

Synopsis of a Purer Theology

Volume I | *Disputations 1–31*

EDITED BY WILLIAM DEN BOER & RIEMER A. FABER

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A Brief Introduction to the *Synopsis of a Purer Theology*

WILLIAM DEN BOER & RIEMER A. FABER

This edition of the *Synopsis of a Purer Theology* offers to English readers an important document of Reformed teaching in the seventeenth century.¹ Composed by four professors at Leiden University between 1620 and 1625, it gives a full yet compact summary of theology as it was understood in the years after the Synod of Dort which was held in 1618 and 1619.² Occasioned by an ongoing conflict between the Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants in the Dutch Republic, the Synod had affirmed the orthodox teaching and summarized it in the Canons of Dort. The Canons contain a response to each doctrine that was expressed in the so-called “Five Articles of the Remonstrants” (1610): divine predestination, the scope of Christ’s atonement, human depravity and conversion, the efficacy of grace, and perseverance. The *Synopsis of a Purer Theology*, which was intended to serve as an educational textbook in the decades following the Synod and has become popularly

¹ The English translation presented in these volumes is reprinted with permission and only minor alterations from the three-volume edition published by Brill (Leiden), *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae / Synopsis of a Purer Theology, Latin Text and English Translation*, of which the general editors are Willem J. van Asselt †, Andreas J. Beck, William den Boer, and Riemer A. Faber. Volume editors are: Dolf te Velde, Volume 1, Disputations 1–23 (2014); Henk van den Belt, Volume 2, Disputations 24–42 (2016); Harm Goris, Volume 3, Disputations 43–52 (2020). The English translation was prepared by Riemer Faber with the assistance of members of the research group ‘Classic Reformed Theology’ (see below and the Acknowledgements).

² The material presented in this brief introduction is derived in large part from the introductory essays in *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae / Synopsis of a Purer Theology*, Vol. 1–3 (Leiden: Brill, 2014–2020): D. te Velde, Vol. 1, p. 1–16; H. van den Belt, Vol. 2, p. 1–19; H. Goris, Vol. 3, p. 1–7. It draws also upon A. J. Beck, D. te Velde, “The Synopsis of a Purer Theology in Its Historical and Theological Context,” Vol. 3, p. 8–91.

known as “the Leiden Synopsis,” includes a fuller discussion of these doctrines and extends them to a wide range of biblical teachings, from the time of creation and the fall into sin to the last judgement and eternal life.

The individual chapters—more accurately, disputations—that make up the *Synopsis of a Purer Theology* began as oral debates organized in the department of theology at Leiden from 1620 to 1624. Such disputations were academic discussions about a particular theoretical or practical topic. The professor who was to preside over a disputation would first introduce the subject and his own understanding of it by means of a number of written statements, or theses, that were circulated beforehand. A graduate student was appointed to defend the theses. He would address also any questions or objections that might be raised by members of the audience. Following the event, the professor would weigh the discussion and present a definitive, fuller disputation in printed form. In the case of the *Synopsis*, some fifty-two disputations were collected into a single volume and published. The printed volume was dedicated to the governing lords of the States of Holland and West Friesland.

The custom of holding academic disputations may be traced back to the early modern period, and towards the end of the sixteenth century the Leiden faculty of theology had started a series of disputations covering the scope of biblical doctrine. After a series was completed, it was usually repeated, sometimes with minor changes in the order or themes covered. After the death of Jacob Arminius in 1609, and the departure of Franciscus Gomarus in 1611, the theological faculty of Leiden, together with ministers and other church leaders throughout the Lowlands, continued to experience doctrinal and ecclesiastical differences that would culminate in convoking the Synod. When Dort rejected the Remonstrant teachings, a Remonstrant spokesman, Simon Episcopius, was removed from his teaching post, and new colleagues were appointed to join Johannes Polyander, at that time the only remaining professor of theology. Thus, towards the end of 1619, Antonius Walaeus and Antonius Thysius delivered their inaugural lectures at Leiden, and in the fall of 1620 Andreas Rivetus was added to the staff. These four professors together agreed to start a new series of disputations and to take turns presiding over them. The plan for the series that later culminated in the publication of the *Synopsis* was born.

The Four Authors of the *Synopsis*

The authors of the *Synopsis* had been trained by some of the leading Reformed theologians of their day, including Theodore Beza, Lambert Daneau, Jerome Zanchi and Zacharias Ursinus. On several key topics the *Synopsis* reveals the influences of these thinkers, who either were pioneers of Reformed scholasticism or who belonged to the second generation that had developed Reformed theology into a fully academic pursuit.

Antonius Thysius (1565–1640) completed his preparatory studies at the Latin School of Antwerp, the city of his birth. He studied theology in Leiden, and also travelled extensively elsewhere, to Geneva, Strasbourg and Heidelberg, among other places. During the Synod of Dort, he assisted in drafting the Canons, and a catechetical textbook for use in the local churches. An expert in Hebrew, Thysius was appointed substitute-translator and revisor of the Old Testament for the authorized Dutch translation of the Bible, the *Statenvertaling*. In 1619 he became professor at Leiden, where he taught Old Testament alongside Rivetus.

Johannes Polyander (1568–1646) was born in France, graduated as a student of theology in Heidelberg in 1586, and moved from there to Geneva and Leiden, whereafter he was ordained as pastor to a French-speaking congregation at Dordrecht. In 1611 he was appointed professor of theology in Leiden. Moderate in personality and thought, Polyander promoted harmony within the Church. He was involved actively in the Synod of Dort, and he, too, helped to draft the articles that refute Remonstrant teaching. Following the Synod, Polyander served in translating Scripture into Dutch for the *Statenvertaling*. He was an initiator of the disputations held at Leiden that would culminate in the production of the *Synopsis*.

Andreas Rivetus (1572–1651), also from France, had studied with Daneau in Orthez, and later at La Rochelle, before becoming a Reformed pastor in Thouars. A leading participant in several provincial and national synods, Rivetus also was appointed as one of the delegates of the French churches to the Synod of Dort, but king Louis XIII did not give him permission to travel there. Following the Synod, the curators of Leiden University recruited Rivetus, as a leading French theologian, to strengthen the theological faculty. He joined the faculty in 1620, as professor of Old Testament; besides his contributions to the *Synopsis*, Rivetus was a prolific and wide-ranging scholar.

Antonius Walacus (1573–1639), born in Ghent, matriculated as student of theology at Leiden University in 1596, whereafter he traveled to Geneva, Lausanne, Bern, and Basel, and then returned to the Netherlands in 1601. He later served as a Reformed pastor in Middelburg. In the years prior to the Synod, Walacus became involved in the conflict between the Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants. He was delegated to Dort by the provincial synod of Zeeland, when he, too, helped draft the Canons; he also was appointed as a translator and revisor for the New Testament portion of the *Statenvertaling*. He became professor of dogmatics at Leiden in 1619.

The Meaning of “Purer” in *Synopsis of a Purer Theology*

The teachings presented in the *Synopsis* reflect the concerns not only of the four authors but also of the Reformed churches that had been established in the Lowlands in the mid-sixteenth century. The word “purer” in the title *Synopsis of a Purer Theology* may be understood as indicating the authors’ desire to be perceived as promoting the orthodox Reformed teaching that had been confirmed at the recently held Synod of Dort. Thus whereas disputations that had taken place in the decades before 1618 may have exposed contradictory views on certain teachings, the *Synopsis* was to project unanimity in collaboration. The collection would support the fragile harmony among the churches in the refined doctrines.

