up wealth and luxury for themselves.

Chapter 20: Prayer

Man is helpless before God. He needs to submit himself before God by prayer in order to submit to His will and His mind. The Gospel presses us to pray, for it demonstrates the communion of men with God in which they seek from Him in fact that which He has already promised in words. Though God ordains all things, this does not hinder prayer but rather presses us to pray to know His mind in our providences.

We should be ready in every situation to pray. We should see our own insufficiency to help ourselves. We should abandon all self-glory and put away all self-assurance. In true humility, then, we pray hoping to have our prayers answered.

We pray in Christ's name for we cannot present ourselves before God on our own merit or goodness, which is a fantasy. The risen Savior alone is our intercessor, and the only Mediator that we can turn to. He is both our redemption and our intercession. We ought to pray to God through Christ alone, and not to the saints. Whoever prays to the saints, robs Christ of His just honor.

We should pray in private in order to pray with petitions and give our thanksgiving to God. God should be praised and thanked without ceasing – which is our attitude in prayer – pray without ceasing. We should also pray in public, but with caution. We should not pray vainly, rather, we should arouse and bear hearts to God. We should make use of the Lord's prayer as a form. We commend to our God our needs, and use the Lord's prayer as a binding rule of faith to pray. God will answer us in His time according to His will.

Chapter 21: Eternal Election

Predestination is a necessary doctrine that we should understand, however, we should also be careful of not falling into the danger of being overly curious. It is to be sought out in Scripture only. Israel was elected of God. God foreknows all things, and nothing is future or past for Him, but everything is known in an instantaneous "now." God's choice of Israel does not rest only on individuals, but also on nations.

The second stage is to see election in terms of individual Israelites. God's freedom in his choice of Jacob over Esau is the very inequality of His grace. This election of individuals is an actual election taking place. God once established by His eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive unto salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would have to devote to destruction. It is founded upon God's mercy, and reprobation is just, and set upon His incomprehensible judgment. When men are actually elected, they are called and justified. Those reprobated are shut off from the knowledge of His name and from sanctification.

God is free. He is active in election and in reprobation. But man is still responsible because they are cognitive and fallen creatures that have rebelled. Man is in bondage and is unable to save himself, or rescue himself out of this bondage.

Chapter 22: Confirmation of this Doctrine from Scriptural Testimonies

Election is not from foreknowledge of merit but is because of God's sovereign purpose. Election is set in God's decree before creation and not associated with foreknowledge of merit. Human worth, then, is completely removed from this since election was given before the creation of the world. Any virtue, then, that comes from humanity is based on God's sovereign election.

Men are elected to become holy, not because they are already holy. Election by human merit is nonsense. Merits are completely ruled out in Scripture ([John 15:16](#)). God's determination of electing people is based solely on His sovereign will. Paul demonstrates that Israel was chosen, but not all descendants of Israel were elect. Paul uses the argument of Jacob and Esau to demonstrate that election is not of works at all. Salvation is then dependent on divine election alone. Jacob was not elected to earthly blessings. Can one, from Jacob's earthly elevation to first born, infer his adoption into the inheritance of heaven? No. God willed by an earthly symbol to declare Jacob's spiritual election.

Christ taught election, as did the apostle, and early church fathers. Election into Christ's kingdom is done by the Father giving people to Christ as a gift. By His free adoption, God makes those whom He wills to be His sons.

Rejection and reprobation do not take place according to merit – as if man could earn his reprobation before he was created. Rather, reprobation is also a product of the divine will of God. Reprobation and election rest on God's will alone.

Chapter 23: Refutation of the False Accusations Against Predestination

Reprobation has been seen by many as something as not in accordance with the divine will. Election, some say, is acceptable, but reprobation is not. But how can one divorce this from God's will? If God wills the election of one, then necessarily he did not will the election of another. This does not make God a tyrant since men are wicked and justly deserve hell. God's will is the proper rule of righteousness, not the emotions of men upon the fate of other men. God is perfectly just towards those who are reprobate, for they are fallen in Adam and deserve justice.

