

A REFORMED CATHOLIC

WILLIAM PERKINS



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A landmark work of **Reformed apologetics**, systematically comparing Protestant and Roman Catholic doctrine across twenty-two contested points — from **free will and justification** to the Mass, purgatory, and papal supremacy. Perkins argues that Reformed Christians are the true Catholics, having retained the core of the ancient faith while rejecting Roman corruptions. Each doctrine is examined through areas of agreement, sharp disagreement, biblical reasoning, and rebuttal of Papist objections, making this an essential resource for understanding the theological fault lines of the Reformation era.



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TITLE PAGE



A Reformed Catholic: A Declaration Showing How Near We May Come to the Present Church of Rome in Various Points of Religion, and Wherein We Must Forever Depart from Them; with an Address to All Supporters of the Roman Religion, Showing That the Said Religion Is Against the Catholic Principles and Grounds of the Catechism.

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1598.

TO SIR WILLIAM BOWES: EPISTLE DEDICATORY



Right Worshipful, it is a remarkable strategy of the devil — one he has planted in the minds of many people in this age — to believe that our religion and the religion of the present Church of Rome are essentially the same, and that the two can be reunited as, in their opinion, they once were. Writings promoting this view have spread widely in the French language and have received more respect from English Protestants than is proper or warranted. Let men claim moderation and pretend to seek the peace and good estate of the Catholic Church for as long as they like — this union of the two religions can no more be made than the union of light and darkness. This becomes clear when we consider how the Roman church has torn out the foundation. Though in words they honor Christ, in practice they turn him into a counterfeit Christ — an idol of their own making. They call him our Lord, but with this condition: that the Servant of Servants of this Lord may change and add to his commandments, claiming such great power that he may open and shut heaven to whomever he wishes, and bind the very conscience by his own laws — thereby sharing in the spiritual kingdom of Christ. They also call him a Savior, but only in the sense that he gives us the grace to become

our own saviors by our merits, and when our own merits fall short, we may draw on the merits of the saints. They acknowledge that he died and suffered for us, but with this qualification: that once the fault is pardoned, we must still satisfy for the temporal punishment, either in this world or in purgatory. In short, they make him our Mediator of intercession to God, but alongside that, his mother must be the Queen of heaven who, by a mother's right, commands him there. In word they cry Hosanna, but in deed they crucify Christ. Therefore we have every reason to bless the name of God, who has freed us from the yoke of this Roman bondage and brought us to the true light and liberty of the gospel. It would be the height of ingratitude for us to fail to stand against the present church of Rome and instead yield to schemes of reconciliation. To this end I have written this little treatise, which I present to your Worship as a token of a thankful heart for undeserved kindness. I request not only your Worship's protection — which is the more common thing — but also your learned protection, being fully confident that by skill and knowledge you are able to defend whatever I have truly taught. Wishing to you and yours the continuance and increase of faith and good conscience, I take my leave. Cambridge, June 28, 1597.

Your Worship's in the Lord, William Perkins.

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER



By a Reformed Catholic, I mean anyone who holds the same essential heads of religion as the Roman Church, but who trims away and rejects all the errors in doctrine by which that religion has been corrupted. How this can be done I have begun to lay out in this small treatise, which aims to show how near we may come to the present Church of Rome in various points of religion, and where we must forever disagree.

My purpose in writing this short discourse is threefold. The first is to refute all those politicians who hold and maintain that our religion and that of the Roman Church do not differ in substance, and consequently that they may be reconciled — though I do not here intend to condemn any effort at reconciliation that aims to persuade the Roman church toward our religion. The second is that the papists who think so poorly of our religion may come to have a better regard for it when they see how closely we agree with them on various points. The third is that the ordinary Protestant might in some measure see and understand the points of difference between us and the Church of Rome, and know in what manner and how far we condemn the opinions of that church.

I ask pardon for the order in which I handle the various points. I have set them down one by one as they came to mind, without following any systematic method. If any papist says I have not stated their opinions correctly, I answer that their books are at hand and I can defend what I have said.

Asking your acceptance of this effort, and wishing you an increase of knowledge and love of pure and sound religion, I take my leave and make an end.

DOCTRINE 1



Revelation 18:4: And I heard another voice from heaven say, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues."

In the previous chapter Saint John gives a detailed description of the whore of Babylon, as he saw her in a vision. In the sixteenth verse of that chapter he foretells her destruction, and in the first three verses of this eighteenth chapter he continues to present that destruction even more directly and plainly, going on to give arguments supporting it in all the verses that follow. In this fourth verse a warning is given to all God's people so they may escape the judgment that will fall on the whore, and the words have two parts: a commandment and a reason. The commandment is: Come out of her, my people — that is, out of Babylon. The reason is drawn from the outcome: lest you be partakers, and so on. Regarding the commandment, I will first search out its true meaning and then set down its practical use and the doctrine that flows from it. In Scripture three Babylons are mentioned. The first is Babylon of Assyria, standing on the river Euphrates, where the languages were confused and where the Jews were held in captivity — a Babylon reproached in Scripture for idolatry and other evils. The second Babylon is in Egypt, standing on the river Nile, now called

Cairo; that is the place some think is meant in 1 Peter 5:13, though it is more commonly and equally likely that Babylon of Assyria is meant there. The third Babylon is mystical — the one of which Babylon of Assyria was a type and figure — and that is Rome, which is without question the city meant here. The whore of Babylon, as all the circumstances indicate, is the state or government of a people who are the inhabitants of Rome and belong to it. This can be proved by the Holy Spirit's own interpretation: in the last verse of the seventeenth chapter, the woman who is the whore of Babylon is said to be a city that reigns over the kings of the earth. In the days when Saint John wrote the book of Revelation, there was no city in the world that ruled over the kings of the earth except Rome, which was then the seat where the Emperor exercised his imperial authority. Again, in the seventh verse she is said to sit on a beast having seven heads and ten horns, and the seven heads are seven hills (verse 9) on which the woman sits, as well as seven kings. Therefore by the whore of Babylon is meant a city standing on seven hills. It is well known, not only to learned men in the Church of God but even to the pagans themselves, that Rome alone is the city built on seven distinct hills, called Caelius, Aventinus, Esquilinus, Tarpeius or Capitolinus, Viminalis, Palatinus, and Quirinalis. To help their cause, papists argue that old Rome stood on seven hills but has since spread to the plain of Campus Martius. I answer that although most of the city in terms of population is no longer on seven hills, in terms of government and religious practice it still is — even to this day, certain churches, monasteries, and other places on those hills serve as centers of papal authority. So Rome, considered as a state and government, still stands upon seven hills. And though it has come about that the

harlot in her later days has moved her seat somewhat, in respect of her earlier days when she was first established, she sat upon the seven hills. Others, afraid of having their own heads wounded, labor to reinterpret these words, saying that the whore represents the company of all wicked men throughout the world, with the devil as their head. But this reading is directly against the text: in the second verse of the eighteenth chapter she is contrasted with the kings of the earth with whom she is said to commit fornication, and in the last verse she is called a city standing on seven hills and reigning over the kings of the earth — and therefore she must be a state of men in some particular place. The papists themselves, seeing that this dodge will not serve them, make two Romes: heathen Rome and the Rome over which the Pope presides. The whore spoken of, they say, is heathen Rome, ruled by cruel tyrants like Nero, Domitian, and the rest — and the Rome now headed by the Pope is not meant here. What a vain and foolish distinction: for ecclesiastical Rome in terms of its imperial character, political dominion, and cruelty in persecuting the saints of God, is one and the same as the heathen empire — the bishop's seat having been turned into the emperor's court, as all the histories make plain. But even granting their distinction, by their own admission the whore here must be understood not only as heathen Rome but also as papal or ecclesiastical Rome. For in verse 3 of this chapter the Holy Spirit says plainly that she has made all nations drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and she has committed fornication with the kings of the earth — meaning she has worked to entangle all the nations of the earth in her spiritual idolatry and to bring the kings of the earth to her religion. This cannot be understood of heathen Rome, which left all the kings of the earth to their own re-

ligion and idolatry and did not labor to bring foreign kings to worship their gods. Again, Revelation 18:16 says that the ten horns — which are ten kings — shall hate the whore and make her desolate and naked. This must be understood of papal Rome, not heathen Rome, for whereas in former times all the kings of the earth submitted to the whore, now they have begun to withdraw — the kings of Bohemia, Denmark, Germany, England, Scotland, and other parts. Therefore this distinction is also hollow. They further argue that the whore of Babylon is drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs (Revelation 17:6), shed not in Rome but in Jerusalem, where the Lord was crucified, and where the two prophets are said to lie slain in the streets (Revelation 11:8). But this place is not meant of Jerusalem, as Jerome has fully shown — it may well be understood of Rome. Christ was crucified there in the sense that the authority by which he was crucified came from the Roman empire, or because Christ in his members was and is daily crucified there, though in his own person he was locally crucified at Jerusalem. Thus, despite all these objections, we must understand the whore here as the state and empire of Rome — not so much under the pagan emperors as under its head the Pope. This reading, beyond the authority of the text itself, has the support and defense of ancient and learned men. Bernard says: 'They are the ministers of Christ, but they serve Antichrist.' And: 'The beast spoken of in the Apocalypse, to whom a mouth is given to speak blasphemies and to make war with the saints of God, is now seated in Peter's chair, like a lion ready for its prey.' It will be said that Bernard spoke these latter words of one who came to the papacy by usurpation. That is true — but why was he a usurper? Bernard gives the reason in the same passage: because the Antipope called

Innocentius was chosen by the kings of Germany, France, England, Scotland, Spain, and Jerusalem with the consent of the whole clergy and people in those nations, and the other was not. And thus Bernard delivered his verdict that not only this usurper but all the popes for many years are the beast in the Apocalypse, because now they are chosen only by the college of cardinals. This agrees with the decree of Pope Nicholas the Second in the year 1059, that the pope shall hereafter be created by the votes of the cardinal bishops of Rome with the consent of the rest of the clergy and people, and the emperor himself — and all popes are excommunicated and accursed as antichrists who enter otherwise, as all now do. Joachim Abbas says: 'Antichrist was long since born in Rome and shall yet be advanced higher in the Apostolic See.' Petrarch says: 'Once Rome, now Babylon.' And Irenaeus in book 5, last chapter, said before all of these that Antichrist would be Latinus — a Roman.

Further, this commandment is not to be understood so much as a bodily departure in terms of physical presence, but as a spiritual separation in terms of faith and religion. The Holy Spirit's meaning is that people must depart from the Roman Church in their judgment and doctrine, in their faith and in the worship of God.

We see then that the words contain a commandment from God, directing His Church and people to make a separation from Babylon. From this I observe that all who wish to be saved must depart and separate themselves from the faith and religion of the present Church of Rome. Those who are charged with schism for separating in this manner are not in fact schismatics, because they have God's own commandment as their warrant. The party in

whom the cause of this separation lies is the true schismatic — and that is the Church of Rome, with its cup of abomination in the whore's hand, which is its heretical and schismatical religion.

Now regarding this duty of separation, I intend to speak at length — not so much to prove it, since the text makes it plain, but to show the manner and measure of making this separation. I will address two things. First, how far we may join with them in matters of religion; second, how far and in what ways we must disagree and depart from them. For this reason I will select certain points of religion and speak of them in as orderly a way as I can, showing in each case our agreement and our difference — the more so because some press hard on the point that a union of our two religions may be made, and that we differ not in substance but only in circumstantial matters.

The first point with which I will begin is the point of free will, though it is not the most important.

1. OUR CONSENT.

Free will, as understood by both them and us, is a combined power in the mind and will of man by which, discerning what is good and what is evil, he chooses or refuses accordingly.

Conclusion 1. Man must be considered in a fourfold condition: as he was created, as he was corrupted, as he is renewed, and as he shall be glorified. In the first condition we ascribe to man's will a freedom of nature by which he could will or refuse either good or evil; in the third, a freedom of grace; in the last, a freedom of glory. All the uncertainty concerns the second condition — and yet even there we agree, as the conclusions that follow will show.

Conclusion 2. The matters with which free will is chiefly concerned are human actions, which are of three kinds: natural, human, and spiritual. Natural actions are those shared with animals, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and moving from place to place. In all of these we agree with the papists and hold that man has free will, and that even since the fall of Adam he performs any of these actions or similar ones freely by a natural power of the mind.

Conclusion 3. Human actions are those common to all people, good and bad alike — such as speaking and using reason, practicing all mechanical and liberal arts, and carrying out outward civil and ecclesiastical duties: attending church, speaking, preaching the word, reaching out a hand to receive the sacrament, and lending the ear to listen outwardly to what is taught. To this category we may also add the outward practice of civil virtues such as justice, temperance, gentleness, and generosity. Here too we agree with the Church of Rome, and say — as experience confirms — that people have a natural freedom of will to perform or not perform these actions. Paul says in Romans 2:14 that the Gentiles who do not have the law do the things of the law by nature — that is, by natural strength. He also says of himself that before his conversion he was blameless with regard to the righteousness of the law (Philippians 3:6). For this outward obedience, natural people receive reward in temporal things (Matthew 6:5; Ezekiel 29:19). Yet certain qualifications must be remembered here: first, that in human actions man's will is weak and feeble and his understanding dim and dark, and he therefore often fails in them. In all such actions I understand with Augustine that the will of man is only wounded or half dead. Second, the will of man is under the will of

God and must therefore be directed by it — as Jeremiah says: 'O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man to walk and direct his own steps' (Jeremiah 10:23).

Conclusion 4. The third kind of actions are spiritual, bearing more directly on the heart and conscience, and these are of two sorts: those that concern the kingdom of darkness, and those that concern the kingdom of God. Those that concern the kingdom of darkness are sins in the proper sense, and here too we agree with the papists, holding that in sins or evil actions man has freedom of will. Some might say we sin necessarily, because one who sins cannot but sin, and that free will and necessity cannot coexist. It is true that the necessity of compulsion and free will cannot agree — but there is another kind of necessity that can coexist with freedom of will, for some things may be done both necessarily and freely. A man in close prison must stay there and cannot walk wherever he wishes, yet he can move freely and walk within the prison. In the same way, though man's will is naturally chained by the bonds of sin and therefore cannot but sin — sinning necessarily — it still sins freely.

Conclusion 5. The second kind of spiritual actions — those concerning the kingdom of God — include repentance, faith, the conversion of a sinner, new obedience, and the like. Here too we partly agree with the Church of Rome, holding that in the first conversion of a sinner, man's free will works together with God's grace as a fellow worker in some sense. Three things are required in the conversion of a sinner: the word, God's Spirit, and man's will. Man's will is not entirely passive in every respect — it has an active role in the first conversion and change of the soul. When any person is converted, God does not accomplish this work by compulsion;

rather, the person is converted willingly, and at the very moment of conversion, by God's grace he wills his own conversion. To this end Augustine said: 'He who made you without you will not save you without you.' Again, it is certain that our will is required for us to do any good thing well — but we do not have this from our own power; God works in us to will. At whatever moment God gives grace, He at the same time gives the will to desire and receive that grace. For example, when God works faith, He at the same time works upon the will, causing it to desire faith and willingly receive the gift of believing. God makes an unwilling will into a willing will, because no one can receive grace entirely against his will — for a will that is forced is no will at all. Yet here we must remember: although in terms of time the working of grace by God's Spirit and the willing of it in man go together, in terms of order, grace is worked first. Man's will must first be acted on and moved by grace, and then it also acts, wills, and moves itself. This is the final point of agreement between us and the Roman Church on the subject of free will — and we must not go further with them.

2. THE DISAGREEMENT OR DIFFERENCE.

The point of difference concerns the cause of the freedom of man's will in spiritual matters related to the kingdom of God. The papists say man's will works together with God's grace in the first conversion of a sinner by its own natural power, merely assisted by the Holy Spirit. We say that man's will works with grace in the first conversion, but not by itself — only by grace. Put another way: they say the will has a natural cooperation; we deny this and say it has cooperation only by grace. In itself it is not active but passive — willing good only as it is moved by grace, and must first be acted

on and moved before it can act or will. To make the difference clearer, I will use an analogy. Both the Church of Rome and we describe the condition of a sinner by the image of a prisoner — but mark the difference. They imagine the prisoner lying bound hand and foot with chains and fetters, and also sick and weak, yet not wholly dead but still living in part. They also suppose that though he lies in this condition and does not stir himself to seek help, he has the ability and power to stir. So when the jailer comes and removes his chains and shackles and helps him up, he can and will, by his own power, stand and walk and go out of prison. Even so, they say, a sinner is bound hand and foot by the chain of his sins, and yet he is not dead but only sick — like the wounded man on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem. Therefore, he does not will and desire what is good; but if the Holy Spirit comes and simply unties his bonds and reaches out a hand of grace, then the sinner can stand by himself and will his own salvation or anything else that is good. We likewise grant that a prisoner fittingly represents a natural person — but the prisoner must be not merely sick and weak, but completely dead. He cannot stir though the jailer unties his chains, nor hear though the jailer sounds a trumpet in his ear. If the jailer wants him to move and stir, he must give him not only a helping hand but soul and life itself. Such is every person by nature: not only chained and fettered in sins, but completely dead in them — like one who lies rotting in the grave, with no ability or power to move or stir. Therefore he cannot so much as desire or do anything truly good by himself — God must first come and put a new soul into him, even the Spirit of grace to quicken and revive him. Then, being revived, the will begins to will good

things at the very same moment when God by His Spirit first infuses grace. This is the true difference between us and the Church of Rome on the point of free will.

3. OUR REASONS.

To confirm our doctrine — that a man does not will his own conversion by nature, either in whole or in part, but entirely and only by grace — the following arguments may be used. The first argument is drawn from the nature and extent of human corruption, which has two parts. The first part is the absence of the original righteousness that was in man at creation; the second is a deep tendency and inclination toward evil and away from anything truly good. This is clear from Genesis 8:21, where the Lord says: 'The intent of man's heart is evil from his youth' — meaning that the dispositions of the understanding, will, and affections, and everything the heart of man devises or imagines, are entirely evil. Paul adds in Romans 8:5 that 'the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God.' These words carry great weight: the word translated 'mind' refers to the best thoughts, the best desires, affections, and efforts found in any natural person — even those that come closest to true holiness — and these are not merely contrary to God but are enmity itself against Him. From this I conclude that the heart itself — the will and mind from which these desires and thoughts arise — is also in a state of enmity with God. For the nature of any action reflects the nature of the faculty that produces it; the nature of fruit reflects the nature of the tree; the nature of branches reflects the nature of the roots. Both of these passages make clear that in human beings there is not only a loss and absence of original righteousness, but also a natural tendency toward evil — an inclination

not toward just a few sins, but toward every sin without exception, not even excluding the sin against the Holy Spirit. From this I reason as follows.

- If every person by nature both lacks original righteousness and is prone to all evil, then he lacks natural free will to choose what is truly good. - But every person by nature lacks original righteousness and is prone to all evil. - Therefore, every person by nature lacks free will to will what is good.

Reason 2. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul says: 'A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.' In these words Paul establishes three points: first, that a natural person does not even think about the things revealed in the Gospel; second, that even when a person hears and mentally grasps them, he cannot consent to them or approve them by natural judgment — on the contrary, he considers them foolishness; third, that no one can assent to the things of God unless he is enlightened by the Spirit of God. From this I reason as follows.

- If a person by nature neither knows nor perceives the things of God, and even when he does know them cannot by nature give assent to them, then he has no power to will them. - But the first is clearly true. Therefore the conclusion follows. - For the mind must approve and give assent before the will can choose or will; and when the mind has no power to understand or assent, the will has no power to will.

Reason 3. The Holy Spirit affirms in Ephesians 2 and Colossians 2:13 that all people by nature are dead in sins and trespasses — not, as the papists say, merely weak, sick, or half dead.

From this I conclude that human beings lack not just the capacity to will simply, but the capacity to will freely and genuinely what is truly good. A dead man in his grave cannot move the slightest finger, because he lacks the very power of life, sensation, and movement; in the same way, the person who is dead in sin cannot will the smallest good — indeed, if he could will or do any good at all, he could not be said to be dead in sin. And just as a dead man in the grave cannot rise except by the power of God, so the person dead in sin cannot rise except by the power of God's grace alone, without any power of his own.

Reason 4. In the conversion and salvation of a sinner, Scripture ascribes everything to God and nothing to man's free will. John 3:3 says: 'Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Ephesians 2:10 says: 'We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.' And Ephesians 4:24 says the new man is created in the image of God. To be born again is a work no less significant than our first creation, and therefore it must be ascribed entirely to God, just as our creation is. Paul does tell the Philippians in Philippians 2:12-13 to work out their salvation with fear and trembling — but he does not mean to credit them with a natural power to do good. In the very next verse he adds that it is God who works both the willing and the doing — directly excluding all natural free will in spiritual matters — while at the same time acknowledging that man's will does play a role in doing what is good, not by nature but by grace. When God gives a person the power to will good things, he can will them; and when God gives him the power to do good, he can and does do it. Although there is no natural cooperation of man's will with God's Spirit in conversion, there is a supernatural cooperation by grace

that enables a person, at the moment of conversion, to will his own conversion. This is what Paul means in 1 Corinthians 15:10 when he says 'I have labored' — but then immediately qualifies it by adding 'yet not I,' meaning not by anything in himself, but by God's grace working in him, enabling his will to do the good he does.

Reason 5. The testimony of the ancient Church. Augustine wrote: 'The will of the regenerate is kindled only by the Holy Spirit, so that they are able because they will in this way, and they will in this way because God works in them to will.' He also wrote: 'By the greatness of our sin we have lost our free will to love God.' In his second sermon on the words of the Apostle he says: 'When man was created, he received great strength in his free will; but by sinning he lost it.' Fulgentius wrote: 'God freely gives grace to the unworthy, by which the wicked man, being justified, is enlightened with the gift of a good will and the ability to do good — so that through mercy going before him he may begin to will well, and through mercy following after he may do the good he wills.' Bernard said: 'It is entirely the grace of God that we are created, healed, and saved.' The Second Council of Orange, chapter 6, declared: 'To believe and to will is given from above by the infusion and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.' More testimonies and arguments could be brought to prove this conclusion, but these are sufficient. Now let us examine the objections raised on the other side.

3. OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

Objection 1. Their first argument is that a person can by nature do what is good, and therefore can will what is good — since no one can do what he neither wills nor thinks to do; he must first will it

and then do it. They claim that people can do good by nature: giving alms, speaking the truth, doing justice, and practicing other duties of civil virtue — and therefore can will what is good. My answer is that a natural person may do good works as far as the outward act itself is concerned, but not with respect to the quality or manner in which they are done. These are two different things. A person without supernatural grace may give alms, do justice, speak the truth, and so on — things which are good in themselves as God has commanded — but he cannot do them well. To think good things and to do good things can be natural acts; but to think good things in the right way and to do them well, in a manner God can accept, are works of grace. Therefore a good deed done by a natural person is, from the perspective of the doer, a sin — because it lacks both the right starting point (a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith) and the right aim (the glory of God).

Objection 2. God has commanded all people to believe and repent; therefore they must have natural free will by which, aided by the Spirit of God, they can believe and repent. Answer: This reasoning does not hold. When God issues such commands, He does not show what people are able to do on their own, but rather what they ought to do — and what they cannot do by themselves. Furthermore, the argument is not well formed. It should rather be stated this way: because God commands people to repent and believe, they therefore have the power to repent and believe, either by nature or by grace. And stated that way, we agree. When God commands people in the Gospel to repent and believe, He simultaneously enables them by His grace both to desire to believe and repent, and actually to do so.

Objection 3. If a person has no free will to sin or not to sin, then no one should be punished for his sins, since he sins out of an unavoidable necessity. Answer: This reasoning does not hold. Even though a person cannot but sin, the fault still lies within himself, and therefore he is to be punished. It is like a bankrupt debtor who is not released from his debts simply because he cannot pay them; the claims against him remain valid because the debt arose through his own fault.

POINT 2: OF ORIGINAL SIN



The next point to address is original sin after baptism — specifically, how much of it remains after baptism. This deserves careful consideration, because many points of Catholic teaching depend on it.

1. OUR CONSENT.

Conclusion 1. Both they and we say that natural corruption is abolished after baptism — but let us examine how far it is abolished. Original sin has three elements: first, the punishment, which is both physical and spiritual death; second, guilt, which is the creature's liability to punishment; third, the offense against God, under which I include both our guilt in Adam's first sin and the corruption of the heart — that is, a natural inclination and tendency toward everything evil and contrary to God's law. Regarding the first element, we say that after baptism the punishment of original sin is removed from the regenerate. As Paul says in Romans 8:1: 'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.' Regarding the second element — guilt — we further agree that it too is removed in those who are born again, since if there is no condemnation, nothing remains to bind them to pun-

ishment. However, this important qualification must be kept in mind: the guilt is removed from the regenerate person, not from the sin that still exists within that person — but more on this later. Third, the guilt of Adam's first offense is pardoned. Regarding the corruption of the heart, I affirm two things: first, the very power and strength by which it reigns in a person is taken away in the regenerate; second, this corruption is abolished — as is the fault of every actual past sin — in the sense that it is the fault and sin of the person in whom it resides. It remains until death, and it is still sin in itself for as long as it remains, but it is not counted against the person — and in that respect it is treated as though it were not there, having been forgiven.

2. THE DISSENT OR DIFFERENCE.

This is the extent of our agreement with the Church of Rome. The difference between us lies not in whether original sin is abolished, but in the manner and measure of that abolishment.

Papists teach that original sin is so thoroughly removed after baptism that it ceases to be sin in the proper sense — that it becomes nothing more than a deficiency, weakness, and readiness to conceive sin: much like tinder, which is not itself fire, but is very apt to catch fire. The Church of Rome denies that it is sin in the proper sense in order to uphold certain of their key positions — namely, that a person in this life can fully obey God's law, perform good works entirely free from sin, and stand righteous before God's judgment seat on the basis of those works.

We teach differently. Although original sin is taken away in the regenerate, and in several respects, it nevertheless remains in them after baptism — not merely as a deficiency and weakness, but as sin in the proper sense. This can be shown by the following arguments.

Reason 1. In Romans 7:17, Paul says plainly: 'It is no longer I who do it, but sin which dwells in me' — that is, original sin. The papists respond that it is called sin only in an improper sense, because it comes from sin and provides occasion for sin. But the context of the passage shows that it is sin in the proper sense: in the verses that follow, Paul says that this sin dwelling in him caused him to do the evil he hated. And in verse 24 he cries out: 'Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?' From this I reason as follows.

Whatever was once properly sin, and while still remaining in a person causes him to sin, entangles him in the punishment of sin, and makes him miserable — that is properly sin.

But original sin does all of these things. Therefore it is properly sin.

Reason 2. Baptized and regenerate infants die bodily before they reach the age of reason — therefore original sin in them is sin in the proper sense, or else they would not die, having nothing in them to cause death. For death is the wages of sin, as Paul says in Romans 6:23, and in Romans 5:12 he says that death entered the world through sin. As for actual sins, infants who die immediately after birth before ever exercising reason or will have committed none.

Reason 3. Whatever lusts against the Spirit, and by lusting tempts, and in tempting draws the heart toward sin, is by its very nature sin. But in the regenerate, sinful desire lusts against the Spirit (Galatians 5:17) and tempts, as James 1:14 says: 'Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust; then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin.' Therefore sinful desire is properly sin — as the fruit is, so is the tree. Augustine wrote: 'The sinful desire against which the Spirit fights is sin, because in it there is disobedience against the rule of the mind; it is the punishment of sin, because it befalls man as a consequence of his disobedience; and it is the cause of sin.'

Reason 5. The testimony of the ancient Church. Augustine wrote in Epistle 29: 'In some people love is greater, in some less, in some absent altogether. The highest degree, which cannot be increased further, is found in no one as long as he lives on earth.' As long as love can still be increased, whatever falls short of what it should be is a fault. And because of this fault, no just person on earth does good and does not also sin; because of this fault, no living person will be justified before God; because of this fault, if we say we have no sin, there is no truth in us; because of this fault, no matter how much we grow, we must still pray 'forgive us our debts' — even though all our words, deeds, and thoughts have already been forgiven in baptism. Augustine does in some places seem to deny that sinful desire is sin after baptism — but his meaning is that sinful desire in the regenerate is not counted as the sin of the person in whom it exists. He explains himself this way: 'This is what it means to not have sin — to not be guilty of sin.' He also says: 'The law of sin in baptism is remitted, not ended.' And again: 'Do not let sin reign' — he does not say 'do not let sin exist,' but 'do

not let it reign.' For as long as you live, sin will of necessity be present in your members — at least make sure it does not reign over you.

OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

The Church of Rome offers the following arguments against our position. Objection 1: In baptism people receive complete and absolute pardon of sin. Since the pardoned sin is entirely removed, original sin after baptism ceases to be sin. Answer: Sin is abolished in two distinct ways. The first is with respect to its being counted against the person; the second is with respect to its very existence. For this reason, God grants two blessings to a person in baptism: the forgiveness of sin and the mortification of sin. Forgiveness abolishes sin entirely with respect to its being charged against the person, but not with respect to its existence. Mortification goes further and abolishes the sinful desire and corruption itself — in all the faculties of body and soul — with respect to its very existence. Because mortification is not completed until death, original corruption remains until death, even though it is no longer counted against the person.

Objection 2: Every sin is voluntary; but original sin in no person after baptism is voluntary; therefore it is not sin. Answer: That principle is a rule of civil law governing human courts, and it applies only to actions done by one person against another. It does not apply to the court of conscience, which God holds in human hearts, where every failure to conform to His law is counted as sin. Second, original sin was voluntary in our first parent Adam — for he sinned and brought this misery upon us willingly, even though

in us it comes about differently, for just reasons. In Adam, actual sin came first and original corruption followed; but in us, original corruption is first and actual sin follows from it.

Objection 3: When the form of something is removed, the thing itself ceases to exist. After baptism, in the regenerate, the form of original sin — that is, the guilt — is completely removed; therefore sin ceases to be sin. Answer: Guilt, or the liability to punishment, is not the form of original corruption — it is, as we say in the schools, an accident or necessary companion of it. The true form of original sin is the deficiency and deprivation of what the law requires of us — in our mind, will, and affections, and in all the faculties of soul and body. They press the argument further, saying: where guilt and punishment are removed, no fault remains; after baptism guilt and punishment are removed; therefore, even if original corruption remains, it is not a fault that makes us guilty before God — it is only a weakness. Answer: Guilt is both removed and not removed. It is removed from the regenerate person, who does not stand guilty for either original or actual sin. But guilt is not removed from the sin itself. Put another way: there are two kinds of guilt — actual and potential. Actual guilt is what makes a person stand condemned before God, and this is removed in the regenerate. Potential guilt is the capacity of sin to make a person stand condemned if he sins — and this is not removed. Therefore sin remains sin. Augustine speaks to this effect: 'We say that the guilt of sinful desire — not the guilt belonging to it as a thing (for a thing cannot be guilty) but the guilt by which it made man guilty from the beginning — is pardoned, and that the thing itself is evil, so much so that the regenerate desire to be healed of this plague.'

Objection 4: Finally, they accuse us of teaching that original sin after baptism is merely trimmed or cut back — like the hair of a man's head, whose roots remain in the skin and keep growing after being cut. Answer: Our doctrine is being misrepresented. When something is merely trimmed — as when hair is cut or a tree is pruned — the root remains untouched and continues to grow as before. But that is not what we teach about the mortification of original sin after baptism. We hold that in the very first moment of a sinner's conversion, sin receives its deathblow at the root — from which it never recovers.

POINT 3: OF CERTAINTY OF SALVATION



1. OUR CONSENT.

Conclusion 1. We hold and believe that a person in this life can be certain of his salvation — and the Church of Rome teaches and holds the same.

Conclusion 2. We hold and believe that a person should place a firm confidence in God's mercy in Christ for the salvation of his soul — and the Church of Rome commonly agrees with this as well. This point is not where the difference between us lies.

Conclusion 3. We hold that assurance of salvation in the heart coexists with doubt — that no one is so assured of his salvation that he never doubts, especially in times of temptation. The papists agree with us on this, and we with them.

Conclusion 4. They go further and say that a person may be certain of the salvation of other people, or of the Church, by the Catholic faith — and so do we.

Conclusion 5. They also hold that a person may be assured of his own salvation through extraordinary revelation, as Abraham and others were — and so do we.

6. They teach that we may be certain of our salvation by special faith with respect to God who makes the promise — even though we cannot be certain with respect to ourselves and our own inadequacy. On this former point they agree with us.

2. THE DISSENT OR DIFFERENCE.

The main point of difference lies in the manner of this assurance.

Conclusion 1. We hold that a person may be certain of his salvation in his own conscience, even in this life, through ordinary and special faith. They hold that a person is certain of his salvation only through hope. Both sides affirm a certainty — we ground ours in faith, they ground theirs in hope.

Conclusion 2. Furthermore, we hold and affirm that our certainty through true faith is infallible. They say their certainty is only probable.

Conclusion 3. Though both sides say we have confidence in God's mercy in Christ for our salvation, we differ in how we arrive at it. Our confidence comes from certain, ordinary faith; theirs comes from hope, which they say provides only a conjectural certainty.

That covers the differences. Now let us look at the arguments on both sides.

3. OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

Objection 1. Where there is no word, there is no faith — for the two go together. There is no word of God saying 'Cornelius, believe' or 'Peter, believe' or 'you will be saved.' Therefore there is no such or-

dinary faith by which a person can believe in his own particular salvation. Answer: The premise is false unless it is qualified as follows: where there is no word of promise, nor anything that serves the same function as a particular promise, there is no faith. They say there is no such particular word. It is true that God does not speak to individuals saying, 'Believe and you will be saved.' But He does something equivalent: He gives a general promise with a command to apply it, and He has appointed the ministry of the word to apply that promise to each hearer personally, in His own name. That amounts to the same thing as the Lord speaking directly to each person. To put it plainly: in Scripture the promises of salvation are stated in general terms — not 'if John believes he will be saved' or 'if Peter believes he will be saved,' but 'whoever believes will be saved.' Then the minister of the word, standing in the place of God and in the place of Christ Himself, takes these general gospel promises and applies them to each individual. This is effectively the same as if Christ Himself were to say, 'Cornelius, believe and you will be saved; Peter, believe and you will be saved.' The reply may be made that this application of the Gospel is conditional on a person's faith and repentance, and that people can be mistaken about their own faith and repentance — and therefore fail in applying the word to themselves. Answer: That is true for all hypocrites, heretics, and unrepentant people — they apply the promise on the basis of fleshly presumption, not faith. But it is true for all the elect who have the Spirit of grace and prayer. When God, in the ministry of the word, says 'Seek My face,' the hearts of God's children truly respond: 'O Lord, I will seek Your face' (Psalm 27:8). And when God says 'You are My people,' they respond: 'The Lord is my God' (Zechariah 13:6). It is a truth of God that the person

who believes knows that he believes, and the person who truly repents knows that he repents — except perhaps at the very beginning of conversion or in times of distress and temptation. Otherwise, what gratitude could there be for grace received?

Objection 2. Belief in one's own salvation is not an article of the Creed, and therefore no one is bound to it. Answer: This argument shows that even the leading figures of the Church of Rome do not understand the Creed — for in what is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, every article carries within it this particular faith. The first article, 'I believe in God,' contains three things: first, to believe that there is a God; second, to believe that this same God is my God; third, to place my confidence in Him for my salvation. The other articles concerning God carry the same meaning. When Thomas said in John 20:28-29, 'My Lord and my God,' Christ answered, 'You have believed, Thomas.' Here we see that to believe in God is to believe that God is our God. And Psalm 78:22 shows that believing in God and trusting in Him are the same: 'They did not believe in God and did not trust in His salvation.' The articles concerning the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life also include, and we acknowledge in them, our personal faith in our own salvation. To believe this or that is to believe both that the thing exists and that it belongs to me — as when David said in Psalm 27:13: 'I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' The reply may be made that in those articles we only profess to believe that forgiveness of sins and everlasting life are granted to the people and Church of God. Answer: That is how many interpret them, but it does not hold up to common sense. If that were all the faith confessed there, the devil would have as good a faith as we do. He

knows and believes that there is a God, and that this God grants forgiveness of sins and everlasting life to His Church. But for us, as God's children, to have a faith that goes beyond that of the devils in hell, we must further believe that forgiveness of sins and everlasting life belong to us personally. Unless we apply those articles to ourselves individually, we will differ little from the devil in our confession of faith.

Objection 3. We are taught to pray daily for the pardon of our sins (Matthew 6:12) — and this would be unnecessary if we could be assured of pardon in this life. Answer: That fourth petition should be understood as referring not so much to our old sins already confessed, as to our present and new sins — for as we go forward day by day, we add sin to sin, and for the pardon of these we must humble ourselves and pray. I also answer that we pray for the pardon of our sins not because we have no assurance of it, but because our assurance is weak and small. We grow in grace in Christ step by step, just as children grow into adulthood gradually. The heart of every believer is like a vessel with a narrow opening: cast into the sea, it is not filled all at once, but receives water drop by drop because of the small passage. God gives us in Christ a whole sea of mercy — but on our side, it is received only little by little as faith grows from one stage to the next. This is why people who already have assurance continue to pray for more.

OUR REASONS TO THE CONTRARY.

Reason 1. The first argument is drawn from the nature of faith. True faith is both an infallible assurance and a particular assurance of the forgiveness of sins and of everlasting life. Therefore, through this faith, a person may be certainly and particularly as-

sured of the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. To establish this argument, two things must be proved: first, that true faith is a certain assurance of God's mercy to the person who holds it; second, that faith is a particular -- not merely general -- assurance of it. For the first point, that faith is a certain assurance: in Matthew 14:31 Christ says to Peter, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" He sets faith and doubting in direct opposition, making clear that certainty and assurance are part of the very nature of faith. In Romans 4:20-22 Paul says of Abraham that he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Note two things: first, doubting is the fruit of unbelief -- therefore infallible certainty, being the opposite of doubting, must proceed from true faith, since opposite effects come from opposite causes. Second, the strength of Abraham's faith consisted in fullness of assurance -- the text says he was strengthened in faith by being fully assured. Hebrews 11:1 further says that true saving faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Faith cannot be the ground or evidence of things unless by its very nature it is certainty itself. So the first point is established. The second point -- that saving faith is a particular assurance -- is proved by the fact that faith's defining characteristic is to receive and apply the promise, and the thing promised: Christ with all His benefits. John 1:12 says: "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." Here, believing in Christ and receiving Christ are treated as the same thing. To receive Christ is to take hold of Him and apply Him, with all His benefits, to oneself -- as He is offered in the promises of the Gospel. In John chapter 6, Christ first

presents Himself not only as a Redeemer in general, but as the bread of life and the water of life. He then describes His best hearers as those who eat His body and drink His blood. His point is that eating His body, drinking His blood, and believing in Him are all one and the same. If Christ is like food, and if eating and drinking His body and blood is what it means to believe in Him, then there must be a correspondence between eating and believing. Just as there can be no eating without taking and receiving food, so there can be no believing in Christ without spiritually receiving and apprehending Him. Just as the body has a hand, mouth, and stomach to take, receive, and digest food for the nourishment of every part -- so in the soul there is a faith that acts as hand, mouth, and stomach to apprehend, receive, and apply Christ and all His merits for the nourishment of the soul. And Paul says even more plainly that through faith we receive the promise of the Spirit (Galatians 3:14).

Now, this property of apprehending and applying Christ belongs to faith alone -- it does not belong to hope, love, confidence, or any other gift or grace of God. We must first apprehend Christ by faith and apply Him to ourselves before we can have any hope or confidence in Him. This applying appears to be not an act of the will's affections, but a supernatural act of the mind -- acknowledging, settling, and believing that forgiveness of sins and everlasting life through the merit of Christ belong to us personally. Augustine agrees with this (Tract 25 on John): "Why do you prepare teeth and stomach? Believe and you have eaten." And again (Tract 50): "How shall I reach my hand into heaven to take hold of Him sitting there? Send up your faith and you lay hold of Him." Bernard says (Homily on Canticles 76): "Where He is you cannot now come; yet

go to follow Him and seek Him -- believe, and you have found Him, for to believe is to find." Chrysostom says in his Homily 10 on Mark: "Let us believe and we see Jesus present before us." Ambrose writes in book 6, chapter 8 of his commentary on Luke: "By faith Christ is touched; by faith Christ is seen." Tertullian, on the resurrection of the flesh, says that Christ "must be chewed by understanding and digested by faith."

Reason 2. Whatever the Holy Spirit testifies to us, we may -- and indeed must -- certainly believe by faith. The Holy Spirit does particularly testify to us our adoption, the forgiveness of our sins, and the salvation of our souls. Therefore we may and must particularly and certainly believe these things by faith. The first part of this argument is true and cannot be denied. The second part is proved as follows. Paul says in Romans 8:15: "You have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" He then adds that the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. Here Paul presents two witnesses of our adoption: the Spirit of God, and our own spirits -- that is, the conscience sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The papists try to avoid this argument by saying that the Spirit of God witnesses our adoption through certain feelings of God's love and favor that are weak and often deceptive. But with respect, the testimony of the Spirit is more than a bare sense or feeling of God's grace. It is called the pledge and guarantee of the Spirit in our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:21), and it is therefore fitted to remove all occasion for doubt about our salvation -- just as earnest money in a transac-

tion is given between the parties to put the matter beyond question. Bernard says that the testimony of the Spirit is a most sure testimony (Epistle 107).

Reason 3. Whatever God commands us to pray for, we must also believe. Every person is commanded to pray for the pardon of his own sins and for everlasting life — that is not in dispute. Therefore he is bound to believe the same. The premise is the most questionable part, but it is proved as follows. Every petition must contain two things: a desire for what is asked, and a particular faith that the thing asked will be given. Christ says in Mark 11:24: 'All things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.' John also points to this particular faith, calling it 'the confidence that we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us' (1 John 5:14). It follows, then, that every petition requires two foundations: a commandment to warrant the petition, and a promise to assure us that it will be fulfilled. And from both of these it necessarily follows that we must apply the things we pray for to ourselves personally.

Reason 4. Whatever God commands in the Gospel, a person must and can perform. God commands us in the Gospel to believe the pardon of our own sins and everlasting life. Therefore we must so believe and may be assured of these things. This argument rests on the distinction between the commandments of the law and those of the Gospel. The commandments of the law show us what we must do but give us no power to do it. The doctrine and commandments of the Gospel work differently — they are called 'spirit and life' because God gives the grace needed to perform what He prescribes alongside the commandment itself. To believe the for-

giveness of sins is a commandment of the Gospel — for the substance of Christ's ministry was 'repent and believe the Gospel.' And this is not merely to believe in general that Christ is a Savior and that the promises in Him are true, for even the devils believe that much and tremble. Rather, it is to believe particularly that Christ is my Savior and that the promises of salvation in Christ belong specifically to me. John says: 'This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of Jesus Christ.' To believe in Christ is to place confidence in Him — and no one can do that unless he is first assured of Christ's love and favor toward him. Therefore, since we are commanded to place our confidence in Christ, we are also commanded to believe our reconciliation with Him — which consists in the forgiveness of our sins and our acceptance to everlasting life.

Reason 5. Even the papists teach that a person may be assured of his salvation through hope — and from this it follows that he may be infallibly assured of it. For true and living hope never makes a person ashamed (Romans 5:5). And true hope follows faith and always presupposes certainty of faith. No one can truly hope for his salvation unless he is, by faith, at least to some degree certainly assured of it.