At the same time, the *Synopsis* may be understood as an academic textbook. It responds to philosophical, theological, and ecclesiastical trends that had developed in the first decades of the seventeenth century. The teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic church continued to require responses from the growing Reformed communities. Moreover, different beliefs and practices were being promoted by Anabaptists and other groups that could not be ignored by the Reformed theologians in the Netherlands. In addition to these more obvious differences, Reformed theology was faced also by forms of anti-trinitarian thought that had taken root in the preceding decades. Thus a sort of “purification” had occurred in the Dutch Reformed churches on the basis of the theological teachings positively conveyed in the Canons.

Method and Genre of the *Synopsis*

The disputations in their originally oral and later published forms were composed according to the methods of what is called scholastic discourse. The term Scholasticism refers to the manner of instruction that was used in universities during the early modern period. It was marked by a consistent use of definitions, distinctions, and logical reasonings. It involved a brief expression of the topic under discussion, a detailed explanation of terms, and a comprehensive treatment of relevant aspects by means of a topical structure. There were explicit statements of proof, and argumentations that were accompanied by references to texts of Scripture or other authoritative sources. Counter-arguments were anticipated and refuted. The reader will find that traces of this format of oral presentation remain visible in the written, published disputations.

As was noted above, the complete work contains fifty-two disputations. Each consists of a number of theses or concise paragraphs that advance a single step in the argument. In compiling the material, the authors normally followed this pattern of thought: What does the term mean? For example: what is “Justification”? Does the object exist? What is it? What are its component parts? What specific aspects of the object may be identified? What are the causes of the object? What effects or consequences follow from it? To what other entities is it related, and how? What object is the opposite? These questions, sometimes posed implicitly, recur throughout the disputations and lend them their common form.

The Structure and Content of the *Synopsis*

It is not certain whether the authors had contemplated publishing the disputations as a textbook when the series first commenced in February 1620, but it does appear that the structure of the *Synopsis* was agreed upon beforehand by Polyander, Walacus, and Thysius (Rivetus joined at a later stage). The disputations of the *Synopsis* may be placed into groups arranged according to traditional scholastic Reformed theology, and summarized as follows:

The Foundation of Theology is Scripture (1–5)

The Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (6–9)

The Creation of the World (10–12)

Humanity as Creatures Fallen into Sin (13–17)
God's Address to Humanity in Law and Gospel (18–23)
Predestination (24)
Person and Work of Jesus Christ (25–29)
God's call and Humanity's response in Repentance and Faith (30–32)
Justification and Sanctification (33–38)
Purgatory (39)
The Church, its Offices and Functions (40–42)
The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (43–45)
The Roman Catholic Sacraments (46–47)
Church Discipline and Organization (48–49)
The Relationship of Church and State (50)
The End of Times (51–52)

The *Synopsis* begins with the biblical foundation of theology and moves on from there to discuss the doctrine of the triune God, the creation of the world and humanity, sin, and the way in which God reaches out to human beings through the Law and the Gospel. The Bible serves as the starting point because it is God's own revealed will for the salvation of humanity, and since its origin is divine, the Bible is the highest authority (1–2). Indeed, it is the only, complete, and perfect source of the knowledge of God; no church tradition or so-called “prophetic” revelation is needed to know God (4). As it is in his Word that the triune God has revealed himself, the authors next focus on the doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (6–9). It is the triune God who created the world out of nothing (10), and he preserves, directs and guides the world by his providence (11).

The next group of disputations treats the creation of human beings in the image of God (13), the Fall of the first parents Adam and Eve in Paradise (14), and original and actual sin (15–16). All of humanity participated in the fall, and so bears responsibility for it; moreover, original sin means not only the loss of what is good but also a tendency toward evil, and our original and actual sins merit punishment both in this life and in the next. A discussion of the doctrine of free choice (17), both before and after the Fall, logically follows the discourse on the creation of human beings.

Disputations 18–23 take us back to the topic of God's self-revelation in Scripture. It is presented here from the perspective of God's revelation in the Law (18–21) and the Gospel (22–23). While the Law exposes the sinful nature

and misery of fallen humanity, the Gospel teaches redemption by Jesus Christ the deliverer. The reader may be surprised to learn that the *Synopsis* does not contain an explicit discussion of the doctrine of the covenant; Disputation 23 does allude to the covenant, however, in its presentation of the Old and New Testaments as two administrations, or economies, of God's covenant of grace.

The next nineteen disputations deal with different aspects of the doctrine of salvation, starting with predestination, election and reprobation (24). It is perhaps worthy of note that the discussion of predestination in Disputation 24 is premised on infralapsarianism, according to which predestination occurred after the fall into sin. The *Synopsis* then dedicates five disputations to the doctrine of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ: his human and divine nature, his three-fold office as prophet, priest and king, the states of his humiliation and exaltation, and his work of satisfaction (25–29). Christ's passion and death suffices to redeem all people, but its power to save is manifested only in those who believe (27). The satisfactory work of Christ leads to a treatment of the universal and special calling to fallen humanity, including the outworking of salvation in the response by humans in obedient faith and repentance (30–32). The doctrines of justification and sanctification come thereafter (33–38).

Following a polemical rejection of the Roman Catholic teaching on purgatory (39), the *Synopsis* then draws our attention to the doctrine of the Church (40–42), the gathering of those whom God has called out of their natural state. The sole overseer and head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ; the Pope has no authority over it (41). Those who do legitimately minister to the Church have been called to serve as servants of Christ, whose Word explains their calling and duties (42).

Five disputations are dedicated to the biblical teaching on the sacraments, of which there are two, baptism and Lord's Supper. As the nature, function and purpose of the sacraments had been debated at length in the previous generations, the authors of the *Synopsis* deemed it worthwhile to give ample treatment to the Reformed understanding of them. Disputation 43 deals with the sacraments in general: the meaning of the term "sacraments," the institution of them by Christ, the administration of them, and their cause and effect. The sacrament of regeneration, that is baptism, is treated next (44), while that of the Lord's Supper is given extensive discussion in Disputation 45, which contrasts the Reformed understanding with the tenets of the Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Zwinglians. Especially the Romanist

teaching and practice of the Eucharist is confronted in Disputation 46, which rejects the papal mass as unbiblical. The Roman Catholic sacraments of confirmation, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, and marriage are addressed and refuted in Disputation 47.

As it was treated also at the Synod of Dort, so too does the *Synopsis* address the biblical principles for the internal structures and governance of the relatively young Reformed churches. The “keys of the kingdom” are a distinguishing feature of a faithful church, as they consist in the administration of the Word and the exercise of discipline (48). The Church’s authority in spiritual matters derives not from the secular state but from Christ and his Word. The meetings of regional, provincial and national councils or synods are explained on the basis of their biblical origins (49), and the broad outlines for their structure, purpose, and membership are sketched. The relationship of Church and State is defined, too, and also the distinctions between them, whereupon the *Synopsis* turns to a discussion of the civil magistrate (50).