God's decree is also hidden in His justice. God's hidden decree should not be mocked because men misunderstand Him or are unable to scrutinize his decree since they are finite. They should accept the hidden mysteries of God as they are laid out in Scripture though they may not understand everything there.

Does the doctrine of election take guilt and responsibility away from men? This question is not asked because men want to know the answer, but because they want to excuse the sinner. God has made everything for Himself, even the wicked for the day of Destruction. He shows no partiality to anyone. God predestined the fall into sin, predestined Adam to fall, and predestined the fall to affect all men. God's might controls all things. To take away His power over all creation is to dispose of them as He wills is to take away God as God.

This does not mean that men should not work for good, nor makes God's admonitions to them meaningless, for the means God employs are useful to His end.

Chapter 24: Election is Confirmed by God's Call

Those who are elected by God are effectually called and those who are not bring upon themselves destruction. The call of the elect is dependent upon the work of Grace in their hearts. God appoints men, calls them inwardly, and then justifies them. This is done through Gospel preaching which is the means by which the elect are inwardly called by the outward preaching of the Gospel. The manner of the call is done by grace alone through the power of the Holy Spirit. The word is preached, and then the Spirit of God illuminates the hearts and minds of those elected. Here, God shows His free goodness in the very act of preaching the Word to fallen sinners. Faith, then is a work of election, but election is not dependent on faith. Election should be seen and understood in Christ Jesus alone. If we are truly in communion with God we can be assured we have been called by Him to be elect and in His Son. In our prayers, then, we should not act as though we must bargain with God, but rather, we should rest secure on His promises for our salvation. Christ is the surety in which we rest for salvation, and He cares for His people. If we truly believe this, we cannot fall away for Christ and the Father upholds us and the Spirit of God continues to sanctify us.

Many are called by the Gospel but few are chosen by God. The call is then both outward and inward. There is the outward call, that falls on all ears that hear, and the special call (effectual calling) that changes the heart. The reprobate are administered justice, while the elect are given grace. The preaching of the Gospel is twofold – it hardens the reprobate sinner and saves the elect.

Chapter 25: The Final Resurrection

The doctrine of the final resurrection is based on the resurrection of Christ and the promises of that resurrection housed in the Word of God. The resurrection that is hoped for is the resurrection of the body. Christ's resurrection is a prototype of the resurrection to come for us. Christ is the head of the body and the body must be completed in order to fit with the whole body that is in travail waiting to be complete. The foundation of this truth is found in the omnipotence of God who is able to resurrect all the bodies of the elect and glorify them perfectly.

There are objections to the resurrection that are given by the pagan who simply deny it and the chiliasts who misunderstand the thousand year reign. If the thousand-year reign ends, then Christ's reign ends. This would overthrow the hope of the final consummation of all things. Not only will there be a true resurrection of the body, overthrowing all objections forced by Scripture, but even the reprobate will have a resurrection of their bodies for eternal judgment.

In the eternal kingdom men will be placed in one of two positions 1) eternal blessedness and enjoyment with God, and 2) eternal misery in alienation from God's goodness and blessing. Everlasting blessedness is not an adequate notion of the future happiness of the elect. It will be nothing like we could ever imagine. We will see him face to face, and in that blessed vision will be forever happy. For the wicked, though, it is the same but in the opposite way – eternal misery in which we cannot imagine such a horrible fate. They will experience, forever, His eternal anger in hell.

Institutes of the Christian Religion,

BOOK 4

Chapter 1: The True Church

Though Christ is ours inwardly, he has also given us outward helps because we are weak and feeble human beings. This is where the necessity of the Church comes to full light. God has provided pastors and teachers (or Doctors) in the church for our edification and help. Through the government of the church, the sacraments and civil order, all which are given to us by God, we have a proposed plan of instruction to help us along the road of the Christian life.