Catholic scholars raise objections to these arguments as follows. First, they say it cannot be proved that a person is as certain of his salvation by faith as he is of the articles of the Creed. Answer: First, these arguments show that we ought to be as certain of the one as of the other — for we have the same kind of commandment to believe the pardon of our sins as we have to believe the articles of faith, as I have shown. Second, these arguments prove that it is the very nature of faith to assure a person of his salvation as certainly as it assures him of the articles he believes. And

while most people in practice do not believe their own salvation as firmly as they believe their articles of faith, some particular individuals do — having God's word applied by the Spirit as a sure ground of faith, by which they believe their own salvation just as securely as they believe the articles. Abraham was certainly assured of his own salvation in this way — as were the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs of God in every age, who willingly laid down their lives for the name of Christ without doubting, being assured of receiving eternal happiness in Him. There is no question that many people today, through long and repeated experience of God's mercy and through the inward witness of the Holy Spirit, have attained to a full assurance of their salvation.

Exception 2. Even if a person may be assured of his present state, no one can be certain of persevering to the end. Answer: The opposite is true. In the sixth petition — 'lead us not into temptation' — we pray that God would not allow us to be wholly overcome by the devil in any temptation. This petition has a corresponding promise in 1 Corinthians 10: that God will, with every temptation, provide a way of escape. Therefore, though the devil may harass, trouble, and wound the servants of God, he will never be able to overcome them entirely. Furthermore, whoever is once a member of Christ can never be wholly cut off. If any person were wholly severed from Christ by sin even temporarily, he would need to be baptized a second time upon his restoration — since baptism is the sacrament of initiation and engrafting into Christ. By that reasoning, we would need to be baptized as often as we sin, which is absurd. John says in 1 John 2:19: 'They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us.' He takes it for granted that those who are once in

Christ will never be wholly separated from Him or fall away. Though our fellowship with Christ may be weakened, the union and bond of connection is never dissolved.

Exception 3. They say we may indeed believe our salvation on God's part, but we must doubt with respect to ourselves — because the promises of forgiveness are given on condition of a person's faith and repentance, and we cannot be assured that we have true faith and repentance, since we may be living in secret sins and therefore actually lack what we think we have. Answer: I say again, the person who truly repents and believes does, by God's grace, know that he repents and believes. Otherwise Paul would never have said, 'Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith.' The same apostle says in 2 Corinthians 2:12: 'We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God' — and those things include not only everlasting life but justification, sanctification, and the like. As for secret sins, they cannot nullify our repentance — for the person who truly repents of his known sins also repents of those unknown to him, and receives pardon for all. God does not require an explicit or specific repentance for unknown sins; a general repentance is sufficient, as David says in Psalm 19: 'Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.' When they add that faith and repentance must be sufficient, I answer that the sufficiency of our faith and repentance lies in their genuineness, not in their measure or perfection. And where both are genuinely present, they can certainly be recognized.

Reason 6. The testimony of the ancient Church. Augustine wrote: 'From being an evil servant you have been made a good child. Therefore do not trust in your own deeds but in the grace of

Christ. It is not arrogance but faith; to acknowledge what you have received is not pride but devotion.' He also wrote: 'Let no man ask another, but return to his own heart; if he finds love there, he has security for his passage from death to life.' Hilary, commenting on Matthew 5, wrote: 'The kingdom of heaven, which the Lord declared to be in Himself, must be hoped for without any wavering of uncertain will. Otherwise there is no justification by faith, if faith itself is made doubtful.' Bernard wrote in Epistle 107: 'Who is the just man but he who, being loved by God, loves Him in return? This happens only by the Spirit, who through faith reveals to him God's eternal purpose for his coming salvation.' This revelation is nothing other than the infusion of spiritual grace, by which, when the deeds of the flesh are put to death, the person is prepared for the kingdom of heaven — receiving at the same time in one Spirit both the assurance that he is loved and the ability to love in return.

In conclusion, the papists have little real cause to disagree with us on this point. They themselves teach and profess that by a special faith they believe their own salvation certainly and infallibly with respect to God who promises. What holds them back, they say, is their own unworthiness and inadequacy — which prevents them from being certain in any way beyond a probable hope. But this obstacle is easily removed, if people will judge impartially. First, with respect to ourselves and our own condition, we cannot be certain at all — indeed we must despair of salvation on those grounds all the way to death. We can never be sufficiently prepared in this life. We must always say with Jacob, 'I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness which You have shown to Your servant' (Genesis 32); and with David, 'Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no man living is righteous'; and

with the centurion, 'Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof' (Matthew 8). Second, in making His promise of salvation, God does not look at human worthiness. He chose us for everlasting life before we existed; He redeemed us from death while we were enemies; and He grants the promise of salvation to those who acknowledge themselves sinners (Matthew 9), who labor and groan under the burden of sin (Matthew 11), and who hunger and thirst for grace (John 7:37). These things we may certainly and personally perceive in ourselves. When we find them present in us, our great unworthiness should not block our assurance. For God makes His power known in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12), and He will not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick (Isaiah 42). Third, if a person loves God for His mercies and has a true hope of salvation through Christ, he is in Christ and has fellowship with Him. And whoever is in Christ has all his unworthiness and failings laid upon Christ — covered and pardoned in His death. When we consider ourselves as we are in Christ, we have no cause to waver but every reason to be certain of our salvation, and that with respect to ourselves as well.

POINT 4: OF THE JUSTIFICATION OF A SINNER



To see how far we may agree with the Roman Church and where we must differ, I will first set out the doctrine on both sides, and then identify the main points of difference on which we must stand firm even to death.

Our doctrine on the justification of a sinner I set out in four rules.

Rule 1. Justification is an act of God by which He pardons a sinner and accepts him for everlasting life on the basis of the righteousness and merit of Christ.

Rule 2. Justification consists of two things: first, the forgiveness of sins through the merit of Christ's death; second, the imputation of Christ's righteousness — an act of God by which He credits the righteousness that is in Christ to the sinner who believes in Him. By Christ's righteousness we understand two things: His sufferings, especially in His death and passion, and His obedience in fulfilling the law. These two go together — for in suffering He obeyed, and in obeying He suffered. Even the shedding of His blood, to which our salvation is attributed, must be understood not only as passive — that is, as a suffering — but also as active — that

is, as an obedience in which He displayed His boundless love both for His Father and for us, and so fulfilled the law on our behalf. If some had reflected carefully on this point, they would not have located the whole of justification in the forgiveness of sins alone.

Rule 3. Justification comes from God's pure mercy and grace, obtained only through the merit of Christ.

Rule 4. A person is justified by faith alone — because faith is the only instrument, created in the heart by the Holy Spirit, by which a sinner lays hold of Christ's righteousness and applies it to himself. Neither hope, love, nor any other grace of God within a person can do this — only faith alone.

The doctrine of the Roman Church on the justification of a sinner is as follows.

1. They hold that before justification there is a preparation for it — an action worked partly by the Holy Spirit and partly by the power of natural free will, by which a person disposes himself for his own future justification.

In this preparation they identify the foundation of justification and the things that flow from it. The foundation is faith, which they define as a general knowledge by which we understand and believe that the doctrine of God's word is true. The things flowing from this faith are: awareness of our sins, fear of hell, hope of salvation, love of God, repentance, and the like. When a person has attained all these, they say he is then fully prepared for justification.

With this preparation complete, justification itself follows — an act of God by which He makes a person righteous. It has two parts: a first justification and a second. The first justification is when a

sinner, from being an evil person, is made a good person. To bring this about, two things are required: first, the pardon of sin (one part of the first justification); second, the infusion of inward righteousness, by which the heart is cleansed and sanctified — and this habit of righteousness consists especially in hope and love.

After the first justification comes the second — when a good and just person is made better and more just. This, they say, can proceed from works of grace, because a person made righteous by the first justification can produce good works. Through the merit of those works, he is able to make himself more just and righteous. They do, however, grant that the first justification comes only from God's mercy through the merit of Christ.

1. OUR CONSENT AND DIFFERENCE.

Now let us come to the points of difference between us and them on justification.

The first main difference concerns the substance of justification, which becomes clear when both Protestants and papists answer this single question. What is the very thing that causes a person to stand righteous before God and to be accepted for everlasting life? We answer: nothing but the righteousness of Christ, which consists partly in His sufferings and partly in His active obedience in fulfilling the full demands of the law. Let us now consider how close the papists come to this answer, and where they part from it.

Consent 1. They grant that in justification sin is pardoned through the merits of Christ, and that no one can be justified without the forgiveness of sins — and this is well.

2. They grant that the righteousness by which a person is made righteous before God comes from Christ and from Christ alone.

3. The most learned among them say that Christ's satisfaction and the merit of His death is imputed to every believing sinner as his satisfaction before God — and up to this point we agree.

The precise point of difference is this: we hold that the satisfaction made by Christ in His death and obedience to the law is imputed to us and becomes our righteousness. They say it is our satisfaction but not our righteousness by which we stand righteous before God — because it remains inherent in the person of Christ as its subject. The papist's answer to the earlier question is this: the thing that makes us righteous before God and causes us to be accepted for everlasting life is the forgiveness of sins and the habit of inward righteousness, or love, together with its fruits. We agree and grant that the habit of righteousness — which we call sanctification — is an excellent gift of God, that it has its reward from God, and that it is the basis of our justification before people, since it declares us to be reconciled to God and justified. But we deny that it is the thing that makes sinners righteous before God.

This is the first point of our disagreement on the substance of justification, and it must be clearly marked. Even if there were no other points of difference between us, this one alone would be enough to prevent any union of our religions — for through it the Church of Rome undermines the very foundation.

Now let us see the reasons for our doctrine and then answer the opposing objections.

OUR REASONS.

Reason 1. Whatever serves as our righteousness before God must satisfy the justice of the law, which says, 'Do these things and you will live.' Nothing can satisfy the justice of the law but the righteousness and obedience of Christ on our behalf. If anyone appeals to civil virtue, it is nothing — for Christ says, 'Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.' Can our works make us just? No — for all human works are deficient with respect to the justice the law requires. Can our sanctification, by which we are renewed in the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, make us just? That too is imperfect and cannot satisfy God's justice as required by the law. As Isaiah said of himself and the people, 'All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.' Even a clear conscience before God is a principal element of inward righteousness — yet Paul says of his own case: 'I am not aware of anything against myself, yet I am not thereby acquitted' (2 Corinthians 4:4). Therefore nothing can procure our pardon and acceptance for everlasting life but the imputed righteousness of Christ. This becomes clear when we consider that one day we must stand before God's judgment seat to be judged in the strict demands of justice. We must bring something that can counterbalance God's justice — receiving not only acceptance in mercy but also approval in justice, since God is not only merciful but also a just judge.

Reason 2. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: 'He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.' From this I reason as follows: just as Christ was made sin for us, so we are made the righteousness of God in Him. Christ was made sin — that is, treated as a sinner — by the imputation of our sins to Him, though He was Himself entirely

holy. Therefore, a sinner is made righteous before God when Christ's righteousness is imputed and applied to him. If anyone says that a person is justified by righteousness infused within him, then by the same logic Christ was made sin by the infusion of sin into Him — which is blasphemy. The comment on this passage by Jerome deserves respect: 'Christ, being offered for our sins, received the name of sin so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him — not our own righteousness and not within us.' If this righteousness of God is neither our own nor within us, then it cannot be an inherent righteousness — it must be an imputed one. Chrysostom says on this passage that it is called the righteousness of God because it does not come from works and because it must be entirely without blemish or deficiency — and that cannot describe inherent righteousness. Anselm says: 'He is made sin as we are made righteousness — not our own but God's, not in us but in Him; just as He is made sin not His own but ours, not in Himself but in us.'

Reason 3. Romans 5:19 says: 'For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.' Note the comparison between the first and second Adam. From this I reason: just as by the disobedience of the first Adam people were made sinners, so by the obedience of the second Adam we are made righteous. Now we are made sinners not only through the transmission of natural corruption, but by imputation. Adam's first sin — the eating of the forbidden fruit — was not a personal offense of each of his descendants, yet it is imputed to all his posterity, in whom we all sinned. The church fathers called this very

sin Adam's 'bond,' which makes us debtors to God. In the same way, the obedience of Christ becomes the righteousness of every believer — not by infusion but by imputation.

Reason 4. A satisfaction made for the lack of that justice and obedience which the law requires of us is accepted by God as the justice itself. But Christ's obedience is precisely a satisfaction made for our lack of the justice and obedience the law requires — as the papists themselves affirm. Therefore this satisfaction is our righteousness. On this basis, I think the papists have little reason to disagree with us. If they acknowledge Christ's obedience as their satisfaction, why do they not take the full step with us and make it their righteousness as well?

Reason 5. The testimony of the ancient Church. Bernard writes in Epistle 190: 'The righteousness of another is assigned to a person; man lacked his own, so man made payment. The satisfaction of one is imputed to all. And why may not righteousness come from another, just as guilt comes from another?' In Sermon 25 on the Song of Songs he says: 'For all righteousness, it is enough for me to have Him alone who is merciful to me — the very One against whom I have sinned.' And: 'Not to sin is God's righteousness; man's righteousness is the mercy of God.' In Sermon 61 he says: 'Shall I sing of my own righteousness? Lord, I will remember Your righteousness alone — for it is also mine, since You have been made righteousness of God for me. Shall I fear that one righteousness is not enough for us both? It is not a short cloak that cannot cover two — it will cover both You and me generously, being a boundless and eternal righteousness.' Augustine, commenting on Psalm 22, says: 'He prayed for our faults and made our faults His own, so that He might make His righteousness ours.'

OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

The papists argue for inherent righteousness as the substance of our justification before God with the following objections. Objection 1: It is absurd that one person should be made righteous by the righteousness of another — as absurd as one person being made wise by another's wisdom. Answer: It is true that no one can be made righteous by the personal righteousness of another in the ordinary sense, because such righteousness belongs only to one person. The wisdom in one person is entirely his own and cannot be another's — no more than the health of one body can be the health of another's body. But the righteousness of Christ is different. It is His indeed, because it is inherent in Him as its subject — yet it is not His alone, but His and ours together, by the terms of the covenant of grace. Christ, as Mediator, is given to every believer as truly and really as land is transferred from one person to another. With Him all things pertaining to salvation are given — they become ours by God's free gift, and among them is the righteousness of Christ. By that righteousness, therefore, as something that is genuinely ours, we may be justified before God and accepted for everlasting life.

Objection 2. If a sinner is justified by Christ's righteousness, then every believer would be as righteous as Christ — and that cannot be. Answer: The premise is false. Christ's righteousness is not applied to us in the same degree or in the same manner as it exists in Christ. His obedience in fulfilling the law surpasses the righteousness of Adam — indeed, it surpasses the righteousness of all angels. They were all creatures, and their obedience was the obedience of creatures. But Christ's obedience is the obedience and righteousness of God, described as such in Romans 1:17-18 and 2

Corinthians 5:21 — not only because God accepted it, but because it was performed by the person who is very God. When Christ obeyed, God obeyed; and when He suffered, God suffered — not because the divine nature itself suffered or performed obedience, but because the person who, according to one nature, is God, both obeyed and suffered. This means His righteousness is of infinite value, worth, merit, and power. It therefore serves not only to justify one particular person (as Adam's righteousness did) but every single one of the elect — indeed it is sufficient to justify many thousands of worlds. Now, to come to the point: this righteousness that exists in Christ in its full and infinite measure is credited to us in a narrower measure — only as received by faith and only as far as it serves to justify any particular believer. They press the objection further: if Christ's righteousness is the righteousness of every believer, then every person would be a savior — which is absurd. Answer: I answer as before, but more plainly. Christ's righteousness is imputed to a particular person — not as it is the price of redemption for all mankind, but as it is the price of redemption for that one person. For example, Christ's righteousness is imputed to Peter not as the price of redemption for all, but as the price of redemption for Peter. Therefore Christ's righteousness is not applied to any one sinner in the full and unlimited measure in which it exists in the person of Christ — only insofar as it serves to satisfy the law for that particular sinner and to make his person accepted by God as righteous, and no further.

Objection 3. If we are truly made righteous by Christ's righteousness, then Christ is truly a sinner by our sins — but Christ is not in fact a sinner by our sins. Answer: We may say with reverence for His majesty, in the proper sense, that Christ was a sinner

— not by any infusion of sin into His most holy person, but because our sins were laid upon Him. The Holy Spirit says: 'He who knew no sin was made sin for us' (2 Corinthians 5:21), and 'He was numbered with transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12) — yet even so, in Himself He remained without blemish, and was indeed more holy than all people and angels. Chrysostom comments on 2 Corinthians 3: 'God permitted Christ to be condemned as a sinner.' And again: 'He made the righteous one to be a sinner, that He might make sinners righteous.'

Objection 4. If a person is made righteous by imputation, then God judges sinners to be righteous — but God judges no sinner as righteous, for it is an abomination to the Lord. Answer: When God justifies a sinner through Christ's righteousness, that sinner at the same time ceases, in terms of guilt, to be a sinner. And the one to whom God imputes righteousness He also sanctifies at that very moment by His Holy Spirit, dealing original corruption its deathblow.

Objection 5. What Adam never lost, Christ never needed to give. Adam never lost imputed righteousness; therefore it was never given to him. Answer: The premise is not true. Saving faith, which Adam never possessed and therefore never lost, is given to us in Christ. Adam never had this privilege: that after the first grace a second would follow to confirm him. Left to himself, he fell from God. Yet this mercy is granted to all believers — that after their first conversion God will continue to strengthen them with new grace, and by this means they persevere to the end. As for their claim that Adam did not have imputed righteousness, I answer that he had the same thing in substance, though not in the particular form of applying it through imputation.

Objection 6. Justification is eternal, but the imputation of Christ's righteousness is not eternal — it ceases at the end of this life. Therefore it is not what justifies a sinner. Answer: The imputation of Christ's righteousness is everlasting. The person counted righteous through Christ's righteousness in this life is accepted as righteous forever, and the forgiveness of sins granted in this life continues forever. Though sanctification will be perfected in the world to come, it will not be what justifies — for we should understand it in the next life as nothing other than a fruit flowing from the imputed righteousness of Christ, without which it could not exist. A good child does not throw away his first garment just because his father gives him a second. And even if inward righteousness were made perfect at the end of this life, should we therefore make it the basis of our justification? By no means. For the righteousness by which sinners are justified must be obtained in this life, before the moment of death.

2. DIFFERENCE ABOUT THE MANNER OF JUSTIFICATION.

Both papists and Protestants agree that a sinner is justified by faith. But this agreement is only in words — the difference between us is in fact very great. It can be summarized under three headings. First: when a papist says that a person is justified by faith, he means a general or Catholic faith — a belief that the articles of religion are true. We hold that the faith which justifies is a particular faith by which we apply to ourselves the promises of righteousness and everlasting life through Christ. I have already proved that our view is correct, but I will add one or two more reasons.

Reason 1. The faith by which we live spiritually is the same faith by which we are justified. But the faith by which we live spiritually is a particular faith by which we apply Christ to ourselves — as Paul says in Galatians 2:20: 'I live, that is, spiritually, by faith in the Son of God,' and he immediately shows this to be a particular faith when he adds 'who loved me and gave Himself up for me' — personally. In this way of believing, Paul was and is an example to all who are to be saved (1 Timothy 1:16; Philippians 3:15).

Reason 2. Whatever we are to ask of God in prayer, we must believe it will be given as we ask. In prayer we are to ask for the pardon of our own sins and the merit of Christ's righteousness for ourselves. Therefore we must believe these things particularly. The first part is a rule from God's word, requiring that in every petition we bring a particular faith — believing that what is lawfully asked will be granted accordingly (Mark 11:24). The second part is also clear and cannot be denied: Christ Himself teaches us to pray 'Forgive us our debts,' and to that we say 'Amen' — affirming that our petitions will without any doubt be granted to us.

Note here that in its doctrine of justification by faith, the Church of Rome cuts off faith's most essential part and property. Justifying faith requires two things: first, knowledge revealed in the word concerning the means of salvation; second, the applying of that knowledge to ourselves personally — which some call assurance. The first they acknowledge, but the second — which is the very heart and principal element of faith — they deny.

Reason 3. The testimony of the ancient Church. Augustine: 'I ask you now, sinner — do you believe in Christ? You say, I believe. What do you believe? That all your sins may be freely pardoned by Him. You have received what you believed.' Bernard: 'The apostle

holds that a person is justified freely by faith. If you believe that your sins cannot be forgiven except by Him alone against whom they were committed — go further and believe this also: that by Him your sins are forgiven you. This is the testimony the Holy Spirit gives in the heart, saying: your sins are forgiven you.' Cyprian: 'God promises you immortality when you leave this world — and do you doubt? This is truly not to know God. This is for a member of the church in the household of faith to have no faith. If we believe in Christ, let us believe His words and promises, and we shall never die, and shall come to Christ with joyful confidence, to reign with Him forever.'

The second difference regarding faith in the act of justification is this. The papist says we are justified by faith because faith prepares a sinner for justification in this way: faith, he says, enlightens the mind in the knowledge of the law and the Gospel; this knowledge stirs up a fear of hell, along with a consideration of the promise of happiness, and also a love and fear of God, and a hope of everlasting life. When the heart is thus prepared, God then infuses the habit of love and other virtues — and by these a sinner is justified before God. We say otherwise: faith justifies because it is a supernatural instrument created by God in the heart of a person at his conversion, by which he lays hold of and receives Christ's righteousness for his justification.

Their doctrine contains two errors. First, they make the faith that justifies chronologically and logically prior to justification itself — whereas, according to God's word, at the very moment any person first believes, he is at that same instant justified and sanctified. As John 6:54 says, the one who eats and drinks the body and blood of Christ has already passed from death to life. The second

error is that for them, faith is nothing more than an enlightening of the mind, which then stirs the will; the will, being moved and assisted, produces many spiritual impulses in the heart, and thereby prepares the person for his future justification. But this is as good as saying that dead men, given only a helping hand, can prepare themselves for their future resurrection. We are all by nature dead in sin, and therefore we must not only be enlightened in mind but also renewed in will before we can even desire what is good. We teach, as I have said, that faith justifies as an instrument to receive and apply Christ with His obedience, which is the substance of our justification. This is the truth, and I prove it as follows. In the covenant of grace, two things must be considered: its substance and its condition. The substance of the covenant is that righteousness and everlasting life are given to God's church and people through Christ. The condition is that we, for our part, receive these benefits by faith — and this condition is itself by grace, just as much as the substance. For us to attain salvation through Christ, He must be truly given to us as He is offered in the terms of this covenant. God has appointed specific means for the giving of Christ: the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments. The preached word is 'the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.' The sacraments are designed to communicate Christ with all His benefits to those who partake of them — as is most plainly seen in the Lord's Supper, where the giving of bread and wine to each communicant is a pledge and sign of God's personal giving of Christ's body and blood, with all His merits, to them. This giving on God's part cannot be effective without receiv-

ing on our part. Therefore faith must be an instrument or hand to receive what God gives, so that we may find comfort in what He gives.