The final disputations deal with the end of times, the resurrection of the dead, judgment, and life everlasting (51–52). As shown in Scripture, it is by the power of the triune God that all human creatures, both good and evil, will be raised. All will be judged, including the angels. Life eternal, which has commenced already in this age, will bring eternal happiness and unspeakable joy for all who believe. Quoting 2 Peter 3:13, the *Synopsis* ends by looking forward to “the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell.”

The Sources Used by the Authors of the *Synopsis*

As the summary of the structure and contents shows, the most important source used by the authors of the *Synopsis* is Scripture. References to the Bible abound, and many theses are supported by prooftexts. The reader will note how frequently texts of Scripture are cited as the basis on which the theses are developed. The authors make it clear that the entirety of their scholastic reasoning arises from Scripture itself, beginning with the definition of the theological term or concept treated in each disputation, and including the distinctions, causes, modes, efficiencies, and goals of each. Moreover, refutation of incorrect perceptions or false teachings is also buttressed by quotations from or references to Scripture. While the genre of the disputation did not lend itself to extensive exegetical explication, it is clear that the

particular texts of Scripture were included only after careful consideration of them. For the modern reader the inclusion of numerous prooftexts serves as a window to understanding the underlying premises and assumptions in each thesis.

The *Synopsis* refers much less frequently (but not sparingly) to historical and literary texts from classical antiquity, both Greek and Roman. Classical authors are quoted to demonstrate definitions or etymological origins, to illustrate the meaning of particular words, and as avenue to the ideas and practices of the pagan cultures of the past. These include not only philosophical and historical authors but also rhetoricians, grammarians and poets. Medieval authors are also cited or referenced, and the majority of these worked in the scholastic tradition. These include especially Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard, and John Duns Scotus, but we also find some references to spiritual writers such as Bernard of Clairvaux. Authors in the Roman Catholic tradition are quoted often to illustrate their difference from Reformed thought, and also as representative of official teaching or its practice. The most frequently cited authors of this type are Robert Bellarmine and Gregory of Valencia.

Editions of the *Synopsis*

The *Synopsis* was printed first by Elzevier in Leiden, in 1625. It was followed by four editions in the seventeenth century (1632, 1642, 1652 and 1658), which suggests that the work was read widely. In the Netherlands, towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was a revival of interest in Calvinist, classical Reformed theology. A sixth edition of the *Synopsis* was produced by Herman Bavinck in 1881, as part of a new series called *Bibliotheca Theologia Reformatata* initiated by Abraham Kuyper and others. More recently, between 2014 and 2020, a three-volume Latin-English edition was published by the research group “Classic Reformed Theology,” a group consisting of specialists in scholastic theology, philosophy, and classics. The edition comes complete with introductions that provide theological, historical and ecclesiastical contexts; critical notes on the Latin text; fulsome annotations explaining scholastic terminology and modes of discourse; a glossary of concepts and terms, bibliographies and indices.³ Readers wishing to delve deeper into the texts, their meanings and socio-political contexts, are encouraged to consult

³ See footnote 1, above.

the scholarly edition. The English translation in the current volume is reprinted (with minor changes and corrections) from the Brill edition (2014-2020).

Intended for the general reader, this edition intends to make the text of the *Synopsis of a Purer Theology* accessible to a readership that has little or no training in the Latin language. The English translation nevertheless seeks to preserve the flavour of the original language, tone, and sentence structure employed by each of the four authors.

The editors take this opportunity to signal the significant debt that is owed to the colleagues who contributed extensively to the project that resulted in the publication of the academic edition of the *Synopsis of a Purer Theology* on which the current edition is based. We are grateful to Brill Academic Publishers of Leiden for permission to employ the English translation of the *Synopsis* as it appears in the three volumes published between 2014 and 2020. To that text only a very few, minor changes have been made (e.g., the abbreviation of the books of the Bible). For some ten years members of the research group ‘Classic Reformed Theology’—experts in various disciplines and associated with universities and institutes in Belgium, Canada, Poland, and the Netherlands—collaborated in producing the Brill edition. These scholars determined the accuracy of the Latin source text, produced an English translation that is faithful to the original text and accessible to the modern reader, wrote introductory essays, composed an instructive glossary of technical and scholastic terminology, and compiled useful bibliographies and indices. The following general and volume editors performed an important role in the production of the Brill edition: general editors Willem J. van Asselt †, Andreas J. Beck, William den Boer, and Riemer A. Faber; volume editors Dolf te Velde (Vol. 1, Disputations 1–23), Henk van den Belt (Vol. 2, Disputations 24–42), and Harm Goris (Vol. 3, Disputations 24–52). Important contributions were made also by other current and past members of the research group “Classic Reformed Theology,” and the reader is directed to the Acknowledgements where we thank them by name.

As a historical Reformed handbook, the *Synopsis of Purer Theology* opens up avenues of exploration for anyone wishing to become familiar with the Reformed tradition as it was shaped in the first decades of the seventeenth century. The harmony of theological thought which the four authors of the *Synopsis* sought to express ensured a certain consensus, even in the heady years surrounding the Synod of Dort. Moreover, while comprehensive in the range

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of doctrinal topics covered, the *Synopsis* employs a conciseness of expression and restrained argumentation that makes the material readily accessible. The constant use of biblical evidence exposes underlying premises and assumptions that invite further exploration and comparison with current exegetical trends. Moreover, as the authors explicitly situated their theses both within the long tradition of theology that begins with the Church Fathers and continued in their own time with Romanist, Lutheran, and Anabaptist thought, the *Synopsis* offers the opportunity to explore the inter-relationships between Reformed orthodoxy and other confessional outlooks. The generally (but not entirely) irenic and positive approach to the theological *loci* lends the *Synopsis* an appeal that suits modern tastes. Thus, the *Synopsis* may be read not only as a document of historical significance but also as a touchstone for the theological questions and issues of the twenty-first century.

Preface Addressed to the Most Honorable and All-powerful Lords of the States of Holland and West-Friesland⁴¹

Most honorable, all-powerful, highly respected sovereign lords,

The two foundations of the Christian Republic are Truth and Peace. The former provides the basis of our spiritual relationship with God, while the latter is the basis on which we associate with fellow-humans here on earth. The prophet Zechariah, when he exhorts us to “love truth and peace,” [Zech 8:19] gives pride of place to the Truth, as she is leader and mistress; and he rightly grants the next place to Peace, as she is her attendant. For by its very nature the Truth is always fair and just, acceptable to God, and salutary to all who profess her. But Peace, if she should deviate from the pathway of Truth, would become unfair, offensive to God, and destructive to everyone who walks in her ways. Hence when the apostle Paul exhorts each and every Christian to dwell in peace with all fellow-humans, he makes only two restrictions: “as much as it lies within you” and “if it is possible” [Rom 12:18]—that is, on the condition that the truth be professed. And because the men who preceded you in this distinguished and noble office have pondered all this carefully, they were eager to foster peace at every turn and in every way, so long as it was grounded in the truth. Or, as the saying goes, they fostered

⁴ The *Synopsis of a Purer Theology* is introduced by a prefatory address to the lords of the States of Holland and West-Friesland, the political body of the Province of Holland which in the decades before and after the turn of the seventeenth century led the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands. In laudatory tones the authors of the *Synopsis* suggest that it was with the support of the lords that the Synod of Dort was held, new professors of theology were appointed at Leiden University, and the Reformed Church was strengthened. Despite the doctrinal issues that had divided the faculty in the recent past, the authors profess a ‘total single-mindedness in what we believe and think, and that we share a consensus in all the headings of theology.’

peace 'right up to the altar'—no rather, as far as our altar, Jesus Christ, who is the very embodiment of Truth, as he himself declared [John 14:6].