The church is both visible (the seen church) and invisible (all the elect both alive and dead). This communion of saints demonstrates various gifts in the body to help one another. The church seen in this way – as mother to us – is necessary for without it, we cannot enter into spiritual life. Away from her we cannot hope for forgiveness of sins or salvation and it is always disastrous to leave the church. Though we cannot see the true invisible church without eyes, we are commanded to stay within the bounds of the church as it respects communing with men.

The marks of the church consist in where the Word of God is purely preached and heard, and where the sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution. Even if these marks are administered in an impure way, though in truth, we ought never to leave the church. Imperfect holiness in the church does not justify schism in the church. The church is not yet complete and is still being sanctified. God has abundant grace that he has always set forth in the church, and gives abundant grace even to delinquent churches.

Chapter 2: A Comparison of the False and True Church

When there is a departure from true doctrine and true worship such a place cannot be called the church of God; here is where Rome has fallen. The false church shows that it does not hear God's Word by its rejection of true doctrine and true worship. The church does not merely exist because of a succession of people in it, rather, it exists when true doctrine is upheld. The true church is founded upon God's Word. Since Christ upholds His dominion by His scepter (which is His Word) it is nonsense to believe that he would rule His people without His word. This negates the false claims of the roman Church.

Rome charges the Reformers with heresy, but there is a difference between schism and heresy. Heretics corrupt the sincerity of the faith with false doctrine, and schismatics break the bond of fellowship. Apart from the Lord's Word there is no agreement of believers, but factions of wicked men who attempt to overthrow the faith.

The condition of the Roman Church resembles that of old Israel under the ceremonies of the old worship. They attempt to create a system of priests and prophets with certain sacramental rites that have been abolished. This papal church should be repudiated for its corruption in overthrowing the grace of God. Christians, then, ought to separate from her out of necessity. The Church of Rome does not qualify as a true church, and as a result all those who sincerely follow Christ should depart from her and commune together as a remnant kept in purity.

Chapter 3: The Doctors and Ministers of the Church

God does not need men to serve Him and His cause, but chooses to do so. This human ministry in the church binds men together as a body. The highest place of ministry in the church is the ministry of Word. The office of preaching and teaching is set for those ambassadors of Christ who represent God and are commissioned by Him to bring His Word to all nations.

The several sorts of ministry positions are described in Ephesians 4. Temporary offices were established for the good of the church at their respective times, such as apostles, prophets and evangelists. These offices have now ceased. The permanent offices of the church are teachers and pastors. Teachers are charged with the interpretation of Scripture, and pastors are charged with the interpretation of Scripture as well as discipline, sacramental duties, warning and exhortation, which teachers are not allowed. Deacons are also an important role in the church which hold two places of ministry: those who distribute alms, who serve the church in administering in the affairs of the poor, and those who care for the poor themselves.

When filling a position in the church in these offices, orderly calling is requisite. All things should be done decently and in order, and this is in no wise different. A minister must be duly called and he must respond to that call. God calls the minister in secret, and the church calls him publicly. These men must be of sound doctrine and a holy life. They should never have any fault that disgraces the ministry or undermines authority. They are brought in by a vote of the people and ordained by ministers.

Chapter 4: The Condition of the Ancient Church in Government

In the ancient church there seem to be three classes of ministers: teaching and ruling elders, and one presbyter selected to be bishop. Scriptures tells us of three orders of ministers, presbyters (some were pastors, some were teachers), a second type of presbyters who were ruling elders, and deacons (charged with the care fo the poor and distribution of alms.)

All those who are entrusted with teaching are called presbyters. Bishops were created in order to prevent dissention and acted as a consul to the senate to report on business, preside in counseling, to govern the whole by action and carry out what had been decreed by consensus. The chief duty of presbyters and bishops is in dispensing the Word of God in teaching. The office of deacon remained the same as it had been under the apostles. Some sub-deacons were assigned to assist the deacons to help them distribute the use of church possessions given to the poor.