The third difference concerning faith is this: the papist says that a person is justified by faith — yet not by faith alone, but also by other virtues such as hope, love, the fear of God, and so on. The arguments they bring to support this view carry no weight.

Reason 1. Luke 7:47 says: 'Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much.' From this they conclude that the woman described was justified and received the pardon of her sins through love. Answer: In this text, love is not presented as the cause that moved God to pardon her sins — it is only a sign that revealed and confirmed that God had already pardoned them. A similar passage is 1 John 3:14, where John says: 'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.' There, love is not the cause of the change but a sign and consequence of it.

Reason 2. Galatians 5:6 says: 'Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.' From this they conclude that faith justifies together with love. Answer: The nature of true faith is to reach out and receive something into itself. Love, which always accompanies faith as its fruit and inseparable companion, is of a different nature. Love does not receive inward but rather gives outward — expressing itself in all the duties of the first and second tables of the law toward God and toward people. Faith by itself cannot do this, which is why Paul says that faith works through love. The hand has the capacity to reach out, take hold of things, and receive a gift. But a hand by itself cannot cut a piece of wood — it needs a saw, a knife, or some other instru-

ment. With such a tool, though, it can cut and divide. In the same way, it is the nature of faith to go outside itself and receive Christ into the heart. As for the duties of the first and second tables, faith cannot bring these forth by itself — no more than a hand can cut without a tool. But join love to faith, and it can then carry out the commanded duties toward God and toward people. This, I believe, is the meaning of the text, which speaks not about justification by faith but only about the carrying out of common duties — which faith performs through love.

Reason 3. Faith is never alone; therefore it does not justify alone. Answer: This reasoning is flawed. By the same logic one could argue: the eye is never alone from the head, therefore it does not see alone — which is absurd. Though in terms of its existence the eye is never separate from the head, in terms of seeing it acts alone. In the same way, though faith does not exist without love, hope, and other graces of God, in the act of justification it acts alone, without them all.

Reason 4. If faith alone justifies, then we are saved by faith alone — but we are not saved by faith alone, and therefore not justified by faith alone. Answer: The first premise is false — more things are required for the ultimate end than for the intermediate means. The second premise is also false: we are saved by faith alone, when faith is understood as the instrument by which we receive Christ for our salvation.

Reason 5. We are saved by hope; therefore not by faith alone. Answer: We are saved by hope not because it is any cause of our salvation. Paul's meaning is only this: we do not yet have salvation

in our possession, but wait patiently for it, expecting the time of our full deliverance. That is all that can rightly be gathered from the passage.

The doctrine we teach is that a sinner is justified before God by faith — indeed by faith alone. This means that nothing within a person, and nothing a person can do either by nature or by grace, contributes to the act of justification before God as any kind of cause — whether efficient, material, formal, or final — but faith alone. All other gifts and graces — hope, love, the fear of God — are necessary to salvation as signs of it and as consequences of faith. Nothing in a person contributes as any cause to this work but faith alone. And even faith itself is not a principal cause but only an instrumental one — by which we receive, apprehend, and apply Christ and His righteousness for our justification.

Reason 1. John 3:14-15 says: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.' In these words Christ draws an analogy: when any Israelite was struck by a deadly serpent, his cure lay not in any medicine or surgery but only in casting his eyes up to the bronze serpent Moses had erected by God's command. In the same way, for the cure of our souls — stung to death by sin — nothing is required within us for our recovery except that we lift and fix the eye of faith on Christ and His righteousness.

Reason 2. The exclusive statements of Scripture prove this point. We are justified freely, not by the law, not through the law, apart from the law, apart from works, not by works, not according to works, not by us, not by the works of the law but by faith (Galatians 2:16). 'All boasting is excluded'; 'only believe' (Luke

8:50). These qualifications, which exclude works and the law from the act of justification, carry with them the clear implication that faith alone justifies.

Reason 3. Even natural reason teaches this much: no gift within a person is suited to serve as a spiritual hand to receive and apply Christ and His righteousness to a sinner — none but faith. Love, hope, the fear of God, and repentance each have their own roles in the believer's life, but none of them serves the function of laying hold of Christ and His merits. None of them has this receiving capacity. Therefore nothing within a person justifies as a cause, except faith alone.

Reason 4. The testimony of the ancient Church. Ambrose, commenting on Romans 4, says: 'Those are blessed to whom, without any labor or work on their part, iniquities are forgiven and sin is covered — no works of repentance required of them, but only that they believe.' On Romans 3 he says: 'Without doing anything or repaying in kind, they are justified by faith alone through the gift of God.' On 1 Corinthians 1 he says: 'God has decreed this: that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved without any work, by faith alone, freely receiving forgiveness of sins.' Augustine says: 'There is one propitiation for all sins — to believe in Christ.' Hesychius, in his commentary on Leviticus (book 1, chapter 2), says: 'Grace, which comes from mercy, is received by faith alone and not by works.' Bernard says: 'Whoever is stricken for his sins and thirsts after righteousness, let him believe in You who justifies the sinner — and being justified by faith alone, he shall have peace with God.' Chrysostom, commenting on Galatians 3, says: 'They said that whoever rests on faith alone is cursed; but Paul shows that it is the one who rests on faith alone who is blessed.' Basil, on humility,

says: 'Let a person acknowledge that he lacks true righteousness and that he is justified only by faith in Christ.' Origen, on Romans 3, says: 'We hold that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.' He also says that justification by faith alone is sufficient, so that a person may be justified by believing alone. And: 'It is our task, therefore, to search out who was justified by faith without works. As an example, I think of the thief who was crucified with Christ and cried out to Him: "Lord, remember me when You come in Your kingdom." No other good work of his is recorded in the Gospel, yet for this faith alone Jesus said to him: "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise."' "

3. DIFFERENCE.

The third difference regarding justification concerns the role of good works in it — specifically, how far they are required.

The teaching of the Church of Rome is that there are two kinds of justification — a first and a second, as I have described. The first is when a person, from being evil, is made good; and in this, works are wholly excluded, it being entirely of grace. The second is when a just person is made more just. This second justification, they say, proceeds from works of grace. Just as a person, once born, can grow larger by eating and drinking — though he could not make himself be born in the first place — so a sinner, having received his first justification, may afterward make himself more just through grace. They therefore hold two things: first, that good works are meritorious causes of the second justification, which they call actual justification; second, that good works are means to increase the first justification, which they call habitual justification.

Now let us see how far we may join with them on this point. Our agreement can be stated in three conclusions.

1. Good works done by justified persons please God, are approved by Him, and therefore have a reward.

2. Good works are necessary to salvation in two ways: first, not as causes of it — not as preserving, contributing to, or producing salvation — but only as consequences of faith, in that they are inseparable companions and fruits of the faith that is itself necessary to salvation. Second, they are necessary as markers along the way, and as the way itself directing us to everlasting life.

3. We hold and believe that a righteous person is in a sense justified by works — for the Holy Spirit says plainly and truly in James 2:21 that Abraham was justified by works.

This is the extent of our agreement with them, and the precise point of difference is this: they say we are justified by works as causes of justification; we say we are justified by works as signs and fruits of our justification before God, and in no other sense. In this sense must the passage in James be understood — that Abraham was justified, meaning declared and shown to be truly just by his obedience, even before God. That our doctrine is true will be apparent from the arguments on both sides.

OUR REASONS.

1. Romans 3:28 says: 'We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.' Some say that ceremonial works are excluded here; some say moral works; some say works that come before faith. But whatever others may devise to defend themselves, the truth is that Paul excludes all works whatever — as the context

of the text itself makes clear. In verse 24 he says we are 'justified as a gift by His grace' — that is, by the pure free gift of God — making clear that a sinner in his justification is entirely passive, doing nothing on his part by which God should accept him for everlasting life. In verse 27 he says that justification by faith excludes all boasting. All kinds of works are therefore excluded — especially those that are most apt to become a source of pride, namely good works. For if a sinner, after being justified by Christ's merit, were further justified by his own works, he would have grounds for boasting in himself. And lest there be any doubt about Paul's meaning, read Ephesians 2:8-9: 'By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.' Here Paul excludes all and every work, including specifically works of grace — as is clear from what follows: 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.' Let the papists tell me what works God has prepared for the regenerate to walk in, if not the most excellent works of grace — and then let them see how completely Paul excludes even these from the work of justification and salvation.

2. Galatians 5:3 says: 'I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law' — and such a person is severed from Christ. Here Paul argues against those who would be saved partly by Christ and partly by the works of the law. My argument follows from this. Paul's foundation is: if a person wishes to be justified by works, he is bound to fulfill the entire law in all its rigor. My further point is that no person can fulfill the law in all its rigor. The lives and works of even the most

righteous people are imperfect and stained with sin — which is why they are taught daily to pray: 'Forgive us our debts.' Our knowledge is imperfect, and therefore our faith, repentance, and sanctification are correspondingly imperfect. The regenerate person is partly flesh and partly spirit, so even his best works are partly from the flesh and only partially spiritual. Therefore, to bind any person to the full rigor of the whole law is effectively to bind him to his own damnation.

3. Election to salvation is by grace, apart from works; therefore, the justification of a sinner is by grace alone, apart from works. The principle here is certain: the cause of a cause is the cause of what that cause produces. Grace apart from works is the cause of election, and election is the cause of our justification; therefore, grace apart from works is the cause of our justification.

4. A person must first be fully justified before he can perform a good work, since the person must first be accepted by God before his works can be accepted. But the person of a sinner cannot please God until he is perfectly justified; therefore, until he is justified, he cannot perform so much as one good work. Good works therefore cannot be any meritorious cause of justification — they come after justification both in time and in the order of nature. In short: while they assert two distinct justifications, we acknowledge that there are degrees of sanctification — but justification is only one, consisting in the forgiveness of sins and God's acceptance of us for everlasting life through Christ. This one justification has no degrees; it is complete from the very first moment.

OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

Psalm 7:8 says: 'Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness.' From this they argue: if David is to be judged according to his righteousness, then he may be justified by it; David desires to be judged by his righteousness; therefore he was justified by it. Answer: There are two kinds of righteousness — the righteousness of the person, and the righteousness of the cause or action. The righteousness of the person is what makes him accepted by God for everlasting life. The righteousness of the action or cause is when God judges that an action or case is good and just. In this psalm, David is speaking only of the righteousness of his action — the innocence of his cause — since he had been falsely accused of seeking the throne. Similarly, Psalm 106:31 says that Phinehas's act of killing Zimri and Cozbi 'was reckoned to him as righteousness' — not because it satisfied the full rigor of the law, which no one act could fulfill, but because God accepted it as a just act and a token of his righteousness and zeal for God's glory.

Objection 2. Scripture says in many places that those who do good works are blessed. Psalm 119:1 says: 'Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.' Answer: The person who strives to keep God's commandments is indeed blessed. But he is not blessed simply because he does so — he is blessed because he is in Christ, through whom he does so. His obedience to God's law is a sign of that.

Objection 3. When a person confesses his sins and humbles himself through prayer and fasting, God's wrath is appeased and withheld; therefore prayer and fasting are causes of justification before God. Answer: People who truly humble themselves through prayer and fasting do indeed appease God's wrath — but not properly through these acts themselves. It is through the faith ex-

pressed and demonstrated in them, by which they lay hold of what actually appeases God's wrath: the merit of Christ, in whom the Father is well pleased, and for whose sake alone He is well pleased with us.

Objection 4. Various people in Scripture are commended for their perfection — Noah, Abraham, Zechariah, and Elizabeth. And Christ commands us all to be perfect. Where there is any perfection of works, those works may justify. Answer: There are two kinds of perfection: perfection in breadth and perfection in degree. Perfection in breadth is when a regenerate person, having the seeds of all necessary virtues, endeavors to obey God not in just some areas but in every part of the law — as Josiah turned to God according to all the law of Moses. Perfection in degree is when a person keeps every commandment of God in the fullest possible measure and with complete rigor. The commands to be perfect, and the examples of perfection in Scripture, must be understood as referring to perfection in breadth — not perfection in degree, which cannot be achieved in this life, even though we must strive daily to come as close to it as we possibly can.

Objection 5. 2 Corinthians 4:17 says: 'Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.' If afflictions work our salvation, then works also do the same. Answer: Afflictions work salvation not as causes that produce it, but as means that direct us toward it. We must always regard works in the matter of our salvation in this same way — as a road or a marker directing us toward glory, not as a cause that produces it. As Bernard says: works are the way to the kingdom, not the cause of reigning there.

Objection 6. We are justified by the same thing by which we are judged; but we are judged by our good works; therefore we are also justified by them. Answer: The premise is false. Judgment is an act of God that declares a person to be just who is already just; justification is a separate act of God by which He makes just the person who is by nature unjust. Therefore it is entirely fitting that the final judgment should proceed on the basis of works — for works are the most suitable means to examine every person's case and to declare publicly whom God has justified in this life.

Objection 7. Wicked people are condemned for evil works; therefore righteous people are justified by good works. Answer: The reasoning does not hold, because there is a fundamental difference between evil and good works. An evil work is perfectly evil and therefore deserves condemnation. But no good work that any person performs is perfectly good — and therefore it cannot justify.

Objection 8. To believe in Christ is a work, and by it we are justified. If one work justifies, why may we not be justified by all the works of the law? Answer: Faith must be understood in two ways: first, as a work, quality, or virtue; second, as an instrument — a hand reaching out to receive the merit of Christ. We are justified by faith not as it is a work, virtue, or quality, but as it is an instrument that receives and applies the very thing by which we are justified. Therefore, when we say 'we are justified by faith,' it is a figurative way of speaking. Faith considered in itself makes no one righteous. Nor does the act of faith — the reaching out — justify. What justifies is the object of faith: Christ's obedience, which faith lays hold of.

These are the main arguments commonly used on their side, and as we have seen, they carry no weight. Our conclusion, therefore, is this: works do have a place in relation to justification, and we are justified by them — but only as signs and effects, not as causes. The beginning, middle, and completion of our justification rests entirely in Christ. This is why John says: 'If anyone sins' — that is, if a person who is already justified sins — 'we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.' To make our good works means or causes of our justification is to make every person his own savior.

POINT 5: OF MERITS



By merit we mean anything or any work by which God's favor and everlasting life is obtained — obtained because of the dignity and excellence of the work or thing done — or, a good work that obliges the one who receives it to repay in kind.

OUR CONSENT.

On the subject of merits, we agree with them in two conclusions. The first conclusion: merits are so necessary that without them there can be no salvation.

The second conclusion: Christ our Mediator and Redeemer is the root and fountain of all merit.

THE DISSENT OR DIFFERENCE.

The Roman Church locates merits within the person, and distinguishes two kinds: the merit of the person and the merit of the work. The merit of the person is a dignity within the person that makes him worthy of everlasting life. They say this is present in infants who die after baptism — though these infants lack good works, they are not without this personal merit, for which they re-

ceive the kingdom of heaven. The merit of the work is a dignity or excellence within the work that makes it capable of deserving everlasting life for the one who does it. They teach that works are meritorious in two ways: first by covenant, because God has promised a reward for them; second by their own dignity, because Christ has merited that our works might merit. This is the substance of their doctrine. We depart from it at the following points.

1. We reject all personal merits — that is, all merits within the person of any mere human being. 2. We also reject all merit of works — that is, any merit claimed for any work done by any mere human being. The true merit by which we hope to obtain God's favor and everlasting life is found in the person of Christ alone. He is the storehouse of all our merits. It is His unique prerogative to be the one person in whom God is well pleased. God's favor is of infinite worth, and no creature is able to perform a work that can counterbalance it — except Christ alone. Because of the dignity of His person, being not merely a man but the God-man, He can perform works of infinite worth that fully answer the measure of God's favor, and are therefore sufficient to merit it for us. Though merit and meritorious work belong strictly to the person of Christ, they are made ours by imputation. As His righteousness is made ours, so also are His merits, which depend on it. His righteousness is made ours by imputation, as I have shown. From this arises another point: just as Christ's righteousness is made truly ours by imputation to make us righteous, so also by the merit of His righteousness imputed to us, we merit and obtain everlasting life. This is our doctrine. In short: the papist grounds his hope in the merit of his own works; we reject all such merit and rest entirely on the

merit of Christ. I will demonstrate that our doctrine is true and theirs false by several arguments, and then answer their objections.

OUR REASONS.

The first argument is drawn from the four essential conditions of a meritorious work. First, a person must do it by himself and out of his own resources — if it is done by another, the merit does not properly belong to the doer. Second, a person must do it of his own free will, not as a required obligation — for when we do what we are already bound to do, we do nothing more than our duty. Third, the work must benefit someone else, who is thereby obligated to repay in kind. Fourth, the reward and the work must be proportionally equal — if the reward exceeds the work, it is not a reward for desert but a gift of goodwill. From this follows a striking conclusion: Christ's human nature, considered apart from His divine nature, cannot merit anything from God — even though it is in every respect more excellent than all people and angels combined. Considered in isolation, it does nothing by itself but only by grace received from the divine nature, though that grace is without measure. Second, Christ's human nature is a creature, and as a creature it is already obligated to do whatever it does. Third, Christ as man cannot give to God anything other than what He first received from God. Therefore the human nature by itself cannot properly merit — only as it is personally united to the divine nature of the Son. If this is so, then far less can any mere human being or any angel merit anything. It is madness to suppose that either our actions or our persons could carry any merit sufficient to obtain everlasting life.

Reason 2. Exodus 20:8 says that God shows 'lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.' From this I argue: where reward is given on the basis of mercy, there is no merit. But reward is given in mercy to those who fulfill the law — therefore there is no merit. What can we possibly deserve, when even our full recompense must come from mercy? This is further confirmed by Adam's case: if he had stood firm to this day, his continued and perfect obedience could not have obtained any greater favor from God — he could only have maintained the blessed condition in which he was first created.

Reason 3. Scripture directly condemns the merit of works. Romans 6:23 says: 'The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.' The logical structure of that verse would require Paul to have said, 'The reward of good works is eternal life' — if everlasting life could be deserved. But it cannot, because it is a free gift. Titus 3:5 says: 'He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy.' Ephesians 2:8-10 says: 'By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works,' though God has prepared those works for us to walk in. If any works are to be rewarded, certainly the sufferings of the martyrs would be — yet Paul says of them in Romans 8:18: 'The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.' What room, then, is left for the merit of ordinary works? On this point Ambrose says: 'The just man, though he be tormented in the brazen bull, is still just — because he justifies God and says he suffers less than his sins deserve.'

Reason 4. Whoever would merit must fulfill the whole law — but no one can keep the whole law. As 1 John 1 says, if we claim to have no sin we deceive ourselves; and whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of the entire law. What can a person merit who is guilty of breaking the whole law?

Reason 5. We are taught to pray: 'Give us this day our daily bread.' In doing so, we acknowledge that every piece of bread is a pure gift from God, unearned. How much more must we acknowledge that everlasting life is in every way a gift of God. It is nothing short of diabolical arrogance for any person to imagine that he can merit everlasting life by his works, when he cannot even merit his daily bread.

Reason 6. The testimony of the ancient Church. Bernard: 'What we call our merits are the road to the kingdom, not the cause of reigning there.' Augustine (Manual, chapter 22): 'All my hope is in the death of my Lord. His death is my merit; my merit is the passion of the Lord. I will not be without merits so long as He is not without mercy.' Basil, commenting on Psalm 114: 'Eternal rest is reserved for those who have striven faithfully in this life — not on account of the merit of their deeds, but through the grace of the most generous God, in whom they trusted.' Augustine, commenting on Psalm 120: 'He crowns you because He crowns His own gifts, not your merits.' And on Psalm 142: 'Lord, You will give me life in Your righteousness — not in mine; not because I have deserved it, but because You have compassion.'

OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

Objection 1. In many passages of Scripture, the promise of reward is made to those who believe and do good works. Therefore our works merit something — for a reward and merit go together. Answer: Reward is of two kinds — a reward of debt and a reward of mercy. Everlasting life is not a reward of debt but of mercy, given by the goodwill of God apart from anything done by the person. Second, the kingdom of heaven is properly an inheritance given by a Father to a child. It is called a reward not in the strict sense but figuratively — by way of resemblance. Just as a worker, having finished his labor, receives his wages, so after people have lived their lives and completed their course in faith and good conscience as dutiful children, God gives them everlasting life. It is for this reason that it is called a reward. Third, even if I were to grant that everlasting life is a deserved reward, it is not deserved by our works but by Christ's merit imputed to us — through which we are said to merit. The relationship is directly between the reward and Christ's merit applied to us.

Objection 2. By His death, Christ merited that our works should merit everlasting life. Answer: That is false. All Scripture tells us is that by His merit Christ obtained the pardon of sin, the imputation of righteousness, and everlasting life. It is nowhere said in God's word that Christ merited that our works should merit — this is a notion of their own invention. He did not die to make our good works capable of satisfying God's wrath — He died for our sins, that they might be pardoned. That is what Scripture says, and nothing more. Since Christ fully merited everlasting life for us by His own death, that is itself sufficient evidence that He never intended to give us the power to merit it as well — unless we suppose He sometimes gives more than is needed. Furthermore, in

His office as Mediator — as King, Priest, and Prophet — Christ admits no deputy or partner. He is the perfect Mediator, accomplishing everything by Himself alone without assistance. The ministers who proclaim the word are not His deputies but willing instruments He uses. But if people can merit increases in grace and happiness by their works, then Christ has partners in the work of redemption — people doing by Him what He does by Himself in securing their salvation. And if it could be maintained that Christ merited that our works should merit, then He would be meriting that our tainted righteousness — which, being tainted, is by its very nature incapable of merit — should nevertheless merit. I call it tainted because we are partly flesh and partly spirit, and therefore in ourselves deserving the curse of the law, even as regenerate people. Moreover, for every good work we do, we commit many evil ones — and the offense of these evil works cancels out the merit of our best deeds and makes them fall short in the balance of the law.