Our own history offers a splendid illustration of the loyalty, courage, and constancy with which your predecessors fought in defense of the true teachings of Christ as revealed in his Word, over against the frightful attacks of the Antichrist and his foremost henchmen. For there was a time when it was a capital offense to contend for the freedom of your Republic and its Religion and to defend the cause of those who retracted only so much as the 'width of a finger-tip' from the idolatry and feigned traditions of the Romanist pope. And they applied an equally great amount of courage in vindicating the freedom of our fatherland when they succeeded, fortunately, in resisting the leading armies of the tyrants who oppressed the reformed churches. And it was with the same courage, and success, that they introduced faithful preachers of the Gospel to the churches after they were swept clean of the desecrations done to the divine worship-service, so that they could expose to the light of day, as if in open theatres of wholesome truth, the Holy Scriptures that had been obscured and oppressed by the Antichrist for so many ages, so that they might guide the common folk whom he had wretchedly led astray back along the path of truth to the goal, the harbour of salvation that Christ had obtained.

No, what is more, there was the added benefit that they expended very much effort and support for the restoration of our churches throughout this entire province, in order to expand the boundaries of true religion further. And it was their determination to bestow as much dedication and industry in establishing an academic storehouse for all the sciences in this city, but especially for that of Religion. And you, most honorable and sovereign lords, just as you followed your predecessors in the other heroic and meritorious deeds, so also in this matter did you follow them. For in subsequent years it was you who caused this our Academy to flourish, when you endowed it with the appointments of learned men from every quarter. And when the 'weeds' of heterodox fancies were plucked out—weeds which some in our midst had caused to be spread abroad—you not only granted restoration and complete recovery to orthodox Theology, but you also lent your support when she was being freed from the false accusations of gainsayers at the recently-held Synod of Dordrecht. It was you who additionally increased the number of professors of Theology, thus raising it to the required full complement.

And now it is our resolve to honour, venerate, and publish abroad with

praise eternal the care and vigilance with which you have rescued this seminary of our churches from the gravest dangers of bygone tempests and placed it upon a firm and peaceable footing. And to make this testimony public, we announce the following as monument of the gratitude and esteem that we owe you: the *Synopsis*, namely, the *Synopsis of the Purer Theology* of which we are professors in your Academy. And it is in your name that we present it to everyone, to study it and to test it against the touchstone of Holy Scripture. We do so in order that the entire globe may acknowledge that you are its most stalwart and steadfast defenders, but also in order that those candidates of the sacred letters who are entrusted to us may fix their gaze upon this North Star and direct their way by it in the course of their studies. And finally we do this so that it may be clear to anyone and everyone that there is a total single-mindedness in what we believe and think, and that we share a consensus in all the headings of theology. We have no doubt whatsoever that the pastors of our churches, when they behold this work as the longed-for proof of the harmony in our teaching, will join with us in congratulating the Province that you command for the fact that by the special grace of God under your watch the flames of our internal dissensions have been quenched. And what is more, that they may now once again behold that on the lecterns in our Academy and on the pulpits in our church-buildings Truth and Peace “greet and kiss one another” (to use the words of king David the prophet [Ps. 85:10]).

And finally we beseech you in all humility, O most highly respected and sovereign lords of the States, to accept this small token of our deepest devotion and commitment with friendly countenance, and to continue to surround us with your benevolence. And may the most high, almighty God, under whose protection we have undertaken, in this sanctuary, to cultivate the garden-estates of Wisdom herself, protect you under the shadow of his wings and keep you safe for as long as is possible. May he enrich your Republic with an over-abundant increase of every blessing, for the glory of his name and for the increase of his Church.

Presented in Leiden, December 28, 1624 by the most devoted servants of your highly distinguished dominions Doctors and Professors of most holy Theology,

Johannes Polyander
 Andreas Rivetus
 Antonius Walacus

PREFACE

Antonius Thysius

VOLUME I

DISPUTATION 1

CONCERNING THE MOST SACRED THEOLOGY

President: Johannes Polyander

Respondent: Johannes Swalmius

Theology is the study of God, and nothing can be known with certainty about God without a special revelation from God Himself. That is why Scripture as God's divinely inspired self-communication is the basis of Theology and that revelation receives full attention in Disputations 2–5. The ultimate source of our knowledge of God lies in the intimate self-knowledge of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is called 'archetypal theology' (3), in which 'archetype' denotes an original pattern from which copies derive. Human understanding of God, being finite, is limited to what God wills to make known to us by revelation. The limited 'copy' of the original is called 'ectypal theology' (4–6), or theology of revelation. This revelation can be natural or supernatural (7–8). Next, all elements of the definition of supernatural revelation are discussed (9–21). The goal of Theology is to increase knowledge of the truth that accords with godliness (18–19), that renders us wise unto salvation (20) and leads us to glorify God (21). True Theology (as opposed to false theology, 25–26) is a practical science that stirs the human will and emotions to worship God and to cherish one's neighbor (22–24). Both the Old and the New Testament advance this theology: God's single will to redeem the human race and the promise that salvation must be obtained through Christ (27–28).

We shall commence our disputations with Scripture, since it, being divinely inspired, is the principle for the most sacred Theology, its source of proof, and its means of instruction.

1. According to the derivation of the noun, Theology is according to some 'the word of God'; or rather, as we think, 'the word about God.'

2. This noun was first used by pagan Greeks (witness Lactantius, *On the Wrath of God*, book 1, chapter 11) and thereafter by the Christians themselves, as can be gathered from the title of the book Revelation, in which John the evangelist and apostle is identified by the epithet, “the theologian;” and from the Second Letter of Basil to Gregory of Nazianzus, where he calls the doctrine of Holy Scripture “Theology.”

3. Theology is of one kind if we consider the matter in itself; it is multiform if we consider the way in which the matter consists in its various subjects. For with respect to God, insofar as Theology is the knowledge whereby He knows himself and all divine things in his divine way, it is archetypal theology. And hence, as it is the case with the very essence of God, so this knowledge is common to the Son with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And just as the divine essence has three persons most closely joined together in fellowship and communion with one another, so too those persons know one another intimately and as perfectly as possible. With a view to this relationship Christ states in John 7:29: “I know the Father, because I am from Him,” and in John 10:15: “Just as the Father knows me so I know the Father.”

4. And if Theology is viewed insofar as it is the knowledge that God either has communicated to created beings endowed with understanding in this age, or that He will share in the age to come, it is ectypal theology. And this knowledge communicated by God has been, so to speak, reproduced from the original in various ways and degrees of communication in people living on this earth, obviously through the grace of revelation. It was certainly received in angels and the spirits of the saints in heaven through the grace of vision—through which kindness we, too, shall see God himself face to face after this life, that is, with our own eyes and in person (1 John 3:2).