There was consent between the elections of presbyters and bishops by the people in order to have pastors over them not dictators to rule them. A proper balance in this was needful. Unfortunately, such consent was overruled over time and by a series of unbiblical notions by councils based on ulterior motives, the church became dependent on rule rather than guidance. Gradually, ministers sought ordination from the metropolitan bishop rather than the church in a given locale. This tended to move the hierarchy of the ordained church away from the people and into the hands of the bishops. Consequently, ordination became the power of the bishop to set men in place.

Chapter 5: The Ancient Form of Government Overthrown by the Papacy

Because of a great neglect of the bishops and presbyters of the day the appointment of unqualified persons without the vote of the people occurred. These men were ignorant in sacred learning, immoral and were often too young. The people of God were deprived of the right to elect their pastors, and the authority shifted from them to church canons. Later on, even princes took the right to nominate and elect bishops.

There were a great many abuses in the appointment of both presbyters and deacons. Their ordination was overthrown, and the means by which they were inducted became a byword. It became a field of simony (buying offices) instead of Christ ruling over His church and giving gifts to His people.

In the ranks of the Roman Church the bishops, pastors and deacons became corrupted. Early stages of unseen oversight (i.e. that pastors were pastors over flocks that they had no contact with) began under the guise of Gregory and Bernard. The priest's moral conduct was corrupted and few of them would ever be shut out of the church by excommunication. Deacons were not enlisted to care for the poor, but rather, the office was given as a stepping stone to the priesthood. Instead of giving alms, the church became wealthy and priests hoarded money instead of helping the poor. They did this under the guise of keeping appearance – as if money would sustain the glory of the church. The church became powerful through money and fraudulent expenditures to increase power and prestige.

Chapter 6: The Primacy of the Roman See

There is no Scriptural warrant to say that a papal line of succession is mandatory. Peter is not the first pope, though Rome requires submission to such an idea. The office of the high priest of the Old Testament cannot be cited as an argument for the primacy of Peter. However, such a high priesthood belongs to Christ alone, not to a mere fallen man.

Jesus' word to Peter did not establish this lordship over the church but papists use two texts to attempt to set this as a rule – [Matthew 16:18](#) and [John 21:15](#). Christ, though, has given nothing to Peter above the other apostles. Binding and loosing men in and out of the kingdom pertains to forgiving sins and is the task of all ministers of the Gospel equally. Their conception of taking the "power of the keys" is unwarranted from Scripture. The keys are really a metaphor for the teaching of the Gospel that opens the kingdom by faith, and closes the kingdom to those who do not have faith. These keys are not given to a "pope" alone, but all gospel ministers.

The church cannot have a human head since Jesus Christ is the head of the church. Christ's headship is not transferable to any. Thus, men are engrafted into the kingdom of God in Christ, and have unity in Him, not in a human monarch.

Questions for Rome: If primacy of Church was established in Peter, how at Rome and permanently? If Peter's first position was at Antioch, how could it be transferred to Rome? If transferred to Rome, how then did Alexandria usurp Antioch's second place? How could Peter have come to Rome and died there? If he did actually come to Rome and died there, how could he have been bishop and for a long time there?

Chapter 7: The Origin and Growth of the Roman Papacy

In the early times in the church the Roman see set itself in the councils of Nicea and Ephesus. They also took precedence in the council of Chalcedon and the Fifth council of Constantinople. However, such involvement at the early stages of the church were not degenerated into the Roman church of today. Even Gregory I refused the title "Universal Bishop." Unfortunately, the Roman church began to usurp rights over the other churches. They had the ordination of bishops under their control, the calling of councils, the hearing of appeals and motions of chastisement or censures.

During the fifth and sixth centuries Rome came into conflict with other provinces and bishops began to have great power, even though some did not succumb to such authoritarian ploys. Gregory the first, for example, was fulfilling the office of a pastor but with so many administrative duties could not care for the flock as he should have. This became the norm. John the Faster desired to be a universal patriarch, and wanted the boundaries of his bishopric to be the same as the boundaries of the empire. Eventually the papal supremacy was established. There was decay in the church as a result until the time of Bernard of Clairvaux.