Objection 3. Our works merit by bargain or covenant, because God has promised to reward them. Answer: God's word sets out two covenants — one legal, the other evangelical. In the legal covenant, everlasting life is promised in exchange for works, for that is the law's condition: 'Do these things and you will live.' But no one can merit everlasting life on these terms, because no one is able to do everything the law requires — either in the manner or the measure of obedience. In the evangelical covenant, the promises are not made to any work or virtue in the person, but to the person himself — and not on account of any merit of his person or work, but on account of the person and merit of Christ. For example, Revelation 2:10 says: 'Be faithful until death, and I will give

you the crown of life.' The promise is made not to the virtue of faithfulness but to the faithful person, whose faithfulness is simply a token that he is in Christ — and it is on account of the merit of Christ's obedience that God promises the crown of life. Christ says further: 'I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done' — note that He says to the person according to his works, not to the work or for the work. The substance of all the Gospel promises, in which God willingly binds Himself to reward our works, does not directly regard us but has regard to the person and obedience of Christ, for whose sake alone God binds Himself as debtor to us and gives the reward according to the measure of our faith as shown by our works. It therefore cannot rightly be concluded that works merit on the basis of any promise or covenant God has made with people. Someone may ask: if works do not merit, why are they mentioned in the promises? I answer: not because they merit, but because they are tokens that the one who performs the work is in Christ, on whose merit the promise will be fulfilled.

Objection 6. Good works are perfect and without fault, because they are the works of the Holy Spirit, who cannot sin. Therefore they merit. Answer: If works proceeded only and immediately from the Holy Spirit, there could be no fault in them. But our works come from the Holy Spirit working in and through the will and understanding of a human being — and in this way they are tainted with sin. Water in a spring is clear and pure, but the streams that flow from it through a contaminated channel become polluted. They also argue: what we are bound to do has no fault in it; we are bound to do good works; therefore good works are perfect. Answer: The premise must be qualified. What we are bound

to do — in itself, according to the intention of the one commanding — has no fault. Or again: what we are bound to do, done exactly as we are bound to do it, has no fault. But in terms of the intention of the doer, or the manner in which we actually do it, there may well be a fault.

Objection 5. Christ says in Revelation 3:4 that the faithful in the church of Sardis shall walk with Him in white, 'for they are worthy.' Therefore believers merit. Answer: Every believer is worthy to walk with Christ — yet not worthy in himself, but in Christ, to whom he is united and made bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. It is because of this union that believers are said to be worthy, since they are enriched with Christ's merits and righteousness.

Objection 7. 2 Timothy 4:8 calls everlasting life a crown — specifically a crown of righteousness to be given by a righteous judge. Therefore a person deserves it by his works. Answer: Everlasting life is called a crown only by way of analogy. Just as a runner must press on to the end of the race before receiving the crown, so we must continue in good works to the end and then receive everlasting life. It is called a crown of righteousness not because any person has earned it by his own due and desert, but because God has bound Himself by a promise to give it — and in fulfilling that promise He is called righteous. It is obtained by virtue of that promise, and in no other way. These are the main objections, by which we may judge the strength of the rest. Here then is the truth: merit is necessary to salvation — but not the merit of any person's works or person. It is the merit of Christ imputed to us, through which we, being in Him, obtain and receive the favor of God and everlasting life.

POINT 6: OF SATISFACTION



OUR CONSENT.

Conclusion 1. First, we acknowledge and uphold civil or political satisfaction — that is, making amends for injuries and damages done to neighbors in any form. Zacchaeus practiced this when, at his conversion, he restored fourfold what he had taken through fraudulent schemes. By civil satisfaction I also mean the imposition of fines, penalties, and punishments on offenders, and the infliction of death on criminals. All of these are forms of satisfaction to the law and to human communities when they are wronged. We consider all of these necessary — neither the church nor the state can function well without them, since they are significant means of preserving civil peace. Sometimes they are also fruits of true faith, as Zacchaeus's restitution was.

Conclusion 2. We acknowledge canonical or ecclesiastical satisfaction — that is, when someone who has given offense to the church of God, or to any part of it, makes an open public declaration of their repentance. Miriam, for speaking against Moses, was struck with leprosy; and though she was afterward cleansed through his prayer, she still had to go outside the camp for seven

days, making a form of satisfaction to the people for her offense. In the Old Testament, sackcloth and ashes were signs of this kind of satisfaction.

Conclusion 3. We hold that no one can be saved unless a perfect satisfaction is made to the justice of God for all his sins — because God is infinite in His justice and will therefore require either everlasting punishment or full satisfaction.

THE DISSENT OR DIFFERENCE.

Our differences are as follows. The Church of Rome teaches that Christ by His death made satisfaction for all the sins of people and for the eternal punishment of them all — but that people must themselves satisfy God's justice for the temporal punishment of their offenses, either in this life or in purgatory. We teach that Christ by His death and suffering made a perfect and all-sufficient satisfaction to God's justice for all human sins and for the entire punishment of them — both eternal and temporal. This is where we differ. On this point we must remain at permanent disagreement with them. Even if there were no other differences between us, this one alone would be enough to keep us from ever uniting our religions, and to cause us to obey Christ's call: 'Come out of her, my people.' For here, as in the earlier points, the papists err not in some peripheral matter but in the very foundation and heart of religion.

OUR REASONS.

Reason 1. A satisfaction that is made imperfect — either directly or by implication — is no true satisfaction at all. The papists make Christ's satisfaction imperfect by supplementing it with human satisfactions. A learned scholastic, Biel, admitted this plainly. He says: 'Although the passion of Christ is the principal merit for which grace is given, the kingdom opened, and glory granted, yet it is never the sole and total meritorious cause. This is obvious because, alongside Christ's merit, there always concurs some work — either the merit of fittingness or worthiness on the part of the person receiving grace or glory, if he has reached the age of reason; or on the part of someone else for him, if he lacks reason.' Whatever admits of being supplemented by another is imperfect in itself. Therefore human satisfactions cannot stand. Learned papists reply that Christ's satisfaction and a person's own can coexist. Christ's satisfaction, they say, is in itself sufficient to answer God's justice for all sin and punishment — but it is not sufficient for any particular person until it is applied, and it must be applied through the person's own satisfaction for the temporal punishment of his sins. But I maintain that a person's satisfaction can be no means of applying Christ's satisfaction — and I prove it as follows. The means of applying God's blessings and graces to a person are of two kinds: those on God's side, and those on the person's side. On God's side are the means by which God offers and conveys His mercies in Christ to people — such as the preaching of the word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. These are, as it were, God's hand reaching down to give us Christ with all His benefits. On the person's side, there is only one means of receiving these benefits: faith — by which we believe that Christ and all His benefits belong to us. This is the human hand by which we receive Christ as He is

offered and presented by God in the word and sacraments. Beyond these two, Scripture knows no other means of applying Christ's benefits. It is therefore foolish for the papists to make human satisfactions a means of applying Christ's satisfaction to us — for by human satisfactions, Christ's satisfaction is neither offered on God's side nor received on the person's side. Let them prove it if they can. Others, not satisfied with this answer, say that human satisfactions do not diminish Christ's satisfaction in any way — because our works receive their worth and merit from Christ's satisfaction, He having merited that our works should satisfy God's justice for temporal punishments. But this too is absurd and false. If Christ satisfied so that people might satisfy, then Christ makes every believer a Christ, a Jesus, a Redeemer, and a Priest on the same level as Himself. But to make a sinful person his own redeemer — even if only from temporal punishments — is a doctrine of demons. The Holy Spirit teaches that Christ's priesthood cannot be transferred to or shared with anyone else. To make satisfaction for sin, or for any portion of its punishment, is a duty that belongs to Christ's priesthood — and therefore it is a work that cannot pass from His person to any other. Furthermore, if Christ by His satisfaction gives people the power to satisfy, then people satisfy through Christ — which means Christ must not only have satisfied once on the cross but must continue to satisfy daily in people until the end of the world. But this cannot be, for when Christ was on the cross in the moment of death, He said, 'It is finished' — meaning: I have fully satisfied for all the sins of humanity, both the fault and the punishment. The burial and resurrection that followed His death served not to make further satisfaction but to confirm and ratify what was already accomplished. Paul also says in 2

Corinthians 5:21: 'He who knew no sin was made sin for us' — that is, made to bear the punishment of sin for us. But if the Church of Rome is right that Christ satisfies daily, then Paul spoke too briefly, and should have added that Christ was made sin for us and also in us, and that God was reconciling the world to Himself not only in Christ but also in us. Paul knew nothing of this teaching. However they turn themselves, by adding a supplement to Christ's satisfaction the papists in fact annihilate it.

Reason 2. In many places of Scripture, especially in Paul's letters, we are said to be redeemed, justified, and saved freely. The word 'freely' means we are justified and saved without anything done on our part in the matter of our salvation. If that is so, then we can do nothing at all that would satisfy God's justice for even the least punishment of our sins. If we satisfy in our own persons, we are not saved freely; and if we are saved freely, we make no satisfaction at all.

Reason 3. We pray daily: 'Forgive us our sins.' But pleading for pardon and making satisfaction are opposites. For whatever we can satisfy, we have no need to plead for pardon. Yet we are taught in this petition to appeal entirely and only to pardon for our sins — which means we acknowledge that we are unable to make any satisfaction at all.

Reason 4. The testimony of the ancient Church. Tertullian, on Baptism: 'When guilt is removed, the punishment is also removed.' Augustine: 'Christ, by taking the punishment upon Himself without the fault, has abolished both the fault and the punishment.' In Volume 10, Homily 5, he also says: 'When we have departed this world, no compunction or satisfaction will remain.' Some later editions have inserted the word 'some,' changing the sense to read:

'no compunction or some satisfaction will remain.' But this is directly against Augustine's meaning, since just before that he says that when the journey is over there is no more settling of accounts with anyone. Chrysostom, in his preface on Isaiah: 'Do not say to me, I have sinned — how shall I be freed from so many sins? You cannot, but your God can. Indeed He will blot out your sins so completely that no trace of them will remain. This does not happen with the body, for when it is healed a scar remains — but God, when He frees you from punishment, at the same moment grants you righteousness.' Ambrose says: 'I read of Peter's tears, but I read nothing of his satisfaction.' And again: 'Let us adore Christ, that He may say to us: do not fear your sins from this world, or the waves of bodily sufferings — I have forgiveness of sins.' Jerome, on Psalm 31: 'The sin that is covered is not seen; the sin that is not seen is not charged; what is not charged is not punished.' Chrysostom, in Homily 44 on Matthew: 'Among all people, some endure punishment in this life and in the life to come; others only in this life; others only in the life to come; others neither in this life nor in the life to come. In the life to come alone — like Dives, who did not have so much as a single drop of water. In this life alone — like the incestuous man among the Corinthians. Neither here nor there — like the apostles, prophets, Job, and others of that kind: for they endured no sufferings as punishment, but to be shown as conquerors in the fight.'

OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

Objection 1. In Leviticus 4, Moses, following God's command, prescribed various sacrifices for various persons — and these were means of satisfaction for the temporal punishments of their daily

sins. Answer: Those sacrifices were only signs and types of Christ's satisfaction, to be offered to His Father in His one sacrifice on the cross. Everyone who offered a sacrifice in the Old Testament understood it in no other way than as a type and figure pointing to better things. Second, those sacrifices were satisfactions to the church, by which people testified their repentance for their offenses and their desire to be reconciled to God and to one another. This kind of satisfaction we do acknowledge.

Objection 2. People whose sins are fully pardoned still experience various crosses and afflictions throughout their remaining days — it therefore seems they are making satisfaction to God for temporal punishments. For example, the Israelites, for murmuring against God in the wilderness, were all barred from the promised land; and the same happened to Moses and Aaron for failing to honor God properly at the waters of Meribah. Answer: A person must be understood in two different conditions — under the law, and under grace. In the first condition, all afflictions are curses and legal punishments, whether great or small. But for those in the second condition who believe in Christ, those same afflictions remain yet change in character — they become the actions of a Father, serving as trials, corrections, preventions, and warnings. 1 Corinthians 11:32 says: 'When we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord.' And Hebrews 12:7 says: 'If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons.' Chrysostom says in Homily 28 on 1 Corinthians: 'When we are corrected by the Lord, it is more for our instruction than for condemnation; more like medicine than punishment; more for correction than penalty.' And as for God's denying the believing Israelites, along with Moses and Aaron, entry into Canaan — it cannot be proved that this was a legal punishment

upon them. Scripture says nothing more than that it was a warning to all people in all ages following to guard against similar offenses, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:11: 'These things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our instruction.'

Objection 3. David was punished after his repentance for his adultery — the child died, and he was struck in kind through the incest of Absalom. And when he numbered the people, he was also punished in the death of his people even after his own repentance. Answer: I answer as before. God's hand was upon David after his repentance — but the judgments that came upon him were not curses in the proper sense. They were corrections for his sins, trials of his faith, and means to prevent further sin and to renew both his faith and repentance. They also served to warn others in similar situations, for David was a public figure and his sins had caused offense both within and beyond the church of God.

Objection 4. The prophets, when the people were threatened with plague, famine, sword, and captivity, urged them to repent and humble themselves in sackcloth and ashes — and by doing so, they turned away the wrath of God that was coming against them. Therefore, through temporal humiliation, people may escape God's temporal punishments. Answer: Famine, sword, exile, plague, and other judgments sent on God's people were not properly punishments of sin but only a Father's corrections by which He humbled them so they might repent. They were punishments aimed at correction, not at extracting satisfaction. God's punishments are turned away not because people satisfy His justice through their own sufferings, but because by faith they lay hold of the satisfaction of the Messiah and testify to that faith through their humiliation and repentance.

Objection 5. Daniel 4:27 has Daniel counsel Nebuchadnezzar: 'Redeem your sins by practicing righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor.' The papists say: see — almsgiving is presented as a means of making satisfaction for a person's iniquities. Answer: The word they translate as 'redeem' — as the most learned scholars in the Chaldean language uniformly agree — properly means 'to break off.' The prophet was saying: O King, you are a great monarch who has used much injustice and cruelty to expand your kingdom. Now repent of your iniquity — break off these sins, demonstrate your repentance by practicing justice, and give alms to the poor you have oppressed. Therefore this passage says nothing about satisfaction for sin — only about demonstrating repentance through its fruits.

Objection 6. Matthew 3:2 says: 'Repent and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance' — which they say refers to works of satisfaction assigned by the priest. Answer: The text cannot bear this meaning — the word means: turn your minds from sin to God, and demonstrate it by good works — that is, by doing the duties of the moral law. These good works are to be done not because they are means of satisfying God's justice for sin, but because they are fruits of the faith and repentance that lie in the heart.

Objection 7. In 2 Corinthians 7:10, Paul lists various fruits of repentance, the last of which is 'self-punishment' — by which, they say, repentant persons punish themselves in order to satisfy God's justice for the temporal punishment of their sins. Answer: A repentant sinner must take action against himself — but this consists only in using all means that serve to subdue the corruption of his

nature, restrain sinful desires, and put sin to death. These actions are properly forms of restraint, not punishments. They are directed against the sin, not against the person.

Finally, they designate three works of satisfaction: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Regarding the first: it is sheer folly to think that a person can satisfy for his sins through prayer. It is the same as saying that a beggar earns his alms by asking for them, or that a debtor pays his debt by asking his creditor to forgive it. Regarding the second: fasting is a morally neutral act, no different in nature from eating and drinking. By itself it contributes nothing toward obtaining the kingdom of heaven — no more than eating and drinking does. Regarding the third: almsgiving cannot be a work of satisfaction for sins. When we give alms as we ought, we are only doing our duty — what we are already obligated to do. Saying that by doing our duty we can satisfy God's justice for the punishment of our sins is like saying a person can pay one debt by paying another. These three things are fruits of faith, but they are not works of satisfaction. The only and all-sufficient satisfaction made to God's justice for our sins is found in the person of Christ, obtained through the merit of His death and obedience. This completes our treatment of satisfaction, and it is important for ordinary believers to learn this doctrine carefully — because the idea of human satisfaction comes naturally and clings stubbornly to the hearts of unregenerate people. When people have sinned and feel the prick of conscience, their instinct is to perform some outward act of humiliation and repentance, thinking this will silence their conscience and that by performing some religious duty they can appease

God's wrath for their sins. Many even think they can satisfy God's justice by reciting the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments — so deeply confused are people on this point.

POINT 7: OF TRADITIONS



Traditions are doctrines passed down from person to person, either by word of mouth or in writing, outside of the written word of God.

OUR CONSENT.

Conclusion 1. We hold that God's word itself was delivered by tradition. God first revealed His will to Adam by word of mouth and renewed it to the patriarchs not through writing but through speech, dreams, and other means of inspiration. In this way God's word passed from person to person for approximately two thousand four hundred years, until the time of Moses, who was the first writer of holy Scripture. During this entire period, people worshipped God and held the articles of their faith by tradition — not from human beings but directly from God Himself. The history of the New Testament, as some estimate for about eighty years and others for twenty years or more, also passed from hand to hand by tradition, until the apostles wrote it down, or it was written by others and approved by them.

Conclusion 2. We hold that the prophets, our Savior Christ, and His apostles spoke and did many things that were true and good but were not recorded in Scripture — things that reached us or our ancestors only by tradition. For example, 2 Timothy 3:8 identifies Jannes and Jambres as the magicians who opposed Moses — yet in the Old Testament books they are never named. It is likely Paul learned their names through tradition or from writings then circulating among the Jews. Hebrews 12:21 also records that when Moses saw the terrifying sight at Mount Sinai, he said, 'I am full of fear and trembling' — words not found anywhere in the Old Testament books. In the letter of Jude, there is a reference to the devil disputing with Michael the archangel over the body of Moses — a detail not in Scripture, which suggests the apostle received it from Jewish tradition. That the prophet Isaiah was killed with a carpenter's club is accepted as true but is not recorded in Scripture. Likewise, that the Virgin Mary lived and died a virgin. Many worthy sayings of the apostles and other holy men are recorded by church writers and accepted by us as true, even though they are not found in the Old or New Testament. We hold many things as true that are not written in God's word, provided they are not contrary to it.

Conclusion 3. We hold that the church has authority to establish ordinances, rules, and traditions concerning the time and place of worship, and concerning the order and decency to be observed in it. Paul commends the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 11:2 for keeping the traditions he had passed on to them. In Acts 15, the council at Jerusalem decreed that the Gentile churches should abstain from blood and from things strangled. This decree is called a tradition, and it remained in force among them as long

as the Jews found it offensive. This kind of tradition, whether established by general councils or particular synods, we are careful to maintain and observe — with these qualifications: first, that it prescribes nothing childish or absurd; second, that it not be imposed as any element of God's worship itself; third, that it be kept free from superstition or any idea of merit; and finally, that the church not be burdened with too many of them.

THE DIFFERENCE.

Papists teach that alongside the written word, there are certain unwritten traditions that must be believed as useful and necessary to salvation. These they divide into two kinds: apostolic traditions (delivered by the apostles but not written down) and ecclesiastical traditions (decreed by the church as occasion arises). We hold that Scripture is fully sufficient, containing all doctrines necessary to salvation — whether concerning faith or conduct. We therefore acknowledge no unwritten traditions alongside the written word that are necessary to salvation in such a way that a person who does not believe them cannot be saved.

OUR REASONS.

Testimony 1. Deuteronomy 4:2: 'You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it.' Therefore the written word is sufficient for all doctrines pertaining to salvation. If someone objects that this command applies equally to unwritten and written words, I answer that Moses is speaking only of the

written word — for these very words are a preface he placed before a long commentary on the written law, to make the people more attentive and obedient.

Testimony 2. Isaiah 8:20: 'To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.' Here the prophet teaches what must be done in difficult cases: people must not run to the medium or fortune-teller but to the law and to the testimony. He presents the written word as fully sufficient to resolve every doubt and question of conscience.

Testimony 3. John 20:31: 'These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.' Here the full purpose of the Gospel — and of the entire written word — is stated: to bring people to faith and thereby to salvation. Therefore the whole of Scripture alone is sufficient for this end, without traditions. If someone objects that this verse refers only to Christ's miracles, I answer that miracles apart from Christ's doctrine and knowledge of His sufferings cannot bring anyone to everlasting life. The verse must therefore be understood as referring to Christ's doctrine and not merely to His miracles — as Paul teaches in Galatians 1:8: 'Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed.' Paul also rebukes those who taught differently from what he had taught in 1 Timothy 1:3.

Testimony 4. 2 Timothy 3:16-17: 'All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.' These words contain two arguments for the sufficiency of Scripture without unwritten doc-

trines. First: whatever is useful for these four purposes — teaching all necessary truth, refuting all error, correcting faults in conduct, and training in righteousness — is sufficient for salvation. Scripture serves all four of these purposes. Therefore it is sufficient, and unwritten traditions are unnecessary. Second: whatever can make 'the man of God' — that is, the prophets, apostles, and ministers of the word — complete in all the duties of their calling is sufficient to make all other people complete in every good work. But God's word is able to make the man of God complete. Therefore it is sufficient to prescribe the true and perfect way to everlasting life, without the help of unwritten traditions.