5. This theology has been communicated by God with Christ the ‘God-and-man’ in a unique and exceptional manner, that is, by the grace of the union, which produced in Christ’s soul as much fullness of wisdom as was necessary for the most complete performance of his calling. Regarding that fullness God is said to have “anointed Him with the oil of gladness beyond his peers” (Ps 45:7[8]) and “has given Him the Spirit without measure” (John 3:34), so that from his fullness all who believe in Him would receive a certain measure of that same Spirit (John 1:16). Therefore, it is said that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge have been hidden in Him (Col 2:3).

6. In this locus we restrict Theology only to persons who are proceeding in

faith in the current age, and in order to differentiate it, we call it ‘the Theology of revelation.’

7. Taken more broadly, revelation can be divided into natural and supernatural revelation.

8. We call natural revelation what is either internal, written upon the hearts of all people through natural truth and natural law (which the apostle explains in Rom 1:19 and 2:15), or external, through the contemplation of the things God has created (which the same apostle discusses in Rom 1:20). We call supernatural revelation what the prophets and apostles have obtained by the direct agency of the Spirit of truth in order to unfold its genuine form to the Church of God, partly through the spoken word and partly through their writings, and to transmit it for safe-keeping. Hence the revelation of sacred theology which God gave the prophets and the apostles was direct and without intervention; however, the revelation that has been disclosed through them to the Church of God was via them as intermediaries.

9. Because in this locus we are discussing supernatural revelation, we define Theology as the knowledge or wisdom of the divine matters that God has revealed to people in this world through ministers of his word inspired by the prophetic Spirit, and that He has adapted to their capability, to lead them to knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness and renders them wise unto their own salvation and God’s eternal glory.

10. We classify the genus of Theology as knowledge or wisdom. It is knowledge,

1. Because Holy Scripture ascribes to it the epithets and effects of knowledge: Isa 53:11, Jer 3:15, John 17:2[3], and 2 Cor 8:7.
2. Because it is the knowledge of things that are necessary, either without relation to any other being, as for example of God and his attributes, or of things that are necessary on the presupposition of God’s will, such as knowledge of his worship and works.
3. Because it brings forth the knowledge of the truth (Titus 1:1), that is, a definite recognition fixed very deeply within the mind by the clearest shows of proof, either through things that are prior and that are principles of being (as in Matt 11:26, Eph 1:5), or through things that are posterior and that are principles of knowledge (as in Rom 1:20).

11. We classify the genus of Theology also as wisdom, for the following reasons:

1. Because Solomon calls it by this name in Prov 1 (and following); so too the apostle Paul in 1 Cor 1:21, and 12:8.
2. Because it presents to people, by way of teaching, its own most accurate and superior principles, which are loftier by far than the principles of the other sciences, namely, the most holy and majestic mysteries of God himself that cannot be fathomed by the human mind.
3. Because what it contemplates deals especially with subjects that are eternal, infinite, inexpressible, immovable, spiritual, heavenly, and not liable to any change or decay. Augustine writes extensively about this matter in *On the Trinity*, book 12, chapter 14.
4. Because it is, so to speak, like an architectonic standard that guides all the disciplines and as the final judge of all actions and thoughts outshines all other sciences and prescribes for them the standard for living well and happily, and for directing all things back to the glory of God. For whatever a man learns outside of Theology (as Augustine says in *On the Trinity*, book 12, chapter 14), if it is harmful, Holy Scripture discredits it; if it is useful, it is found and commended therein.

12. When we assert that matters pertaining to God are the object of theology, we include in the range of application: 1. God himself; 2. The doctrines and divine benefits required for a saving knowledge of God, for fellowship with and enjoyment of Him. 3. Everything that God has created and ordained in the nature of things as they must be related to God as their origin and goal. Regarding this last point Augustine shows in the *Letter to Volusianus* that within the terms of Theology are contained also Physics, Ethics, Politics, and the other disciplines.

13. God is the chief efficient cause of Theology, regarding three ways in which He brings it about. For 1. his Spirit supplied it to the prophets and apostles by his inspiration, as Paul testifies in 2 Tim 3:16, and Peter in 1 Pet 1:11,12 and 2 Pet 1:21. 2. He has appointed the true standard for treating Theology and placed it over against false standards (1 Tim 1:3, 6:4[3]). And 3. He has bestowed upon it the power to instill his wholesome teachings into our minds

(John 6:45, 1 Cor 3:7, 1 Thess 4:9).

14. The instrumental cause of Theology is the Word of God, spoken through the mouth of men divinely inspired and called directly by God, and recorded in the holy books (1 Pet 1:11, 2 Pet 1:21, Acts 20:27, 1 Thess 2:13 and 4:8).

15. The manner God chose to use for disclosing Theology is divided by some into 'the inward manner', solely through inspiration by the Holy Spirit, and 'the outward manner', conferred by God upon men through certain instruments and devices.

16. This manner of revelation formerly flowed forth from God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in different ways. Sometimes He spoke by using clear speech, sometimes by means of dreams, visions, signs, appearances or likenesses. On other occasions He spoke through angels who had assumed human shape. Sometimes He spoke to our fathers in the Old Testament through human prophets who were driven by the Spirit of Christ (Gen 15:1; Num 12:6,8; Gen 18:13; Exod 23:21; Acts 7:30; 1 Cor 10:9). And at last He spoke most fully through his own Son as He was revealed in the flesh (Heb 1:1).

17. Although these different ways of revelation have been adapted by God to everyone's capacity for receiving them, some people have grasped them more fully and others less so, according to varying measures of faith.

18. The foremost fruit and goal of Theology is knowledge of the truth that accords with godliness (Titus 1:1). By this description supernatural truth is distinguished from natural truth; the latter does not suffice in a man who is not yet reborn, and it does not have the power to infuse his heart with godliness and true service to God, as is evidenced by many proofs in Rom 1 and 2.

19. This truth is the form that pervades Theology in its entirety as well as its individual parts, and therefore the theologian always contemplates it in one and the same way throughout the sacred letters.

20. The second use and goal of Theology is that it renders us wise unto salvation and to every good gift in this present life and the life that is to come (2 Tim 3:15, 1 Tim 4:8).

21. The glory of God is the highest goal of Theology, whereby He has prepared this glory only for himself, because He is all-sufficient unto himself

and is in want of nothing, and because not a thing can be added to Him by our doing.

22. From this the question arises: Is the most holy Theology a theoretical or a practical discipline? The reply of some theologians to this question is 'theoretical,' of others 'practical,' and of others yet again 'a mixture of the two.' We concur with the last reply in that we reckon Theology ought to be called both theoretical and practical both because of the combination of its two-fold goal, that is, the increase of knowledge and of the worship of God in this life, and because of the arrangement of the one below the other. For just as godliness is placed in the service of our blessedness and God's glory, so too knowledge is ranked in service to godliness in sacred literature (1 Tim 4:[7-]8; Col 3:16; Titus 1:1).

23. Therefore in Theology theory and practice are not placed in opposition to one another, but they are conditions associated with each other for the purpose of obtaining everlasting life, and placed in their proper order.

24. And Theology consists not of bare and empty theory but of a practical science that powerfully stirs the human will and all the emotions of the heart to worship God and to cherish one's neighbor. Hence it is said that faith works powerfully through love (Gal 5:6; 1 Thess 1:3). Hence also they are said to deceive themselves by false reasoning who only hear the Word of God but in reality do not put it into practice (Jas 1:22 ff.).