The papal supremacy is too akin to the Antichrist's reign as Paul demonstrates. Paul says that the Antichrist will sit on the throne of God and in his temple – which apply to the Roman pontiff. This Antichrist deprives Christ of honor in order to take it upon himself. This reality is seen in the moral abandonment of the popes through their successions.

Chapter 8: The Power of the church with respect to the Articles of Faith

The Word of God alone limits ecclesiastical power. This power is spiritual and consists only in doctrine, jurisdiction and making laws. Here the Word of God has authority to lay down articles of faith and the authority to explain them. This power, which belongs to the church alone, has these for the propose of up building and not destruction. Such doctrinal authority is seen of Moses and the priests, of the prophets, and of the apostles.

In the revelation given to the church by the Word of God there is a unity though multiplicity of revelation. In the diverse times there were diverse ways of learning this Word, but the same message was given in various ways, culminating in the Son of God and does not contradict the message at any point. Here the Old covenant has the essential unity of doctrine from the law through the prophets and historical works. Then the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. All that comprehended the Father was embodied in the Son of God who tabernacled among us. The apostles were then authorized to teach what Christ has taught them and commanded of them. Not even the apostles, though, were to go beyond the written and spoken word of Christ and God.

Rome thinks that a universal council is the true image of the church and therefore governed by the Holy Spirit which is never in error. But the presence of Christ in the church does not negate the bond He has to the Word, and Rome disregards this. The promise of the presence of Christ was given to individual members of the church not just its leaders. The church is not infallible in this way as Rome claims.

Chapter 9: Councils and Their Authority

There is a difference between true and false councils. It should never be said that we ought to reject the wise Scriptural leading of gathered councils for they have their place. But any decision made by any council must be subject to the Word of God and this authority. In any case, Rome has defected from the truth in placing men above the Word of God and Councils greater giving the Word “meaning and authority” by interpretation.

When councils argue against one another, this demonstrates their fallibility. The word of God should decide the interpretation that is valid between disagreements within two various councils. Councils are made up of human beings who fail one another. Emotions, feelings, and fickleness tend to sway the hearts of men easily, and the Word of God should instead, govern them.

We must not give blind obedience to councils. We cannot accept the teaching of all pastors without questioning their doctrines. Church titles should not blind us from the truth of God. If there is an disagreement in the church about a doctrine or matter, it is not wrong for councils to convene in order to take up such questions. Yet, we cannot go as far as Rome to say that everything discussed in councils is faith-based and binding. Everything ordained in these councils is not interpretation of Scripture and should not blindly bind us to such decisions.

Chapter 10: The power of Making Laws

Can the church bind the consciences of men by its laws? The concern is not surrounding political order, but the worship of God. If Rome is allowed to make laws that bind men, then the freedom given to us in Christ is lost. Roman constitution enslaves the consciences of weak men.

What is the conscience? When men grasp the conception of things with the mind and the understanding, they are said to “know.” When men have an awareness of divine judgment adjoined to them as a witness which does not let them hide their sins but arraigns them as guilty before God’s judgment seat, this is called “conscience.”

God is the only lawgiver who can bind the consciences of men by the Word of God. The Church may never do this unless it is simply preaching the undefiled Word. The apostles never bound the consciences of men with anything but god’s word. All arbitrary lordship in this way is an encroachment upon the Lawgiver and the kingdom God rules over. God rules us by the prerogative of the Word of God and the laws found in His word. To set up a new law or to create more, is to impinge on His honor.

The Roman church has set up laws and ceremonies which have no place in binding the consciences of men. They are meaningless and useless for the edification of the body since they did not originate with God. Such ceremonies are a mockery to Christ, and hide the Gospel rather than reveal Him. Traditions are not equal to the Word of God and should be abolished. True church constitution should be set to guard against this.

Chapter 11: The Jurisdiction of the Church and its Abuse in the Papacy

The power of the keys is the basis for jurisdiction in the church in disciplinary matters. It is surrounded by the preaching of the Gospel and is more of a ministry than a power. Binding and loosing men in and out of the kingdom is directly related to excommunication in and out of the church. Beyond this kind of use in the church, the church has no right to insist on civil matters of law and practice.