Testimony 5: The testimony of the Church. Tertullian says: 'Take from heretics the opinions they share with the pagans, so that they must defend their positions by Scripture alone — and they cannot stand.' And again: 'We need no searching curiosity after Christ Jesus, and no further inquiry beyond the Gospel. When we believe it, we desire to believe nothing beyond it — for this is what we believe first: that there is nothing more for us to believe.' Jerome, commenting on Matthew 23 regarding the tradition that John the Baptist was killed for foretelling the coming of Christ, says: 'Since this has no authority from Scripture, it may as easily be rejected as accepted.' In these words there is a notable argument against all unwritten traditions. Augustine, in *On Christian Doctrine*, book 2, chapter 9: 'In the passages set down plainly in Scripture are found all the points that concern faith and right living.' Vincent of Lerins says: 'The canon of Scripture is perfect and fully sufficient in itself for all things.'

Beyond these testimonies, other arguments support this point. First: the practice of Christ and His apostles. They always appealed to Scripture to confirm the doctrine they taught. It cannot be shown that they ever confirmed any doctrine by tradition. As Paul says in Acts 26:22: 'I have had God's help to this day, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place.' This shows that we must always return to the written word as sufficient to instruct us in matters of salvation. Second: if believing unwritten traditions were necessary to salvation, we would also need to believe the writings of the ancient church fathers — since apostolic traditions are found nowhere else but in their books. Yet we may not treat their words as the word of God, because they often err, being fallible. For this reason their authority, when they speak of traditions, may be questioned, and we cannot always take them at their word.

OBJECTIONS FOR TRADITIONS.

Objection 1. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 has the apostle telling that church to hold firmly to the traditions they were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter. From this they conclude that, alongside the written word, there are unwritten traditions that must be kept and obeyed. Answer: It is very likely that this letter to the Thessalonians was the first Paul ever wrote to any church, even though it does not hold first place in the collection. When this letter was written, it may well have been the case that some things necessary to salvation had been delivered by word of mouth and

had not yet been written down by any apostle. Nevertheless, those same things were afterward set down in writing, either in the second letter to that church or in Paul's other letters.

Objection 2. The fact that Scripture is Scripture is itself something to be believed — yet that is an unwritten tradition. Therefore there is at least one unwritten tradition we are obligated to believe. Answer: That the books of the Old and New Testament are Scripture is something to be gathered and believed not from bare tradition alone, but from the books themselves. Let a person with the Spirit of discernment read through the individual books and consider the declared author — God Himself — and the content, which is a most divine and absolute truth full of piety, and the manner and style of expression, which carries great majesty in the simplicity of its words. The entire aim of these books is the honor and glory of God alone. Such a person will be convinced that Scripture is Scripture by Scripture itself, and by this means he can distinguish any part of Scripture from all merely human writings. Scripture proves itself to be Scripture. We do not despise the universal consent or tradition of the Church in this matter — which, while it does not compel the conscience, is a significant help in moving us to reverence and regard the writings of the prophets and apostles. This is true not in any one particular place or book, but in every line and page of the whole Bible — to the person who reads with the Spirit of discernment and can recognize the voice of the true Shepherd, as Christ's sheep can.

Objection 3. Some books of the biblical canon are lost — such as the Book of the Wars of the Lord (Numbers 21:14), the Book of Jashar (Joshua 10:13), the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah (1 Kings 14:19), and books by certain prophets: Nathan,

Gad, Iddo, Ahijah, and Shemaiah. Therefore the content of these books must reach us through tradition. Answer: Even granting that some canonical books are lost, Scripture remains sufficient — because whatever content from those books was necessary to salvation is contained in the canonical books that do exist. Moreover, I believe that no part of the canon is actually lost. Paul says in Romans 15:4: 'Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.' He takes it for granted that the whole canon of Scripture was available to him — because books that are lost serve neither for instruction nor for comfort. Furthermore, to claim that any books of Scripture have been lost calls into question both God's providence and the faithfulness of the church, which has been entrusted with keeping God's books and is therefore called 'the pillar and foundation of truth.' As for the Book of Jashar and the Chronicles of the Kings — these were essentially the equivalent of the chronicles of England: political records of events in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, from which the prophets drew what was necessary and incorporated into holy Scripture. As for the books of Iddo, Ahijah, Shemaiah, Gad, and Nathan — these are contained in the books of Kings, Chronicles, and Samuel. As for the books of Solomon that are said to be lost — these did not concern religion or matters of salvation but dealt with philosophical and similar subjects.

Objection 4. On Mount Sinai, Moses received from God, beyond the written law, a more secret doctrine — one he never wrote down but transmitted by word of mouth to the prophets after him. This, the Jews say, is what they have now preserved in their Kabbalah. Answer: This is indeed the position of some Jews, and

in substance a number of papists follow them in it — but we regard it as nothing better than a Jewish fantasy. If Moses had known any secret doctrine beyond the written law, he would never have given the commandment: 'You shall not add anything to it.'

Objection 5. Hebrews 5:12 teaches that God's word comes in two forms — milk and solid food. By 'milk,' we should understand the written word, in which God speaks plainly to the understanding of even the simplest person. But 'solid food' refers to unwritten traditions — a doctrine not to be given to everyone but only to those who are advancing toward maturity. Answer: One and the same word of God is both milk and solid food, depending on how it is presented. When it is delivered broadly and plainly for the simplest person's understanding, it is milk. When it is handled with depth and detail, suited to people of greater understanding, it is solid food. For example, the doctrines of creation, the fall of humanity, and redemption through Christ — when taught simply and plainly — are milk. When their depth is fully opened up, they are solid food. It is therefore a human invention to imagine that 'solid food' refers to some unwritten word.

Objection 6. Many passages of Scripture are disputed, and different groups have their own interpretations — the papists have theirs, and the Protestants have theirs. Since there can be only one truth, when the question is about the meaning of Scripture, recourse must be had to the tradition of the church so that the true sense can be determined and the debate settled. Answer: This does not follow. In disputed passages, Scripture itself is sufficient to declare its own meaning — first, through the analogy of faith, which is the summary of Christian teaching gathered from the clearest passages of Scripture; second, through the context of the passage

and the natural meaning of the words; third, through comparing one passage with another. By these and similar helps found within Scripture itself, we can determine the truest meaning of any passage. Scripture is its own text and its own best commentary. It is wrong to blame Scripture for being the cause of disputes — the problem lies not in Scripture itself but in the misuse of it by people.

This covers our disagreement on traditions — a point on which we must be firm and unwavering, because even among those who have rejected Rome, popish tendencies and inclinations remain widespread. Our ordinary people show a remarkable preference for human traditions — indeed, human nature is more drawn to them than to the word of God. The celebration of our Savior's birth is nothing more than a church custom and tradition, yet people are commonly more conscientious about observing it than about keeping the Lord's Day, which is commanded by the moral law. Human laws have not been enough to stop people from buying and selling on the Sabbath — yet throughout the twelve days of Christmas no one holds market. We see this same tendency in how people respond to preaching: if the preacher quotes Peter and Paul, the congregation counts it as ordinary material, such as anyone could find. But if a man cites Ambrose, Augustine, and the other fathers, he is considered the authority. And again: if a person faces some danger, the first thing he does is run to a fortune-teller or wise man — God's word is apparently not sufficient to comfort and guide him. All of this shows that the Roman religion, rejected with the lips, still lives in the heart. We must therefore learn to honor the written word by ascribing to it every kind of perfection.

POINT 8: OF VOWS



OUR CONSENT.

On the subject of vows, it must be understood that we do not reject them altogether, but only seek to restore the purity of teaching on this point, which the Church of Rome has progressively corrupted and obscured. We hold that a vow is a promise made to God concerning duties to be performed for Him, and it is of two kinds: general and special. The general vow concerns all believers and is made in the covenant, both of the law and of the Gospel. In the covenant of the Gospel there are two actions: one on God's part and one on the person's part. God, in mercy, promises forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. The person, in turn, promises to believe in Christ and to obey God in all His commandments. All people have made this vow to God — the Jews in circumcision, which they also renewed each time they participated in the Passover. In the New Testament, all who are baptized do the same. In baptism, this vow is called 'the pledge of a good conscience,' by which we commit to deny ourselves, believe in Christ, and bring forth the fruits of true repentance. It should be renewed each time we participate in the Lord's Supper. This vow is necessary and must be kept as part of the true worship of God, since it is a prom-

ise in which we commit to perform all the duties commanded by God in either the law or the Gospel. Although we are already bound to these duties — partly by nature and partly by the written word — we may still renew that same obligation through a vow. A person who is already bound may bind himself further, as long as it is to help overcome his own slowness due to lack of zeal and to make himself more diligent in the duties of love toward others and worship toward God. For this reason David swore to keep God's law in Psalm 119:106, even though he was already bound to it by nature and by the written law itself.

The special vow does not apply to all believers but concerns only certain individuals on particular occasions. This kind of vow is also of two types. The first involves ceremonial duties performed as acts of service to God — this was practiced in the Jewish church under the Old Testament. Two examples stand out: first, the Nazirite vow, which God did not require of anyone by commandment but which people undertook voluntarily, with God prescribing the manner and rules for keeping it, including the accompanying rites such as abstaining from wine, not cutting their hair, and similar practices. The second example is when Jews voluntarily vowed to give to God their house, land, sheep, cattle, or similar things for the support of the ceremonial worship — of which God also gives rules in Leviticus 27. These vows were part of the Jewish ceremonial law through which God trained the Jews in the Old Testament. When observed by them, they were elements of true worship — but this is no longer the case under the Gospel, since they have all been abolished along with the ceremonial law, which Christ brought to its end at His death on the cross. It is true that Paul made and kept such a vow in the New Testament period (Acts

18), but not as an element of worship. He did it as a matter of indifference for that time, accommodating himself to the weakness of the Jews so that by this means he might better bring them to Christ. As for Christ being called a Nazarite in Matthew 2:23, this must not be taken to mean He belonged to that specific order — since He did not abstain from wine. Rather, He was called by that name because He was the reality and fulfillment of what that order represented. The Nazirite order signified that God's church was a set-apart people, chosen out of the world, and that Christ in His holiness was also separated from all sinners. Vows concerning foods, drinks, clothing, touching, tasting, times, places, and days were particular to the Jewish people.

The second kind of special vow is when a person freely promises to perform some outward and physical practice for a good purpose. This kind of vow, when made properly, is lawful and belongs to both the Old and New Testament church. In the Old Testament we have the example of the Rechabites (Jeremiah 35), who at the direction of their ancestor Jonadab abstained from wine and strong drink and from planting vineyards and orchards. Jonadab's intention was simply to prepare them for their future circumstances — teaching them to live as strangers in a foreign land and to endure hardship. In the New Testament we have similar grounds for making vows. For example, if a person finds that drinking wine or strong drink makes him prone to drunkenness, he may vow to himself to abstain from wine or strong drink for as long as he finds that drinking it stirs up that weakness and creates occasion for sin. In this same category are vows in which we purpose and promise to God to observe set times of fasting, to commit ourselves to prayer and reading of holy Scripture, to give specific

alms for particular causes known to ourselves, and to perform various similar duties. To avoid mistakes in making such vows, certain rules must be kept in mind. First, the vow must be agreeable to God's will and word — if it is not, both the making and the keeping of it is sin. Vows must not bind us to wrongdoing. Second, it must be made in a way that is consistent with Christian liberty, for we may not bind the conscience with things God has left free. Christian liberty gives us the free use of all indifferent things, as long as we are not causing offense. It follows that vows must be made, kept, or not kept insofar as they can or cannot stand with the liberty purchased for us by Christ. Third, the vow must be made with the consent of one's superiors, if one is under authority. Among the Jews, for example, a daughter's vow was not binding unless her parents consented to it. Fourth, the vow must be within the maker's power and ability — a vow of something impossible is no vow at all. Fifth, it must be consistent with the calling of the person who makes it — both his general calling as a Christian and his specific calling in life. If it conflicts with either, it is unlawful. Sixth, it must be made with deliberation. Rash vows are not lawful, even if the thing vowed is itself lawful. Seventh, the aim must be good — to strengthen and exercise the gifts of faith, prayer, repentance, obedience, and other virtues of the mind, or to express gratitude to God for blessings received. These are the principal rules to observe in making vows. It must also be remembered that vows made in this manner are not in themselves a form of God's worship but only aids and supports toward it. This is how we are to regard all vows in the New Testament era.

THE DISSENT OR DIFFERENCE.

The points of difference between us on vows are mainly three. First, the Church of Rome teaches that in the New Testament era we are just as obligated to make vows as the Jewish church was, including vows involving outward practices. We disagree — the ceremonial law has now been abolished, and we have only two ceremonies commanded to be observed: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, we are not as strictly bound to make or keep vows as the Jews were, because they had an explicit commandment to do so, and we have none. They appeal to Isaiah 19:21 in support, where the prophet, speaking of the Gospel era, says: 'The Egyptians will know the Lord and will make vows to Him and perform them.' I answer in two ways. First: the prophet here expresses the spiritual worship of the New Testament era in the language of the ceremonial worship then in use — as he also does in the last chapter of his book, where he calls the ministers of the New Testament 'priests and Levites.' Second: we grant that the New Testament church makes vows to God, but these are vows of moral and evangelical duties that must not be omitted. Each time we come to the Lord's Table, we inwardly renew the vow and promise of obedience. And even where vows are made concerning indifferent things and actions, they are not themselves elements of God's worship — which is the very point at issue.

They also appeal to Psalm 76:11: 'Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them.' They say this commandment binds all people. Answer: That commandment first binds the Jews to the making of ceremonial vows. Furthermore, David here speaks of vowing praise and thanksgiving to God — as he explains himself in Psalm

56:12: 'Your vows are binding upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings to You.' This vow does concern all people, because it involves a moral duty — giving glory to God.

Second point of difference. The Church of Rome also teaches that vows made even of things not commanded — such as food, drink, clothing, and the like — are elements of God's worship and tend toward a state of perfection, in that keeping them brings a person to a higher condition than keeping the law alone can achieve. We plainly deny this, holding that lawful vows are supports for God's worship, not the worship itself. Paul says plainly in 1 Timothy 4:8: 'Bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things.' Furthermore, as God's kingdom is, so must His worship be. God's kingdom does not consist in outward things such as eating, drinking, and similar actions — and therefore His worship does not consist in outward things either.

Third point of difference. The Church of Rome endorses vows that are not consistent with the rules set out above, and on this point we must also disagree. The first and most significant is the vow of celibacy — by which a person promises to God to remain sexually abstinent, living unmarried for life. This kind of vow is directly contrary to the word of God and therefore unlawful. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:9: 'If they do not have self-control, let them marry.' In 1 Timothy 4:1 he calls it a doctrine of demons to forbid marriage. And Hebrews 13:4 says: 'Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled.' Furthermore, this vow exceeds what the person making it can guarantee — for celibacy is a gift of God, which He gives not to all but to whom He wills, when He wills, and for as long as He wills. They claim that fasting and prayer can obtain the gift of celibacy when it is lacking.

This is not so. God's gifts are of two kinds: some are given to all believers, such as faith, repentance, and the fear of God; others are given only to some, such as the gift of celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:7): 'I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.' If we fast and pray for an increase of the common gifts — faith, repentance, and all that is necessary to salvation — we may obtain them in some measure. The same cannot be said for particular gifts. A child of God may pray for health or wealth and receive neither in this life, because God may not will to grant these blessings to everyone. Paul prayed three times to be delivered from a temptation and did not receive what he asked for. Similarly, a person may pray for the gift of celibacy and never receive it — because it may be God's will to save that person without it. We therefore regard this vow as something that has produced and continues to produce innumerable evils in the world. Note, however, how we take this position: although we reject the vow of celibacy, we have no objection to the single life itself and commend it in its place. Marriage is better in two respects: first, God has ordained it as a remedy for those who lack self-control; second, it is the nursery of both church and society, raising up a seed for God and enlarging His kingdom. Yet the single life, for those who have the gift of celibacy, is in some respects preferable. First, it provides freedom during persecution (1 Corinthians 7:26): 'I think then that this is good in view of the present distress.' Second, it frees a person from the ordinary cares, troubles, and distractions of family life (verse 28): 'Such people will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.' Third, single people can generally worship God with greater ease and undistracted focus — provided, of course, that

they have the gift of celibacy (verse 34): 'The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit.'

Furthermore, while we reject the vow of celibacy, we hold and teach that men and women who are genuinely assured they have the gift of celibacy may firmly and deliberately resolve to live a single life. As 1 Corinthians 7:37 says: 'He who stands firm in his heart, having no compulsion but having authority over his own will, and has decided in his own heart to keep his own virgin, he will do well.' We embrace the saying of Theodoret on 1 Timothy 4: 'He does not blame single life or celibacy, but he accuses those who by binding law compel men to pursue these.' People made themselves celibate for the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:12) — not by vow but by a deliberate purpose of heart, which is far less binding than a vow and may be changed as circumstances require. A vow, once made, cannot be changed unless it clearly proves to be unlawful.

Third: for those who are genuinely able to live celibate, choosing single life for the reasons mentioned above — we do not regard this as a counsel of perfection, but we do acknowledge it may be a counsel of practical benefit and outward ease. This is in line with what Paul says in verse 25: 'I give an opinion' — and in verse 35: 'This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you.'

Finally, we believe that if anyone with the gift of celibacy makes a vow to remain single but then marries while that gift remains, he has sinned — not because he married, but because he broke his vow. Augustine said the same of widows who married after making such a vow, in his book *On the Good of Widowhood*, chapter 9.

The second condemned vow is the vow of poverty and monastic life — in which a person gives away everything he has to the poor and devotes himself entirely to prayer and fasting. This vow is contrary to the will of God. Acts 20:35 says: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Proverbs 30:8 says: 'Give me neither poverty nor riches.' Deuteronomy 28:22 numbers poverty among the curses of the law — and none of those are things to be vowed. The Holy Spirit's rule in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 is: 'If anyone is not willing to work, he is not to eat.' And verse 12: 'We command and exhort such persons to work quietly and to eat their own bread.' When people withdraw from ordinary society to devote themselves only to prayer and fasting, they are living in no lawful calling. This vow is also contrary to the general vow made at baptism, because it releases a person from various duties of the moral law and changes the proper purpose of human life. Every person must have two callings. The first is the general calling as a Christian, by which he worships God and fulfills duties of love toward others. The second is a particular calling, suited to his gifts, in which he serves other people in some function belonging to either the church or the society of which he is a member. The first must be performed through the second, and the second must be carried out in conjunction with the first. The purpose of human life is not only to serve God through the duties of the first table of the law, but to serve God by serving others in the duties of the second table. This is why Paul calls love of neighbor the fulfillment of the whole law (Romans 13:10) — because the law of God is practiced not in isolation but in and through love of neighbor. Given all this, it is evident that vowed poverty in monastic life produces people who are useless members of both church and society.

While we reject this vow as well, we do so while affirming these qualifications. First, a person may forsake all his possessions in response to a specific divine calling — as the apostles did when they were sent to preach the Gospel throughout the whole world. Second, possessions may be forsaken — indeed, wife, children, parents, siblings, and everything — in the case of open confession of faith: that is, when a person is persecuted for the religion of Christ and compelled to give up everything he has. In that case, the duties of the second table give way to the duties of the first (Mark 10:29). And during a time of persecution, people may rightly withdraw — when a genuine occasion is provided — and take refuge in remote places or wilderness areas (Hebrews 11:37). But in times of peace, I see no case for a solitary life. If it is argued that people withdraw for contemplation and spiritual practice, I say again that God's grace can be exercised just as well in a family as in a monastery. The family is in fact a school of God, in which those who have even a spark of grace can learn and practice many virtues — acknowledging God, calling on Him, fearing Him, loving others, showing generosity, exercising patience and meekness, and being faithful. Indeed, there are more opportunities for doing and receiving good in a household than there are or can be in a cloister. Third, we do not condemn the ancient and early monks, though we cannot approve of everything about them. They did not live as idle people — they worked with their own hands as they ought, and many of them were married. In their food, drink, clothing, rule, vows, and entire way of life, they differed from the monks of our time as much as heaven differs from earth.

The third condemned vow is the vow of regular obedience — by which people bind themselves to keep some devised rule or order, which typically consists of outward practices concerning food, drink, and clothing. This vow is contrary to Christian liberty, which grants the free use of all indifferent things as long as they are not causing offense. Galatians 5:1 says: 'Stand firm in the freedom with which Christ has set us free.' Colossians 2:16 says: 'Let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink.' In conclusion: while the papists make much of these their vows and give little account of the vow made in baptism, we must stand in direct opposition to them — not only in doctrine but in practice. We ought to be especially careful to fulfill the vows we have made to God according to His commandment. In our creation we made a vow of obedience, and upon being received into the covenant of grace, we vowed to believe in Christ and to bring forth the fruits of new obedience. This vow is renewed every time we come to the Lord's Table. Our duty is therefore to keep it before God, as David says: 'Vow to the Lord your God and fulfill it.' If we do not keep our vows, the shame and confusion falls back on us. People place great importance on keeping their word to other people, and rightly so — it is considered a mark of integrity. If we are so careful to keep faith with other people, how much more ought we to keep covenant with God.

POINT 9: OF IMAGES



OUR CONSENT.

Conclusion 1. We acknowledge the civil use of images as freely and fully as the Church of Rome does. By civil use I mean the use made of images in the common life of society, outside the appointed places of solemn worship. That this is lawful is clear because the arts of painting and engraving are ordained by God, and skill in them is a gift of God — as the example of Bezaleel and Aholiab in Exodus 35:30 demonstrates. This use of images may serve several purposes. First, the decoration and beautification of buildings. Solomon adorned his throne with images of lions, and the Lord commanded His temple to be decorated with images of palm trees, pomegranates, bulls, cherubim, and the like. Second, the marking of coins — a practice of emperors and rulers throughout all nations. When Christ was asked in Matthew 22 whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, He asked for a coin and said: 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They replied, 'Caesar's.' He then said, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's' — approving, not condemning, the image stamped on the coin. Third, images serve to keep in memory departed friends whom we hold in high regard. It is likely that this is one of the sources from which

images entered the Roman Church — in the years following the apostles, people privately kept pictures of friends who had died. This practice later made its way into the open congregation, and eventually superstition gained the upper hand and images began to be worshipped.

Conclusion 2. We hold the historical use of images to be good and lawful — that is, to represent to the eye the events of history, whether human or biblical. We therefore believe that scenes from the Bible may be painted in private settings.