25. The true Theology we have explained to this point is opposed by false theology, which errs in two ways:

1. By utterly departing from the orthodox teaching of the prophets and the apostles, partly regarding the matters themselves, and partly insofar as it concerns the treatment of these matters (1 Tim 1:3 and 4:7[6]; 2 Pet 2:1).
2. By empty chatter and disputes about words, whereby those who rage madly over foolish enquiries stray from the real goal of pure worship (1 Tim 1:6; 6:4).

26. This false Theology can be summarized in three particular types, namely, the Theology:

1. Of the pagans, who do not know Christ as the Savior, which the Holy Spirit condemns (Acts 17:22, 23, 30, and 19:34; and Rom 1:21).

2. Of the Jews, who reject Christ (whom Jerome in his commentary on chapter 12 and 13 of Matthew calls the source of Wisdom) and therefore who are not able to understand anything wisely.
3. Of the pseudo-Christian heretics, who (as the same Jerome states in his commentary on chapter 23 of Jeremiah) steal Christ's words and usurp the speech of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles in order to transmit their own deceptions under the semblance of a spurious truth, either on the foundation of Christian doctrine or in matters concerning its foundation, to those who are rather careless.

27. Even though the Old and the New Testaments differ with respect to some of the tools whereby the teachings are administered (and also their circumstances), yet they agree as far as the substance is concerned. And the same Theology is advanced in both Testaments: God's single will to redeem the human race and the one basic promise that salvation must be obtained through Christ (Gen 3:15 and 22:18; Acts 15:11, and 10:43, etc.).

28. Accordingly we must reject the opinion of those people who make up a three-fold way of obtaining salvation: the first for those who lived before the Law was recorded, by observing the law of nature; the second for those who lived under the written Law, by keeping it; and the third for those who live under the grace of the Gospel, through faith in Christ Jesus.

29. But we must battle especially the opinion of those who are not afraid to claim that anything at all that has been disclosed by God, regardless of the manner and degree it has been made, is even now sufficient for them to obtain salvation.

30. Theology is not only noetic and semantic, but also dianoetic. For often it employs arguments to refute those who oppose it, and it either draws logical conclusions to confirm the truth from its own principles that in and of themselves cannot be demonstrated from foregoing principles, or it produces solutions to refute the harmful objections of the Sophists (Matt 22:32, 33; 1 Cor 15:20, 21, 22).

ON THE NECESSITY AND AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

President: Antonius Walaeus

Respondent: Johannes Crucius

Holy Scripture is the foremost means by which knowledge about God and salvation is revealed (1–3). While its divine origin guarantees certainty, its written form guarantees a reliable preservation of truth (4–8). Also the Holy Spirit works through Holy Scripture alone (9). From the most elementary to the most advanced knowledge of God, Scripture is absolutely necessary (10). Scripture derives its authority—the conviction that it proceeds from God—ultimately from the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (12). Besides that, many marks reveal the divinity of Scripture (13–27). That holds true for all Scripture and not just for a part (28). The Church has no authority over Scripture, but serves and proclaims it (29–32). Holy Scripture, the supernatural principle of all sacred teaching, and the unmoved rule of faith and moral conduct, can depend on nothing but God who has granted it, and on its own light, which He has put into it (33–34).

1. As the nature of Theology was treated in the preceding disputation, it now follows that we deal with the foremost means whereby it is revealed, namely, Holy Scripture, which is the principle and foundation for all Christian teaching.
2. By Holy Scripture we here mean not the actual characters of the alphabet but the word that is signified and expressed in those characters and letters. For all scripture is a sign and indicator of the word; in fact, the word is a sign and indicator of the thoughts and concepts conceived in the mind.
3. Moreover, we define this Scripture as the divine instrument whereby the doctrine of salvation was handed down by God through the prophets,

apostles, and evangelists as God's secretaries, in the canonical books of the Old and New Testament.

4. Before the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, God established his Church only through the spoken word, which He imparted to the patriarchs "in many and various ways" [Heb 1:1] and through the tradition of the elders [cf. 1 Pet 1:18 and Matt 15:2]. However, when length of life was shortened and the state of wickedness was increasing daily, and Satan by means of his misleading oracles and apparitions with which he imitated God and his appearance was deluding the human race throughout the world, it pleased God from then until the end of the world to establish his Church also by means of the Scriptures, to preserve the divine truth more reliably, to widen its extent, and to restore it more easily where it had fallen into ruin.

5. For this reason, too, at this point of time God Himself furnished the prophets with a precedent when onto stone tablets He wrote the law which He had announced previously from Mount Sinai in public to the entire people (Exod 24:12, and 34:28). And He commanded Moses and the other prophets and apostles to do the same, partly by means of a direct command (as in Exod 17:14, 34:27; Jer 36:2, and 28; Rev 1:19), and also partly by means of hidden instigation, He instructed them to record in writing what He revealed to the Church. "For all of Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16); and Peter (2 Pet 1), in dealing with the prophetic writings testifies: "No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

6. From this it is clear how false is the claim of papal teachers that the written Word of God is not necessary for the Church, and that it is less crucial to the existence of the Church than to its well-being; that to the contrary, even the Church can do without Holy Scripture, in the same way that it managed without it before the law was given. They likewise foolishly assert that a great portion of the truth that proceeds from God is preserved nowadays in the Church's own unwritten traditions.

7. For we grant that God even today can gather and defend his Church without Scripture just as He did in former times. However, He did determine that his Word be recorded in writing, and Holy Scripture bears witness in Eph 2:20 that "it is the foundation of our faith." And indeed even Christ himself directed his listeners to the Scriptures of the Old Testament in order there to obtain salvation (Luke 16[16-31], John 5[39, 45-47]). And the apostle John in

chapter 20:31 states that: "These things are written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing we may have eternal life in his name." On these grounds we steadfastly maintain that even today Holy Scripture is altogether necessary, and that the Church cannot exist without it.

8. From this it becomes clear also what is the godless thinking of contemporary Libertines, who call themselves zealous followers of the Spirit. Some of them claim that the literal and genuine sense of Holy Scripture, like a letter that kills [cf. 2 Cor 3:6], is of no use to the Church of the New Testament, and they try to foist on people some fanatic dreams of their own, figments of the imagination in the name of Spirit. But others of them grant that there surely is some use for Scripture in the Church, but only for the first, initial lessons in the Christian faith. However, as soon as those converts have matured, been regenerated, and have reached perfection, then they should progress beyond the elementary principles solely by the instigation of the Spirit, leaving outward Scripture behind, and they must follow his order only, as much in matters of the faith as in conduct.

9. This thinking is false and harmful. Because if Holy Scripture is neglected, then nothing in the Christian religion can be established with certainty, for from outside of it no criterion or guidance could be given to distinguish the divine truth from false influences and erroneous forces, which God as just judge often sends on those who disdain the Gospel. This opinion is false also because the Holy Spirit works salvation in the hearts of people only through the outward Word and Holy Scripture. Whence also Paul calls his ministry the ministry of the Spirit (2 Cor 3, esp. 3:3).