The administration of power in the early church was not given to one individual, except for Christ. The power of the church lies in the hands of a plurality of elders, those ordained to teach and those ordained to be censors of morals. Bishops in the papacy decided not to take this into their consideration and handed it off to other officials they elected. Instead, these bishops adhered to a worldly power that they desired which opposed God's Word.

The Roman pontiff claims world-wide power for himself based on his own divine right, or by the power of the Donation of Constantine. The Donation of Constantine is fraudulent and absurd, and the right to divine title is equally absurd since the pope tries to incorporate his right by his own power. The Apostle Peter, though, did not have this power to confer, and so its succession is equally ridiculous. In such a divine right, the Roman clergy themselves attempt to become immune to civil law, and all judgments went to the bishop, which made them safe from condemnation since their own judgments ruled.

Chapter 12: The Discipline of the Church

There is the necessity of the power of the church to conduct discipline. If small families in society need to utilize discipline, how much more shall the church need this to order itself aright? Discipline is seen in various stages. First is to privately admonish the brother who has offended. This may be the special duty of pastors and presbyters if they can be involved. Then it ought to be brought to the assembly of elders. Private sins are to be reprov'd privately, and public sins should be reprov'd in public. Different degrees of sin should also be met with various degrees of exhortation.

The purpose of church discipline is that those who lead horrible lives and call themselves Christians may be rebuked and the good name of "Christian" be spared. Secondly, that good Christians should be guarded against from wicked men who may corrupt them. The third end is that those overcome by sins may be rightfully put back in a place of repentance. Excommunication, then, becomes corrective and not simply judgmental.

Fasting and prayer may be of use to the corrective and preventative discipline in the church in order to help them stay in line with any great matter they need to bring up before God. Fasting is to weaken the flesh and to prepare us to pray. Fasting is more than just no eating food, it should characterize the whole of the Christian life in solemn discipline.

In the church there is a problem with celibacy and the priesthood which throws a great problem on how one views marriage. Celibacy is not required in Scripture.

Chapter 13: Vows

There are dangers in taking vows in the wrong way. The church has already demonstrated taking rash vows and the abuse that often comes of them. God alone is the one in which we make our vows. Lawful vows are to Him alone, and by seeing this we can determine what vows are good and what may not be good. Rash vows in this way are obsolete because the Christian, if he knows the Word of God, will not make a rash vow knowing full well it is God to whom he vows. We should take into consideration what we are vowing, to be sure we can fulfill what we have said, and also the intention on making such a vow. It may be a godly thing to vow something to the Lord, but it may not be in accordance with His will to do so based on certain results not thought through. For instance, as Jacob vowed certain tithes to the Lord if the Lord should lead him ([Gen. 28:20-22](#)).

All believers have made vows. For example, Christians make vows in the act of their baptism and in the Lord's Supper when they partake of them. They make vows of sorts when they are catechized or when they join their church. Hypocrites, on the other hand, think they procure something special if they vow.

Monastic vows are unlawful and place the one who is entering monkery into a position that is not warranted by Scripture. Monastic sectarianism is not lawful and anyone vowing to such is committing sin before the Lord.

Unlawful and superstitious vows are not binding on ignorant people. Monastic vows should be broken, and the Christian should be part of the true body instead.

Chapter 14: The Sacraments

Sacraments are a sign of God's covenants. A sacrament is an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of His good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety towards Him in the presence of the Lord and of His angels and before men. To be precise: a sacrament is a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with mutual attestation of our piety toward Him.

A sacrament is never without a preceding promise but is joined to it as a sort of appendix, with the purpose of confirming and sealing the promise itself, and of making it more evident to us and in a sense ratifying it. The Word of God must explain the sign, and help us to understand what the sign means. The sacrament then seals us, confirming the Word preached preceding the giving of the sacraments. And since the lord calls his promises covenants, and his sacraments tokens of those covenants, they are there to make His promises more trustworthy to our feeble senses.