Conclusion 3. In one particular case it is lawful to make an image to testify the presence or effects of God's majesty — namely, when God Himself gives a specific command to do so. In this case, Moses made and erected a bronze serpent as a type, sign, and image representing Christ crucified (John 3:14). And the cherubim over the mercy seat served to represent the majesty of God, to whom the angels are subject. The second commandment does not say simply 'You shall not make a carved image,' but with a qualification: 'You shall not make for yourself' — that is, on your own authority and according to your own will.

Conclusion 4. The true images of the New Testament, which we hold and acknowledge, are the doctrine and preaching of the Gospel and all things belonging to it by the word of God. Galatians 3:1 says: 'Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?' It follows from this that the preaching of the word is like a most excellent picture, in which Christ and His benefits are vividly presented to us. We stand with Origen, who says: 'We have no images made by any ordinary craftsman, but only those that are produced and formed by the

word of God — patterns of virtue and representations resembling Christians.' He means that Christians themselves are the true images of Christ.

THE DIFFERENCE.

Our disagreement with the Roman Church on images has three points. First, the Church of Rome holds it lawful to make images representing God — not with respect to His divine nature, but with respect to certain attributes and actions. We hold the opposite: it is unlawful for us to make any image in any way representing the true God, or to use any image as part of religious worship, whether of God or of any creature. The second commandment states plainly in Exodus 20:4: 'You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of what is in heaven above.' The papists say the commandment refers to images of false gods. But it must be understood as referring to images of the true God, Jehovah. It forbids us to represent God — whether in His nature, His attributes, or His works — or to use any representation of Him for any sacred purpose, even as a memory aid in worship. The Holy Spirit, as the best interpreter of His own word, makes this plain in Deuteronomy 4:15-16: 'You did not see any form at all on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb' — neither of a false god nor of the true God — 'so watch yourselves carefully, that you do not act corruptly and make a carved image for yourselves in the form of any figure.' Isaiah, in chapter 40:18, rebukes idolaters by asking: 'To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?' And in verse 21: 'Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning?' — as if to say: Have you forgotten the second commandment that God gave your fathers? He

plainly condemns all attempts to represent the true God in images. They also say that the 'carved images' forbidden in the second commandment refers to idols — that is, things people worship as gods. But if that were the case, we would be confusing the first and second commandments. The first commandment — 'You shall have no other gods before Me' — already forbids all false gods that people wickedly invent for themselves. Their distinction — that an image represents something real while an idol represents something imaginary — is false. Tertullian says every form and representation is to be called an idol. Isidore says the pagans used the words 'image' and 'idol' interchangeably with the same meaning. Stephen, in his defense in Acts 7:41, calls the golden calf an idol. Jerome says that idols are images of dead people. The ancient teachers all agree on this. Lactantius says: 'Where images are kept for the sake of religion, there is no religion.' The Council of Elvira decreed that nothing should be painted on the walls of churches that the people would adore. Origen says: 'We do not permit anyone to worship Jesus at altars, images, or temples — for it is written, You shall have no other gods.' Epiphanius says: 'It is contrary to Scripture to see the image of Christ or of any saint hanging in the church.' At the Seventh Council of Constantinople, these words of Epiphanius were cited: 'Remember, beloved children, not to bring images into the church, nor place them at the sites where the saints are buried. Always carry God in your hearts. Do not allow them even in a private home, for a Christian should be occupied not with the eyes but with the meditation of the mind.'

ARGUMENTS OF THE PAPISTS.

Objection 1. Cherubim — images of angels — were erected on the mercy seat in Solomon's temple, the very place where God was worshipped, and by them the majesty of God was represented. Therefore it is lawful to make images representing God. Answer: The cherubim were erected by a specific command from God, who prescribed their very form and the place where they were to be set. Moses had God's warrant for making them — without it, he would have sinned. Let the papists show a similar warrant for their images if they can. Second: the cherubim were placed in the Holy of Holies, the innermost part of the temple, entirely removed from the sight of the people, who only knew of them by report. Only the high priest saw them, and that only once a year. And as for the cherubim in the outer areas of the temple, which could be seen — these were not to be worshipped (Exodus 20:4). Therefore the cherubim do nothing at all to justify the use of images in the Roman Church.

Objection 2. God appeared in the form of a man to Abraham (Genesis 18) and to Daniel, who saw the Ancient of Days seated on a throne (Daniel 7). Since God appeared in such forms, He may be represented in them — therefore it is lawful to depict God in the form of a man or in any similar form in which He revealed Himself. Answer: The premise is false. God may appear in whatever form it pleases His majesty, but it does not follow that human beings therefore have the right to represent God in those forms. We have no liberty to represent Him in any form at all unless He specifically commands it. Furthermore: when God appeared in the form of a man, that form was a sign of His presence only for the duration of that appearance — just as the bread and wine in the sacrament are signs of Christ's body and blood not permanently

but only during the administration. And when the Holy Spirit appeared in the likeness of a dove, that likeness was a sign of His presence only for as long as He appeared in that form. Therefore, whoever would use such forms to represent the Trinity greatly dishonors God and does something for which he has no warrant.

Objection 3. A person is the image of God — but it is lawful to paint a person, therefore it is lawful to make an image of God. Answer: This is nothing more than wordplay. First, a person cannot be painted as the image of God, since that image consists in the spiritual gifts of righteousness and true holiness — not in physical appearance. Second, an image of a person may be painted for civil or historical purposes. But to paint any person for the purpose of representing God, or for use in worship to help us remember and honor God — that is unlawful. Their other arguments on this point are too weak to warrant a response and I will pass over them.

Second difference. The Church of Rome teaches and maintains that images of God and of the saints may be worshipped with religious honor — particularly the crucifix. Thomas Aquinas argued: since the cross represents Christ, who died on the cross and is to be worshipped with divine honor, it follows that the cross is also to be worshipped. We hold the contrary. Our main ground is the second commandment, which has two parts: the first forbids making images to represent the true God; the second forbids worshipping them or worshipping God through them, in the words 'You shall not bow down to them.' There can be no act of worship less than bowing the knee. Furthermore: the bronze serpent was a type and image of Christ crucified (John 3:14), appointed by God Himself. Yet when the people burned incense to it, Hezekiah destroyed it — and is commended for doing so (2 Kings 18:4). And when the devil

offered Christ the entire world if He would simply bow down to him, Christ refused, saying: 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only' (Matthew 4:10). It is lawful to show civil reverence to another person, but to offer a person religious honor is unlawful. All religious worship is prescribed in the first table of the law, and the honor due to people is prescribed only in the second table, in its first commandment: 'Honor your father' — which is therefore civil honor, not religious. Even the humblest person is a more excellent image of God than all the images of God or the saints that people have ever devised. Augustine, and centuries later Gregory, both plainly deny that images are to be adored.

The papists defend their view with these arguments. Psalm 99:5: 'Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool.' Answer: The text is to be understood as: bow before God at His footstool — that is, at the ark and mercy seat, where He had promised His presence. The words say not 'bow to the ark' but 'bow to God at the ark.'

Objection 2. Exodus 3:5: God said to Moses: 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' If holy places must be treated with reverence, then surely holy images — such as the cross of Christ and the like — must be also. Answer: God commanded the removal of sandals to strike Moses with a sense of religious reverence — not for the place, but for His own majesty, whose presence made the place holy. Let them show a similar warrant for their images.

Objection 3. It is lawful to kneel before the throne of a king or queen in their absence — therefore it is surely even more appropriate to kneel before the images of God and of the glorified saints, who are absent from us. Answer: Kneeling before a royal throne is

nothing more than a civil act — a sign of civil reverence by which loyal subjects, when occasion calls, demonstrate their duty and submission to their lawful rulers. This kneeling, done in this manner and for no other purpose, has sufficient warrant in God's word. But kneeling before the image of a departed saint is religious worship, and consequently something more than civil reverence — as the papists themselves acknowledge. The argument therefore proves nothing, unless they are prepared to keep the two kinds of reverence entirely separate.

Third difference. The papists also teach that it is lawful to worship God in the images in which He appeared to people — worshipping the Father in the image of an old man, the Son in the image of a crucified man, and the Holy Spirit in the likeness of a dove. We hold it unlawful to worship God in, by, or at any image — for this is precisely what the second commandment forbids. The Israelites' act of worshipping the golden calf in Exodus 32 is condemned as outright idolatry — even though they were not worshipping the calf itself but God through the calf. In verse 5, Aaron says: 'Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord,' making clear that the calf was merely a sign of the Lord they were worshipping. The papists may say it appears the Israelites were worshipping the calf, since Aaron says in verse 4: 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.' Answer: Aaron's meaning is simply that the golden calf was a sign of the presence of the true God. The name of the thing signified is given to the sign — just as on stage, the person playing the king is called the king. Augustine says that images are commonly called by the names of the things they represent, as the appearance of Samuel is called Samuel. And we must not take the Israelites for fools — they would not have supposed

that a calf made from their earrings, only a day or two old, could be the God who had brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand many days before.

These are the points of difference regarding images, on which we must remain permanently at odds with the Church of Rome. They err in the very foundation of religion, effectively making an idol of the true God, worshipping a different Christ than we do — under new names, sustaining the idolatry of the pagans. We have therefore separated from them, and must continue to do so, because they are idolaters, as I have demonstrated.

POINT 10: OF THE REAL PRESENCE



OUR CONSENT.

We hold and believe in a presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper — not a pretended but a true and real presence. This presence must be considered in two respects: first, in relation to the signs, and second, in relation to those who receive the sacrament. Regarding the first: we hold and teach that Christ's body and blood are truly present with the bread and wine, which are signs in the sacrament. But in what sense? Not in terms of physical location or of existing side by side, but by sacramental relation — in this way: when a word is spoken, the sound reaches the ear and at the same moment the thing signified comes to the mind. In this relational sense, the word and the thing it refers to are both present together. In the same way, at the Lord's Table, bread and wine must not be considered merely as physical substances, but as outward signs in relation to the body and blood of Christ. This relation, arising from the very institution of the sacrament, consists in this: when the elements of bread and wine are present to the hand and mouth of the receiver, at that very same moment the body and blood of Christ are presented to the mind. In this way, and no other, Christ is truly

present with the signs. The second presence is in relation to those who receive the sacrament, to whose believing hearts Christ is also truly present. What kind of presence is this? It corresponds to the kind of communion that occurs in the sacrament — and it is by the nature of that communion that we must understand the presence. The communion takes place as follows: God the Father, according to the terms of the evangelical covenant, gives Christ in this sacrament as truly and really as anything can be given to a person — not partially or in installments, but whole Christ, both God and man. In Christ there are two natures: the divine and the human. The divine nature is not given in terms of its substance or essence, but only in terms of its power, merits, and operation conveyed into the human nature. In this sacrament, Christ's whole humanity is given — both body and soul — in this order: first, the humanity itself in substance, and that truly; then, the merits and benefits of that humanity, namely the satisfaction made by and in the humanity to the justice of God. Thus the entire humanity, with all its benefits, is given wholly and together. The two distinct signs of bread and wine do not signify two separate givings — the body separately and the blood separately — but the full and perfect nourishment of our souls. Furthermore, the benefits of Christ's humanity are given in different ways. Some are given by imputation — an act of God by which what Christ did is counted as done by us. In this way God has given Christ's suffering and obedience. Others are given by a kind of transmission: just as one candle is lit from another and one torch's light passes to twenty candles, so the inherent righteousness of every believer flows from the storehouse of righteousness in Christ's humanity. The righteousness of all the members is only the fruit of Christ's righteousness, just as the natural corruption of

all humanity is only the fruit of the original sin in Adam. This is how God gives Christ — truly and really. And when God gives Christ, He also gives at the same time the Spirit of Christ. That Spirit creates in the heart of the receiver the instrument of true faith, by which the heart truly receives Christ as given by God, resting on the promise God has made to give Christ and His righteousness to every true believer. When God gives Christ with His benefits, and a person by faith receives these as they are given, there arises the union between every faithful receiver and Christ Himself. This union is not imaginary but a real, true, and close joining — closer than any other — because it is formed by a solemn giving and receiving that passes between God and the person, and by the bond of one and the same Spirit. To come to the point: since there is a real union and consequently a real communion between us and Christ, there must therefore be such a presence in which Christ is truly and really present to the heart of the person who receives the sacrament in faith. This is the extent of our agreement with the Roman Church on real presence.

THE DISSENT.

We disagree not about the presence itself, but only about the manner of it. We hold a real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament — but not a local, bodily, or substantial presence. Rather, it is spiritual and mystical: to the signs by sacramental relation, and to the communicants by faith alone. The Church of Rome, in contrast, maintains transubstantiation — a local, bodily, and substantial presence of Christ's body and blood, by a change and conversion of the bread and wine into that body and blood.

OUR REASONS.

Reason 1. This bodily presence undermines several articles of faith. We believe that Christ's body was made from the pure substance of the Virgin Mary — once, at the moment of His conception by the Holy Spirit and birth. But this cannot stand if Christ's body is made from bread and His blood from wine, as must follow if there is a real conversion of substances in the sacrament rather than any succession or annihilation — unless we are asked to believe contradictions: that His body was made from the Virgin and not from the Virgin; made once and yet not once but many times. Furthermore, if His body and blood are present under the forms of bread and wine, then He has not yet ascended into heaven but remains still among us. Nor can He be said to come from heaven at the day of judgment, since the One who is to come from there to judge the living and the dead must currently be absent from the earth. Augustine says that Christ according to His majesty, providence, and grace is present with us to the end of the world, but according to His assumed flesh He is not always with us. Cyril says He is absent in body but present in power, by which all things are governed. Vigilius says: 'He has gone from us according to His humanity; He has left us in His human nature; in the form of a servant He is absent from us. When His flesh was on earth it was not in heaven; being on earth He was not in heaven; and being now in heaven He is not on earth.' Fulgentius says: 'One and the same Christ, according to His human substance, was absent from heaven when He was on earth, and left the earth when He ascended into heaven.'

Reason 2. This bodily presence overturns the nature of a true body — whose common nature and essential property is to have length, breadth, and thickness. Take these away, and a body is no longer a body. Because of these three dimensions, a body can occupy only one place at a time — as Aristotle observed, the defining property of a body is to be located somewhere, so that one can say where it is. Those who hold that Christ's body is in many places at once make it no body at all, but rather something like an infinite spirit. They appeal to God's omnipotence — which is certainly true, but in matters like this we must not debate what God is capable of doing, but what He has chosen to do. I say further: because God is omnipotent, there are in fact certain things He cannot do — such as deny Himself, lie, or make both parts of a contradiction true at the same time. To come to the point: if God were to make Christ's very body present in many places at once, He would be making it no body while it remains a body — at once confined to one specific place and not confined, visible in heaven and invisible in the sacrament. He would be making contradictions true, which is contrary to His nature and reflects limitation rather than power. Augustine speaks to this: 'If He could lie, deceive, be deceived, act unjustly, He would not be omnipotent. And therefore He is omnipotent because He cannot do these things.' And again: 'He is called omnipotent by doing what He wills, not by doing what He does not will — for if the latter were to happen, He would not be omnipotent.'

Reason 3. Transubstantiation undermines the very nature of the Lord's Supper itself. Every sacrament must have a sign, a thing signified, and a proper relation between the two. But the Roman doctrine of real presence destroys all three — for when the bread is truly turned into Christ's body and the wine into His blood, the

sign is abolished and nothing remains but the outward forms or appearances of bread and wine. It also abolishes the purposes of the sacrament. One purpose is to remember Christ until He comes again. But if He is bodily present in the sacrament, there is no need to remember Him — since aids to memory are used for things that are absent. Another purpose is to nourish the soul for everlasting life. But by transubstantiation, the primary feeding is of the body and not of the soul — and the soul can only be fed with spiritual food. Though the body may benefit from food intended for the soul, the soul cannot be fed with bodily food.

Reason 4. In the sacrament, Christ's body is received as it was crucified and His blood as it was shed on the cross. But at this present time, Christ's crucified body remains a body — just not a crucified body, because the act of crucifying has ceased. Therefore it is faith alone that makes Christ crucified present to us in the sacrament. Furthermore: the blood that poured from Christ's feet, hands, and side on the cross was not gathered up and restored to His veins. Such a gathering would have been unnecessary, since after the resurrection He no longer lived a natural but a spiritual life — and no one knows what became of that blood. The papist therefore cannot say it is present locally under the form of wine. We may more rightly say that it is received spiritually by faith, which has the property of giving reality to things that are not physically present.

Reason 5. 1 Corinthians 10:3-4 says: 'Our fathers all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.' The fathers of the Old Testament could not eat His crucified body or drink His shed blood physically — since at

that time His body and blood did not yet exist. They could only do so spiritually, by faith. The papists reply that the fathers ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink as each other, not as us. But this reading contradicts the text. Paul's purpose is to prove that the Israelites were in every respect equal to the Corinthians — because they ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink as the Corinthians. Otherwise the argument would not prove what he is trying to establish, namely that the Israelites were in no way inferior to the Corinthians.

Reason 6. Just as it may be said that the Sabbath was made for people and not people for the Sabbath, so it may be said that the Lord's Supper was made for people and not people for it. Therefore people are more excellent than the sacrament. But if the signs of bread and wine are truly converted into the body and blood of Christ, then the sacrament is infinitely greater than a human being — for in his best state a person is only joined to Christ and made a member of His mystical body, whereas the bread and wine would actually become Christ Himself. But the sacrament and its outward elements are not in fact greater than a human being, since the end is always greater than the thing ordained to serve it. It therefore follows that Christ's presence is not bodily but spiritual. Furthermore: in the Lord's Supper, every believer receives whole Christ — God and man — though not the divine nature itself. But by this supposed physical eating, we would receive not whole Christ but only a part of His humanity. Therefore in the sacrament there is no physical eating, and consequently no bodily presence.

Reason 7: The testimony of the ancient Church. Theodoret says: 'The same Christ who called His natural body food and bread, and who called Himself a vine, condescended to give the

visible signs the name of His own body — not changing their nature, but adding grace to nature.' And: 'The mystical signs after sanctification do not lose their proper nature — they remain in their original nature and keep their original figure and form. They can be touched and seen as before.' Gelasius says: 'Bread and wine pass over into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, yet in such a way that the substance and nature of bread and wine do not cease. They are converted into the divine substance, yet the bread and wine remain in the properties of their nature.' Peter Lombard says: 'If someone asks what kind of conversion this is — whether formal, substantial, or of some other kind — I am not able to define it.' That the church fathers did not hold to transubstantiation I prove by several points. First: in earlier times it was the practice to burn with fire whatever of the sacrament remained after the administration. Second: by the sacramental union of bread and wine with the body and blood of Christ, the fathers used to confirm the personal union of Christ's humanity with His divine nature against heretics. They would not have used this argument if they had believed in the Roman doctrine of real presence. Third: it was a custom in Constantinople that when much of the sacrament remained after the administration, young children were brought from school to eat the remainder — even though those same children were excluded from the Lord's Table. This clearly shows that the church in those days regarded the bread after the administration as ordinary bread. It was also once a practice in the Roman Church for the wine to be consecrated by dipping into it bread that had already been consecrated — but this practice is incompatible with the real presence, in which the bread is said to be converted into both body and blood. Nicholas Cabasilas says: 'After saying some words to

the people, he lifts their minds and raises their thoughts from earth and says, "Lift up your hearts — let us set our minds on things above and not on things that are on the earth."

OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

Objection 1. John 6:55: 'My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.' Therefore, they say, Christ's body must be eaten with the mouth and His blood drunk accordingly. Answer: The entire chapter must be understood as speaking of a spiritual eating of Christ. His body is true food — but spiritual food — and His blood is spiritual drink, to be received not by the mouth but by faith. This is the very point Christ is establishing in this chapter: that to believe in Him, to eat His flesh, and to drink His blood are all one and the same thing. Furthermore, this chapter cannot be referring to the specific act of eating Christ in the sacrament — for verse 53 states generally: 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.' If these words, which are the heart of the chapter, must be understood as referring to sacramental eating, then no one before Christ's coming was saved — since no one then ate or drank His body or blood physically, as that body and blood did not yet exist. They were present only to the believing heart by faith.

Objection 2. A further argument is drawn from the words of institution: 'This is My body.' Therefore, they say, Christ's body must be taken literally. The objection is also made that when people make their last wills, they speak as plainly as possible — and in this Supper Christ was ratifying His last will and testament, so He spoke plainly, without any figure. Answer: Christ here speaks plainly and also figuratively — for it has always been the Lord's

customary manner, when speaking of sacraments, to give the name of the thing signified to the sign. For example: Genesis 17:10 calls circumcision 'the covenant of God,' and the very next verse, by way of explanation, calls it 'the sign of the covenant.' Exodus 12:11 calls the Passover lamb 'the Lord's Passover' — yet it was only a sign of it. 1 Corinthians 10:4 says 'the rock was Christ.' 1 Corinthians 5:7 calls the Passover lamb 'Christ.' The same figurative language is found in the institution of this sacrament with regard to the cup — which the papists themselves admit is figurative — where Luke 22 says: 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood,' meaning a sign, seal, and pledge of it. The timing of these words must also be considered: they were spoken before Christ's passion, when His body had not yet been crucified nor His blood shed. Therefore neither body nor blood could at that moment be received physically — only by faith. Furthermore, Christ was not only the author but the minister of this sacrament at its institution. If the bread had truly been turned into His body, Christ with His own hands would have taken His own body and blood and given them to His disciples. More than that, He would with His own hands have taken His own flesh and drunk His own blood — He would have eaten Himself. For Christ Himself ate the bread and drank the wine to consecrate His Last Supper with His own person, just as He had consecrated baptism before. And if these words were to be understood literally, then every person eating Christ would become a killer of a human being. Finally: because of the Roman doctrine of real presence, it would follow that our bodies are nourished by bare qualities without any substance — which is philosophically false and incoherent. To handle this and similar absurdities, some papists invent nine miracles in the sacrament — that

Christ's body is as large as it was on the cross yet does not exceed the size of the bread; that accidents exist without a subject; that bread is turned into Christ's body yet is not the matter of that body; that Christ's body is not increased by consecrating many loaves nor diminished by frequent reception; and so on. By this method, any person could easily defend the most absurd position imaginable, if allowed to answer every objection simply by appealing to miracles.