10. The other opinion is equally wrong, and contrary to Holy Scripture. For not only to those who are untrained in the Christian faith, and beginners, but also to those who are more accomplished and have been regenerated, Holy Scripture everywhere commends its own use and necessity, in the Old and the New Testament. This is clear from many passages and instances in Scripture, but especially from the introductions to almost all the apostolic letters. For Paul declares in Rom 1:7, 8 that he is writing to "all who are at Rome, who are loved by God and called to be Saints, whose faith is renowned throughout the world." In 1 Cor 1:2 he writes: "To the sanctified in Christ Jesus, and to all who call on the name of Christ in every place." In chapter 10:15 he writes "to sensible people;" in Phil 3:15 "to those who are mature." He sent letters to Timothy and Titus, who had been discharging the office of evangelist for a

long time already. Peter, in the Second Epistle chapter 1:1, writes to those who “had received a faith as precious as his own.” John in the First Epistle chapter 2:12[–14] writes “to the fathers who have known Him who was from the beginning;” the same: “To the young men who are strong, in whom the word of God dwells, and who have overcome the evil one.” In the same way also the apostle Jude addresses his letter “to the called, the ones sanctified by God the Father, and kept by Jesus Christ” (verse 1).

11. And so, now that the necessity of Scripture has been proved over against the Jesuits and Libertines, we must explain next from where its authority derives, or to say it more clearly, from where we get the conviction that it proceeds from God and is *autopistos* [self-convincing]. We must consider this question, then, over against two kinds of people. First, against pagans, who along with Celsus, Porphyry, Julian, and similar enemies of Christ’s Church, call into question the divine origins of Scripture. And secondly, against the papal teachers who derive its authority from the affirmation of their Church alone.

12. As far as those are concerned who call into question the divinity of the entire Scripture, since they still are devoid of the Spirit of Christ, they cannot be refuted by the witness of the Holy Spirit, which is more effective than all arguments. For, as Christ testifies in John 14:17: “The world does not know that Spirit, nor can it accept Him.” Therefore, we must procure other weapons against them, to restore their spirit little by little to submit to Christ [cf. 2 Cor 10:5] (if perhaps through his Spirit He will enlighten their hearts), or else so that they themselves, convicted in their own stubbornness, may remain self-condemned [cf. Titus 3:11]. We shall summarize those arguments according to the following three kinds.

13. We draw the first kind of argument from those marks and criteria whereby the truth and reliability of any history whatsoever can be and normally is tested. For if the statement holds that sacred history is true and reliable, then by the same token it unavoidably follows that it proceeds from God and is *theopneustos* [God-breathed], because history itself everywhere supplies the fullest evidence of its own divine character.

14. Arrian, in the preface of book 1 about Alexander’s expedition, states that in human history reliable criteria exist to establish the truth. First, if the writers are credible persons. Second, if they themselves participated in the events which they commit to writing. Third, if neither an obligation nor a financial

reward was offered them, to cause them to write something different from what had happened. To these Josephus, in *Against Appian* book 1, adds this also: If all writers wrote the same things about the same subjects.

15. These and whatever other criteria can be produced for historical certainty occur more abundantly and convincingly in sacred history than in any human writings. For some of the holy writers were kings and rulers, while others, of more modest wealth and standing, were renowned for surpassing human wisdom. But all were holy and honest men who did not hide their own failings or those of their people—if there were any—and who won a reputation for holiness and equity not only from among all of their own followers but also from foreigners and enemies. In the same way Flavius Josephus in book 1, *Against Apion*, mentions the Egyptians themselves as witnesses for this fact, as they considered Moses “a man worthy of their respect, and godly.” And Strabo in book 16 of the *Geography* provides this witness about Moses and the early Israelites: They were “promoters of justice and truly devout.” And Josephus himself gives the same testimony about John the Baptist, James the brother of our Lord and Savior. So too Pliny the Younger in the Epistle to the emperor Trajan (*Epistles*, book 10.101) was constrained to testify the same thing about the first Christians who were either contemporaries of the apostles or living shortly thereafter.

16. Also the sacred writers witnessed with their own eyes and ears those things which they preserved in writing; and they recorded them with the awareness of many thousands of people who had seen and heard the same things. Furthermore, through their writings they sought no earthly glory or wealth; to the contrary, they could hope for nothing in this world except suffering, crucifixion, and death. Meanwhile, weapons were not rallied to support but oppose them, and very many of them freely sealed with their own blood the truth they promoted. In fact, all of them with one accord in different places, different times, and different circumstances taught entirely the same things and bequeathed these to those who came after them. Therefore either no human writings at all must be considered as true, or everyone must acknowledge that the sacred accounts are true and reliable—and hence, also divine.

17. This reasoning can convince the mind of an unbeliever; the ones that come next are able even to instill faith, by God’s grace. Thus, the second kind of argument is drawn from the perfect integrity and divine quality of the

religion that these books comprise. For no-one has ever stated that true religion did not proceed from God alone, because it constitutes God's covenant with humanity; for that reason, also the authors of false religions have feigned some divine character. Now as to the fact that the Christian religion alone is the true one of all the religions which till now have been commonly accepted in the world is demonstrated in that it alone displays the marks of true religion, and so is the one that proceeds from God.

18. Now the infallible marks of true religion, as the consciences of human beings prescribe, are these: First, that in it the true God, as creator and ruler of everything, is acknowledged and honoured, as is the case in the Christian religion alone. For paganism, which is the oldest religion after Christianity, worships created beings, indeed even evil spirits as though they were gods. In fact, the Turkish, and today the Jewish religion, besides the fact that their beginnings on earth are recent, even though it boasts about the true God, pollute the knowledge of the true God and his deeds with silly stories and inventions.

19. The second mark of true religion is that only it explains the true ground on which sinful man can be restored to God, and that is to be found in the Christian religion alone. For in it alone one finds the only sacrifice fitting for the atonement of sins, and one sufficient to appease God's anger. On the other hand, in pagan religion atonement is sought vainly in abominable rites (such as of Saturn, Venus, Ceres, Bacchus, etc.); and in the Turkish and Jewish religion nowadays it is sought in meaningless and superstitious rituals, which can clean dirt from the skin and body, but not the heart and conscience.

20. The third mark of the true religion is that in it are prescribed the right and complete duties towards God and the neighbor. This, too, occurs in no religion except the Christian one, in which all of man's inner as well as outward deeds are directed to the honour of God, and all matters weighty and holy are taught. In it we are demanded to love God above all things, and our neighbors—no, even our enemies—as ourselves. But the pagans worship their deities with base gladiatorial games and theatrical plays. The Jews give heed to empty ceremonies and the outer shell of the law only and inflict noticeable violence upon the Old Testament of Holy Scripture. But the heathens and the Turks, besides the superstitious forms of worship whereby they purport to revere God, either teach flawed duties towards other people or they permit horrible misdeeds against them, because their religion allows these, or at least

lets these go entirely unpunished.

21. The third and foremost kind of argument is drawn from the specific marks of divinity which God has willed to stand out in Holy Scripture in a special way. For it is true that in every passage Holy Scripture bears witness to its own divinity to those who have their eyes opened by the Spirit of God. Yet, just as some rays coming from the sun are more brilliant and visible than others, so even in the divine light of Holy Scripture certain very bright rays of divinity come out in different passages that display their author most vividly.