Sacraments confirm faith as agencies of the Holy Spirit. They do not, in and of themselves, impart grace to us, but, like the word, they hold forth Christ to us. There is no magic in the sacraments for the matter and the sign of the sacrament are to be distinguished.

The Old Testament sacraments of ceremonial shadows have been fulfilled in Christ who has instituted two sacraments for His church in the New Testament: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Chapter 15: Baptism

Baptism is a sign of our forgiveness and the participation we have in Christ's death. It confers to us His blessings. Baptism is the sign of the initiation by which we are received into the society of the church, in order that, engrafted in Christ, we may be reckoned among God's children. Baptism serves our faith before God and serves our confession of that faith before men. It is a token of the cleansing we have by the power of Christ. It demonstrates our mortification and renewal in Him, as well as our union with Him.

The Baptism of John is not different from that of the apostles. John baptized in Him who was to come, but the apostles baptized in Him who came. The baptism given by the apostles does not make the baptism given prior to that less credit. Even in the Old Covenant the people had baptism which was a type of that baptism to come in the New Testament under Christ. The people of Israel were washed, or mortified in their sin, when they crossed the Red Sea ([1 Cor. 10:2](#)). In the cloud there was also a symbol of cleansing ([Num. 9:15](#); [Exo. 14:21](#)).

Baptism is to be received with trust in the promise of which it is a sign. It does not impart an infused righteousness as the Romanists believe. Rather, it is a confirming of faith. Nor does it depend upon the merit of him who administers it, rather it comes from God. There are dangers to avoid in baptism: mode is not important; emergency baptism is not valid; and women are not permitted to baptize (Zipporah's circumcision not a valid use of trying to prove that women can administer it.)

Chapter 16: Infant Baptism

Infant Baptism corresponds to circumcision and is authorized by the covenant made with Abraham. Circumcision and baptism have an analogical relationship. It is impossible to deny this. The difference between the two is in externals only. They both demonstrate the promise of God (God's favor, forgiveness of sins, eternal life). They both represent the thing signified which is regeneration. Dissimilarity only consists in the external ceremony, not the reality of the promise.

Infants are to participate in the covenant. If they can participate in the thing signified (regeneration) how could the outward sign be denied to them? The Lord's covenant with Abraham is as much enforced for Christians as it once was for the Jews: both, heirs of the covenant and holy seed are confirmed in this. Baptism, then has fulfilled circumcision – not simply replaced it, for regeneration cannot be replaced.

Jesus invited the little children to come to Him, for such is the kingdom of heaven. How then could we deny baptism to them whom Christ invites?

The Anabaptists argue that baptism is not to be associated with circumcision, and only those professing faith should be baptized. However, they miss the point that all the promises of God in the Old Testament were spiritual. Abraham is the father of all who believe, and thus, how can the covenant sign be denied of those who say they follow father Abraham? Children who are baptized grow into an understanding of their baptism and what God has already done in them. Baptism is a sign of our birth, where the Lord's Supper is a sign of our growth. Servetus and the Anabaptists misunderstand this.

Chapter 17: The Sacred Supper of Christ

The signs of the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper is true spiritual food for those who have faith in Christ. Christ is the only food for our soul represented in the elements. In the Supper we have a union with Him that allows us, by faith, to feed from Him. In the sacrament the witness of Christ is so full and real it is as if we actually have Christ physically present with us to take, eat and drink.

The chief function of the supper is not simply a memorial, but to seal and confirm to us the promise that His flesh is food indeed and His blood is drink. How does this become a reality in our soul? When we partake of the supper, it is as if we are communicating by the elements with Christ and partaking, by that connection of faith, of Him in his body and blood. By this action, His life passes into us, truly and really, and we partake of Him. This life-giving communion is enacted by the power of the Holy Spirit to transcend the place where Christ is in heaven, and where we are here on earth.