22. First among these marks are the miracles that far surpass every created possibility and first sealed the Word of God in the sight of all peoples, even before the very eyes of those who resisted this teaching with all their might. There are also many instances of miracles in the non-biblical historians, of the kind that Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and other ancient Christian writers demonstrate in their own apologetic writings against the gentiles.

23. Secondly, the content of Holy Scripture clearly shows the same mark of its divine origin; for this we give as examples: the time and order of the creation of the world; the increase of human beings and peoples on earth; the teaching about God the three-in-one; Christ the God-and-man; the resurrection of the body; the final judgment; and similar doctrines, which have not ever entered the minds of any wise man of this age, and so could have been disclosed only by God. Likewise the ten words of the Decalogue, which contain all piety and justice; the six petitions in the Lord's Prayer—each of them necessary for salvation, clearly framed in a divine manner. For this we also cite as examples the sacred prophecies and predictions which preceded the actual events by several hundreds—even thousands—of years. Such pronouncements include especially the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, while the Jewish state still existed; the prophecies about the calling of the gentiles into the fellowship of the Church; the prophecies about the removal of pagan idolatry through the coming of Christ, the release of the Jewish nation from slavery in Egypt and Babylon; about the final destruction of the city [Jerusalem] and of the Jewish people; about the rising of many heresies; about the formation and overturning of the kingdom of the Antichrist, and so on. And finally, we mention the spiritual promises that have been made to believers in Christ, specifically concerning the forgiveness of sins, the peace of the conscience, the circumcision of the heart, the spirit of prayer and sonship, of endurance in the cross; and the like. The true believers feel their impact; the unbelieving,

however, are forced to be astounded by miraculous events of another sort, whether they like it or not, and are forced frequently to undergo the corollary threats of spiritual punishments in their own persons.

24. The form and the goal of Holy Scripture prove the same divine origin. And foremost is the ubiquitous agreement regarding the same divine doctrine, the highest loftiness and effectiveness in the most plain style, the same laws granted to kings and to subjects, the same promises and punishments announced to both groups equally, and that not only by outward deeds, but also by their most private plans and deliberations. And everywhere the goal is the glory of God, the salvation of humanity, mercy towards the meek, and the display of judgments against the obstinate.

25. Add to this the effects that are clearly of divine doing; for wherever the Word of God and Holy Scripture find a place, there the mockeries and spiritual forces of the devil fade away—as we saw happen throughout the known world after Christ’s ascension, while the gentiles marveled and wondered why the demonic oracles disappeared. In our times, too, when Holy Scripture is first taken up in the hands of people, the magic tricks of the devil and all the power he had wielded previously in the shadows of ignorance generally disappeared from sight. To this we should add that so many gentiles who were dwelling in darkness turned to Christ without the force of weapons, only through this spiritual sword and the endurance of the saints; the transformation of so many people who previously had been wrapped up in criminal activities and worldly filth, into models of holiness and justice in all ages and places. Not any other religion has produced any results such as these.

26. Finally there is the evidence of certain accompanying attributes in these books. Among these is the fact that they are from antiquity, by far surpassing the age of all writings of human origin; for the oldest religion is from God, as it must be close to its origin in time. So too for the continuous hostility and efforts of Satan against it, the persecutions and vain attempts by tyrants, indeed even the terrible judgments of God against them, such as the whole world witnessed in the case of Antiochus Epiphanes, Julian the Apostate, and the like.

27. These are the marks whereby the divinity of these books is revealed more clearly than the light of day; which anyone whosoever will find out in fact, who with an honest heart and eager for his own salvation prepares to read and meditate upon them earnestly.

28. And here one ought not to pay heed to Socinus and several other Christians who grant that Holy Scripture is divinely originated in issues of special importance, but that its authors in situations and circumstances of lesser importance were abandoned by the Holy Spirit and could have erred. Because this opinion paves the way for contempt, and expressly contradicts Scripture which testifies that “everything that was written was written for our instruction” (Rom 15:4), and “all Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). Likewise, “no Scripture is of one’s own interpretation” (2 Pet 1:20); indeed, “not even one iota will disappear from the Law” (Matt 5:18). “And it is not permitted for any man to add to or remove from it” (Deut 4[:2], Rev 22[:18–19]).

29. From these arguments that we have explained and proved thus far it is now abundantly clear how wrong the contention of many papal teachers is, that greater authority rests with the Church than with Scripture; and that of others, too, who claim that the authority of Scripture derives from the testimony of the Church alone, at least insofar as it pertains to us.

30. For we admit freely that it is the Church’s duty to guard Holy Scripture, to preserve its integrity with all reverence and care, to vindicate it from people’s corrupting influence, to exhibit and prove its divine quality to others, whence it is called, “the pillar and bulwark of the truth,” by Paul in 1 Tim 3 [:15]. Be that as it may, from this no authority over Scripture should be drawn for the Church, but only service and proclamation, just as the edicts of leading civic officials do not get their authority from the heralds and servants, even though by these men they are made known and published.

31. It is made clear to us that the authority of Holy Scripture is much greater than that of the Church by the fact that the Church is capable of erring while Scripture cannot. Moreover, it is clear that the authority of the Church (whatsoever that may be) is derived from Scripture, just as the papal teachers themselves recognize, since they try to prove their own authority from Scripture. And finally, because the testimony of the Holy Spirit, shared by all of Christ’s true sheep (John 10), as well as those divine marks that present themselves in Holy Scripture, is of much greater authority and weight—even as far as we are concerned—than the mere testimony of the Church, since this testimony of the Church is nothing but human persuasion. But the Holy Spirit, by means of those divine marks in Scripture instills into our souls the divine faith that brings salvation.

32. To be sure, the testimony of the early Church, which was contemporary with or immediately after the prophets and apostles, is much greater and weightier to us than today's. For that Church of long ago, besides the proofs it shares with the contemporary one, heard and saw also additional and unique wonders of the prophetic and apostolic mission. And those are: answers given by means of the Urim and Thummim, miracles, exceptional gifts of the Holy Spirit, extraordinary prophecy and similar acts. Therefore, also the Church of today is and should be accustomed to use the affirmation of that early Church to acknowledge the authority of the divine books. For every instance of proof whereby anything is proved should be more evident and more accepted as valid to us than the conclusion itself.

33. For believers the authority of the sacred books is so far from depending solely, or even mainly, on the testimony of the Church that it in fact does not depend on it at all. For just as a law given by some magistrate is dependent on no-one except those on whom the magistrate depends, so too the divine law can depend on no-one except God himself, who is dependent on no creature. And just as the first principles and immovable norms do not depend on the authority of those who use them, but only on the one who has established them, and on its own light and evidence, so too Holy Scripture, the supernatural principle of all sacred teaching, and the unmoved rule of faith and moral conduct, can depend on nothing but God who has granted it, and on its own light, which He has put into it.

34. Therefore also the prophets and apostles never subjected the authority of the word they preached and recorded to human, let alone angelic authority, but only to God's authority—as is evident everywhere in the prophetic and apostolic preambles and declarations. And for that reason, lastly, Christ and the apostles never pointed their disciples or listeners to the authority of the Church, but either to the Scripture of the Old Testament, or to those signs and truly divine results which are displayed in the hearts of those people whose minds have not been blinded by the god of this age (Gal 3:1–2; 2 Cor 3:[2,]3, 4; 2 Cor 13:5, 6, etc.).