Transubstantiation is a fantasy that is impossible based on Christ's flesh only present in one place at one time. To say that his death is sacrificed over and over in the giving and blessing of the Eucharist is to deny the final and finished work of Christ. This act done by the priest is really a Satanic magical incantation that is opposed to anything that is of faith, and of the Word of God. It is impossible to prove this doctrine by Jesus words "This is my body" for he also said "I am the door, the gate, etc." We ought never to superstitiously adore the elements, for this plays into the wrongful interpretation of the roman doctrines.

Chapter 18: the Papal Mass a Sacrilege to the Lord's Supper

The Roman Mass nullifies the Lord's Supper and its intent. The Mass is blasphemy against Christ. It is a suppression of Christ' passion and the once for all nature of the cross. The Mass encourages forgetfulness of Christ's death. The Mass robs men of the benefits of Christ's death. The Mass nullifies the Lord's Supper for it is supposed to be a gift that we receive from God, and rather, the Romanists make it a price to God paid in order to have Christ as a satisfaction.

Private Masses are a repudiation of the true nature of the communion of saints together. It is not scriptural and not something the early church ever engaged in, but was fabricated by the Roman Church. It cannot be said to be like the Old Testament sacrifice since it was prefiguring Christ to come, and it cannot be like the New Testament sacrifice of Christ already finished. It becomes, then, a superstition.

There are only two sacraments that Christ has given the church – baptism and the Lord's supper. Instead of humanly devising new sacraments to oppress men, instead we ought to be content with the sacraments that Christ has given his church for her well being. In the Roman Church the sacraments take precedence since they are means to line the pockets of the priests and bishops. They are sold for profit. And as a tragedy to this, the Word of God goes unmentioned and unnoticed in order to make room for that which profits the purse.

Chapter 19: The Five Other Ceremonies.

The Roman Church attempts to create five other sacraments that are not authorized by god's word or were ever used in the early church. God alone can establish a sacrament.

Confirmation is not a sacrament. It was never a practice in the early church. There is nothing in the word of God that demonstrates confirmation. Confirmation actually devalues baptism, and the papists would put confirmation above baptism.

Penance is not a sacrament and was not used in the early church. Baptism is better seen as the sacrament of repentance. The true sacrament of penance is baptism itself.

Extreme unction is not a sacrament and is created upon a misuse of [James 5:14-15](#). [James 5:14](#) is wrongly applied. Miracles in the early church were replaced by the preaching of the gospel.

Holy orders is no sacrament. The office of presbyters is a lawful office that God has instituted and to create a further set of hierarchical levels is to overthrow the commands of Christ and the gifts he gives to the church.

Marriage is not a sacrament, and was not administered as a sacrament until the time of Gregory VII (1073-1085). It is a misapplication of [Ephesians 5:28](#) and their misinterpretation of the word "mystery."

Chapter 20: Civil Government

There is a difference between spiritual and civil government. We ought not to misunderstand the false ideas that are commonly thought about concerning Christian freedom as if this means we are free from the State's rule. The spiritual kingdom of God is not set at odds with the government of the state, as certain antinomian fanatics believe. Civil government is ordained by God specifically for His glory: to cherish and protect the outward worship of God, to defend sound doctrine of piety and the position of the church, to promote general peace and tranquility and to adjust our life to the society of men.

The three parts of civil government are the magistrate, the laws enacted and the people who are governed. The magistrate is ordained of God as men are vice-regents of His law. Scriptural examples of this are David, Josiah, and Hezekiah, the lordships of Joseph and Daniel, and the civil rulers of free people like Moses, Joshua and the Judges.

The government has the right to wage war on those who are unlawful. It is not against piety to exercise the use of force when necessary. They are also allowed to levy tributes to the state in taxes in order to sustain the need for government.

The Christian is to exercise obedience to rulers even if they are unjust. They owe obedience since God is the sustainer of government powers and he sets them in place. A wicked ruler may in fact be a judgment of God on a wicked people. It is not up to the subjects of the kingdom to seek vengeance, but rather, to be obedient and allow God to enact vengeance as He sees fit. However, God is merciful and will bring relief from tyrannical rules if the case warrants.