In conclusion: since there is a real communion in the sacrament between Christ and every believing heart, our duty is to give our hearts to Christ — striving to love Him, to rejoice in Him, and to long for Him above all things. All our trust must rest in Him and with Him. Though we are on earth, our hearts and minds must dwell in heaven. This is the true real presence that the ancient church of God has commended to us. In all the ancient liturgies these words were used — and they still appear in the Roman Mass: 'Lift up your hearts. We lift them up to the Lord.' By these words the communicants were urged to direct their minds and faith to Christ seated at the right hand of God. Augustine said: 'If we celebrate the ascension of the Lord with devotion, let us ascend with Him and lift up our hearts.' And again: 'Those who have already risen with Christ in faith and hope are invited to the great table of heaven, to the table of angels, where the true bread is.'

POINT 11: OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS



On this point, I will first explain what is meant by the word 'sacrifice.' A sacrifice may be understood in the proper or improper sense. In the proper sense, it is a solemn and sacred action in which a person offers and consecrates some outward, physical thing to God in order to honor and please Him. In this sense, all the sacrifices of the Old Testament and the offering of Christ on the cross in the New Testament are sacrifices. In the improper sense — that is, only by way of resemblance — the duties of the moral law are also called sacrifices. In addressing this question, I will use the word 'sacrifice' in both its proper sense and in the improper, figurative sense.

OUR CONSENT.

I set out our agreement in two conclusions. Conclusion 1. The Lord's Supper is a sacrifice and may rightly be called one, as it has been called in former ages, for three reasons. First, because it is a memorial of Christ's actual sacrifice on the cross and includes thanksgiving to God for that sacrifice — which thanksgiving is 'the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name'

(Hebrews 13:15). Second, because every communicant there presents himself — body and soul — as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to God. Just as God gives Christ and His benefits to us in this sacrament, so in response we give ourselves to God as servants committed to all dutiful obedience. Third, it is called a sacrifice with reference to the giving that was associated with the sacrament — namely, the alms given to the poor as a testimony of our gratitude to God. For these reasons the ancient fathers called the sacrament an unbloody sacrifice, the table an altar, the ministers priests, and the whole act an oblation — offered not to God alone by the priest, but by the whole congregation together. A canon of one council decrees: 'We ordain that every Lord's Day the offering at the altar be brought by every man and woman, both bread and wine.' Augustine says that women bring a sacrifice to the Lord's altar, that it might be offered by the priest to God. In the ancient writers, the communion of the whole congregation is commonly called the sacrifice or oblation.

Conclusion 2. The very body of Christ is offered in the Lord's Supper. Just as we take the bread to be the body of Christ sacramentally — by resemblance and in no other way — so the breaking of bread is sacramentally the sacrificing or offering of Christ on the cross. For this reason the fathers called the Eucharist an immolation of Christ, because it is a commemoration of His sacrifice on the cross. Augustine writes: 'He does not lie who says Christ was offered — for if sacraments did not bear the resemblance of the things of which they are sacraments, they would in no way be sacraments; but from the resemblance they often take their names.' Again, Christ is sacrificed in the Lord's Supper in the sense that the faith of the communicants makes something past and

completed present to them. Augustine says: 'When we believe in Christ, He is offered for us daily.' And: 'Christ is then slain for each person when he believes that He was slain for him.' Ambrose says: 'Christ is sacrificed daily in the minds of believers, as upon an altar.' Jerome says: 'He is always being offered to believers.'

THE DIFFERENCE.

The Church of Rome makes the Eucharist a real, external, and physical sacrifice offered to God, teaching that the minister is a priest in the proper sense and that in this sacrament he truly and properly offers Christ's body and blood to God the Father under the forms of bread and wine. We acknowledge no real, outward, or bodily sacrifice for the remission of sins — only the one offering of Christ on the cross, made once. This is the main difference between us on this point, and it is of such weight that any church which stubbornly maintains their position on this cannot be a true church of God. This error tears out the very foundation of religion. To show that we hold the truth, I will first confirm our doctrine from Scripture, and then refute their arguments.

OUR REASONS.

Reason 1. Hebrews 9:15, 26, and 10:10 all state that Christ offered Himself once. Therefore not repeatedly — and thus there can be no real or bodily offering of His body and blood in the sacrament. The text is plain. The papists answer: Christ's sacrifice is one in substance, yet in manner of offering it is either bloody or unbloody, and the Holy Spirit speaks only of the bloody sacrifice, which was offered once. Answer: The author of Hebrews takes it as given that

Christ's sacrifice is one, and that it is the bloody sacrifice. He says in Hebrews 9:25: 'Nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own.' Verse 26: 'Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.' Verse 22: 'Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.' These words make plain that Scripture knows nothing of a twofold manner of sacrificing Christ. Any theological distinction not founded in the written word is a human invention. And if this distinction were valid, how would the apostle's argument stand? He says Christ did not offer Himself often — because He suffered only once.

Reason 2. The Roman Church holds that the sacrifice in the Lord's Supper is one in substance with the sacrifice offered on the cross. If that is so, then the sacramental sacrifice must be either a continuation of the sacrifice begun on the cross or a repetition of it. Let them choose one of these two options. If they say it is a continuation — with Christ as the one who began it and the priest as the one who completes it — they make it imperfect. To continue something until it is finished is to bring it to its completion; but Christ's sacrifice on the cross was completely finished, as His own words show: 'It is finished.' If they say it is a repetition, they again make it imperfect — for that is precisely the argument the Holy Spirit uses to prove that the Old Testament sacrifices were imperfect: because they had to be repeated.

Reason 3. A real and outward sacrifice within a sacrament is contrary to the very nature of a sacrament — and especially of the Lord's Supper, one of whose purposes is to keep in memory the

sacrifice of Christ. Every act of remembrance is of something absent, past, and completed. If Christ is truly and bodily sacrificed daily, the sacrament is no longer a fitting memorial of His sacrifice. Furthermore, the principal purpose for which the sacrament was ordained is that God might give and we might receive Christ with His benefits. Therefore the giving, receiving, eating, and drinking are the primary actions here. In a real sacrifice, however, God does not give Christ to the priest to receive — rather, the priest gives and offers Christ to God, and God receives something from us. To get around this, they say this sacrifice does not serve to make any satisfaction to God, but only to apply to us the satisfaction Christ already made. But this answer still works against the nature of a sacrament, in which God gives Christ to us — whereas in a sacrifice, a person gives something to God. A sacrifice is therefore no fitting means for God to give anything to us.

Reason 4. In Hebrews 7:24-25, the Holy Spirit distinguishes Christ as the high priest of the New Testament from all the Levitical priests in this way: they were many, each succeeding the other, while He is only one, holding an eternal priesthood that cannot be transferred to any other. If this distinction is valid, then Christ alone — in His own person — must be the priest of the New Testament, with no one alongside Him or under Him. Otherwise, the New Testament would have more priests than the Old. If they reply that the entire priestly action remains in Christ and the minister is merely an instrument under Him, I say again this is false — because the entire offering is performed by the priest himself, and whoever does everything is more than a mere instrument.

Reason 5. If the priest truly offers Christ's real body and blood to God for the pardon of sins, then a human being has become a mediator between God and Christ. The Church of Rome says the priest in the Mass is a priest in the proper sense, and his sacrifice a real sacrifice — differing from Christ's sacrifice on the cross only in the manner of offering. The very Canon of the Mass implies as much, when it asks God to accept their gifts and offerings — namely Christ Himself being offered — just as He accepted the sacrifices of Abel and Noah. But it is absurd to think that any creature could be a mediator between Christ and God. Therefore it is impossible for any creature to offer Christ to God.

Reason 6: The testimony of the ancient Church. A council held at Toledo in Spain rebuked ministers who offered sacrifice multiple times in one day without receiving communion. The canon reads: 'It has been reported to us that certain priests do not receive the grace of holy communion as many times as they offer sacrifices in a single day — that when they offer many sacrifices to God in one day, they abstain from communion in all those oblations.' Note here: in the ancient church, these sacrifices in the Mass were nothing more than forms of divine service, since even the priest himself did not receive communion. Another council uses the word 'Mass' simply for a form of prayer: 'It has pleased us that prayers, supplications, and Masses approved by the council be used.' In this sense, speaking of composing or preparing Masses makes sense — for a propitiatory sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ admits of no such composition. Abbot Paschasius says: 'Because we sin daily, Christ is sacrificed for us mystically, and His passion is given in mystery.' These words argue against any real, physical sacrifice. He explains himself even more plainly in chapter 10: 'The blood is

drunk in mystery spiritually, and everything we eat is spiritual.' In chapter 12: 'The priest distributes to each person not as much as the outward appearance offers, but as much as faith receives.' In chapter 13: 'The full resemblance is outward, and the immaculate flesh of the Lamb is inward through faith — so that truth may not be lacking to the sacrament.' In chapter 6: 'One person eats the flesh of Christ spiritually and drinks His blood; another seems to receive not so much as a morsel of bread from the priest's hand' — his reason being that such people came unprepared. In all these passages, Paschasius speaks of no receiving that is not spiritual — and no sacrifice that is not spiritual.

OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

Objection 1. Genesis 14:18: When Abraham was returning from the defeat of the kings, Melchizedek came out to meet him and brought bread and wine, and he was a priest of the Most High God. They argue that Melchizedek brought out this bread and wine to offer as a sacrifice, since he is called a priest of God. They then reason: since Christ was a priest after the order of Melchizedek, just as Melchizedek offered bread and wine, so Christ under the forms of bread and wine offers Himself as a sacrifice to God. Answer: Melchizedek was a type of Christ not with respect to the act of sacrificing, but with respect to his person and the things belonging to it — all of which are fully explained in Hebrews 7. The summary is this: first, Melchizedek was both king and priest, as was Christ; second, he was a ruler of peace and righteousness, as was Christ; third, he had no father or mother recorded, because Scripture in recounting his history mentions neither the beginning nor the end of his days — and correspondingly Christ had no father as man and

no mother as God; fourth, Melchizedek, being greater than Abraham, blessed him — and Christ by virtue of His priesthood blesses, that is, justifies and sanctifies, all those who share Abraham's faith. The resemblance lies in these things only — not in the offering of bread and wine. Furthermore, the purpose of bringing out the bread and wine was not to make a sacrifice but to refresh Abraham and his servants after returning from battle. Melchizedek is called a priest of the Most High God here not because of any sacrifice but because of his blessing of Abraham, as the natural order of the words shows: 'And he was the priest of the Most High God, and therefore he blessed him.' Third, even if it were granted that he brought out bread and wine as a sacrifice, it would not follow that in the sacrament Christ Himself is to be offered to God under the bare forms of bread and wine. Melchizedek's bread and wine would then be absurd types of not-bread and not-wine, or of the mere appearances of bread and wine in the sacrament.

Objection 2. The Passover lamb was both a sacrifice and a sacrament, and the Eucharist takes the place of it. Answer: The Passover lamb was a sacrament but not a sacrifice. Christ says to His disciples in Mark 14:12: 'Go and prepare for us to sacrifice the Passover' — but the words 'to sacrifice' or 'to offer' often mean nothing more than 'to kill.' When Jacob and Laban made a covenant, it is said that 'Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his kinsmen to eat the meal' (Genesis 31:54) — here 'sacrifice' simply means killing for a feast, not an offering to God. When Saul was searching for his father's donkeys and asked for the seer, a young woman told him to hurry, 'for there is a sacrifice of the people today at the high place' (1 Samuel 9:12). There the

feast at Ramah is called a sacrifice — most likely because a sacrifice was offered to God at its opening. So the Passover may be called a sacrifice because sacrifices were offered during the appointed feast period — yet the Passover meal itself was no more a sacrifice than was the feast at Ramah. And even if it were granted that the Passover was both, it would not substantially help their case — for the Lord's Supper follows from the Passover only in respect of its main purpose, which is the deepening of our communion with Christ.

Objection 3. Malachi 1:11 foretells a pure sacrifice that will be offered in the New Testament era — and that, they say, is the sacrifice of the Mass. Answer: This passage must be understood as referring to a spiritual sacrifice, as becomes clear when compared with 1 Timothy 2:8, where Paul fittingly expounds what the prophet means. Paul says: 'I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.' This is the pure sacrifice of the Gentiles. Justin Martyr says that prayers and thanksgiving are the only perfect sacrifices pleasing to God, and that Christians have been taught to offer these alone. Tertullian says: 'We offer sacrifice for the emperor's health, as God has commanded, with pure prayer.' Irenaeus says that this pure offering, to be made in every place, is the prayers of the saints.

Objection 4. Hebrews 13:10: 'We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.' They argue: if we have an altar, then we must also have a priest and a real sacrifice. Answer: The altar here is not a physical one but a spiritual one — for it is set in contrast with the material tabernacle. What it means is expressed in the very next verse, where the author proves that we have an altar: 'For the bodies of those animals whose blood

is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.' Apply the proof to the thing proved, and we must understand that Christ Himself is both the altar, the priest, and the sacrifice.

Objection 5. Finally, they argue: where both the law and the covenant are changed, there must be both a new priest and a new sacrifice. The New Testament involves a change of both law and covenant — therefore it has both a new priest and a new sacrifice. Answer: All of this may be granted. In the New Testament there is indeed both a new priest and a new sacrifice — but not any Roman priest, only Christ Himself, both God and man. The sacrifice is Christ as He is man; and the altar is Christ as He is God, who in the New Testament offered Himself as a sacrifice to His Father for the sins of the world. Though He was the Lamb of God slain from the beginning of the world — in terms of God's purpose, in terms of the value of His merit, and in terms of faith which makes things future as present — He was not actually offered until the fullness of time came. And having offered Himself once, He remains a priest forever. All other priests beside Him are unnecessary, since His one offering, once made, is entirely sufficient.

POINT 12: OF FASTING



OUR CONSENT.

I will set out our agreement in three conclusions. Conclusion 1. We do not condemn fasting but recognize three types: moral, civil, and religious. The first, the moral fast, is the practice of sobriety and temperance — restraining the appetite in the use of food and drink so that it does not exceed moderation. Every Christian should practice this throughout life. The second, the civil fast, is when people abstain from certain foods for particular civic or governmental reasons — as when the law in our country requires abstaining from meat at certain times of the year to preserve livestock and support the fishing industry. The third, the religious fast, is when the duties of religion — prayer and humiliation — are practiced in conjunction with fasting. This is the kind I will now address specifically.

Conclusion 2. We join with the Roman Church in affirming the proper and primary purposes of a religious fast, which are three. The first is that fasting helps the mind become attentive in meditation on the duties of godliness. The second is that it subdues the rebellion of the flesh, which becomes an instrument of unruliness when indulged. The third — and what I take to be the chief pur-

pose — is to confess our guilt and testify our humiliation before God for our sins. For this purpose even the animals were made to fast during the Ninevite fast.

Conclusion 3. We grant that fasting is a help and support for the worship of God — and indeed a good work when practiced in the right way. Though fasting in itself, being a morally indifferent act like eating and drinking, is not to be called a good work, when it is directed toward the right purposes described above and practiced accordingly, it is a work approved by God and highly to be valued by all God's servants.

THE DIFFERENCE OR DISSENT.

Our disagreement with the Church of Rome on fasting concerns three things. First, they prescribe fixed times of fasting as necessary to observe. We hold and teach that determining the time of a religious fast belongs to the liberty of the church and its leaders, to be set as particular occasions arise. When John's disciples asked Christ why they and the Pharisees fasted often while His disciples did not, He answered: 'The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn while the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast' (Matthew 9:15). He made clear that fasting should follow occasions of mourning as they arise. From this I conclude that a fixed time of fasting is no more appropriate to prescribe than a fixed time of mourning. Augustine held the opinion that neither Christ nor His apostles appointed any set times for fasting. Tertullian says that people in his time fasted of their own free will, without law or commandment, as occasion and circumstances allowed. Eusebius says that Montanus was the first to make laws

about fasting. It is objected that a set fast is prescribed in Leviticus 16:29. Answer: That prescribed fast was commanded by God as part of the ceremonial law, which came to its end in the death of Christ. It therefore does not justify a set time of fasting in the New Testament, where God has left the matter to human liberty without giving a comparable commandment. It is also claimed that in Zechariah 7:5 set times were appointed for religious fasts — the fifth and seventh months. Answer: These were appointed in response to the church's present afflictions in Babylon and ceased when deliverance came. We may do the same when similar occasions arise. It is further objected that some Protestant churches observe set times of fasting. Answer: Where such days exist, they are appointed for civic or political reasons — not as a matter of conscience or religious necessity. The Roman Church, by contrast, treats missing a set fast day as a mortal sin.

Second, we disagree with the Roman Church on the manner of fasting. Even their most learned teachers allow the drinking of wine, water, and restorative beverages — often during the course of their prescribed fast. They permit eating one meal on a fast day at noon, and on good grounds an hour earlier, while the fast period is still technically in effect. But this practice is contrary to Old Testament practice and defeats the purpose of fasting. Physical abstinence is an outward means and sign by which we acknowledge our guilt and unworthiness of any of God's blessings. They also prescribe a difference in foods — on their fast days, only 'white meats' are permitted, and in most cases this is enforced as a matter of conscience. We regard this distinction as both foolish and wicked. Foolish — because the foods they permit (fish, fruits, wine, and the like) are just as filling and pleasurable as those they forbid.

And it is contrary to the purpose of a religious fast to indulge in any refreshment beyond what health and decency require. The ancient church used to abstain not only from food and drink but from every pleasure — even from soft clothing and fragrant ointments. Joel 2:15-16 says: 'Consecrate a fast. Let the bridegroom come out of his room and the bride out of her bridal chamber.' Daniel 10:3 says: 'I did not eat any desirable food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.' 1 Corinthians 7:5 says: 'Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer.'

We also regard this practice as wicked because it takes away Christian liberty, according to which 'to the pure, all things are pure.' The apostle in Galatians 5 tells us to stand firm in this liberty, which the Church of Rome would abolish. To understand this better, consider how the Lord has from the beginning kept in His own hands — as a master in his own house — the allocation of His creation for human use, so that people would depend on Him and His word for their daily blessings. In the first age, He appointed as food for humanity every seed-bearing plant and every tree bearing seed-containing fruit (Genesis 1:29). After the flood, the Lord renewed the grant and gave His people liberty to eat the flesh of living creatures — while still declaring some things unclean and forbidding their consumption, including blood. But since the coming of Christ, He has broadened His word and given full liberty to all — both Jews and Gentiles — to eat all kinds of meat. We rest on this word of God, holding it 'a doctrine of demons for men to forbid eating of foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in.' Socrates, a Christian historian, records that the apostles left every-

one free to eat whatever they chose on fast days and at other times. Spyridon, during Lent, prepared pork and set it before a stranger, eating some himself and inviting the stranger to eat as well. When the stranger refused, claiming to be a Christian, Spyridon said: 'All the more reason to eat, then — for to the pure, all things are pure, as God's word teaches us.'

They object using Jeremiah 35, where Jonadab commanded the Rechabites to abstain from wine — a command they obeyed and were commended for obeying. Therefore, they say, certain foods may lawfully be forbidden. Answer: Jonadab gave this commandment not as a religious or meritorious matter, but for wise practical reasons. He commanded his descendants not to drink wine, not to build houses, not to sow grain or plant vineyards, and not to own any — but to live in tents — so that they would be prepared to endure the hardships that would come upon them. But the Roman Catholic abstinence from certain foods is a matter of conscience and religion, and therefore is a different thing entirely, with no warrant from the Rechabites' example.

Objection 2. Daniel 10:3 records that Daniel, in mourning for three weeks, abstained from meat — and this example, they say, is our warrant. Answer: It was the custom of holy people in ancient times, when they fasted of their own free choice over many days, to abstain from various things. Daniel abstained from meat in this way. But the Roman Catholic abstinence from meat is not voluntary — it is required by commandment, and omitting it is treated as a mortal sin. Furthermore, if they want to follow Daniel's example in abstaining from meat, why do they not also abstain from all rich food and wine — and from ointments? And why do they eat anything at all during their fasts, since there is no evidence that

Daniel ate anything until evening? Molanus has noted that our ancestors abstained from wine and delicacies, and that some of them ate nothing for two or three days at a stretch.

Objection 3. They cite the diet of John the Baptist — whose food was locusts and wild honey — and of Timothy, who abstained from wine. Answer: Both John and Timothy practiced that kind of diet and abstinence purely for the sake of temperance — not for conscience or to earn merit by it. Let them prove the contrary if they can.

Third and finally, we disagree with the Roman Church on certain purposes they assign to fasting. They make abstinence itself — in a person who is properly disposed — a part of the worship of God. We regard it as morally indifferent in itself and therefore not a part of God's worship. Rightly practiced, we esteem it as a support and aid to worship — in that it helps us be better fitted for worshipping God. Even some of their more learned teachers acknowledge this when they say: 'Not the work of fasting itself, but the devotion of the person fasting, is to be regarded as service to God.' They also say that fasting with devotion is a work of satisfaction toward God's justice for the temporal punishment of sins. We consider this a blasphemous belittling of Christ our Savior, who is the complete and perfect satisfaction for sin — both in terms of guilt and punishment. On this point they appeal to the examples of the Ninevites and of Ahab's fasting, by which they turned away the judgments God had declared through His prophets. We answer that God's wrath was turned from the Ninevites not by their fasting but by faith laying hold of God's mercy in Christ, and thereby staying His judgment. Their fasting was only a sign of their repentance, and their repentance was a fruit and sign of their faith,

aroused by the preaching of Jonah. As for Ahab's humiliation — it is irrelevant to the case, for it was done in hypocrisy. In conclusion: we do not condemn the practice of fasting — only its abuse. It would be well if fasting were practiced more widely by all Christians everywhere, given that the Lord provides us daily with new and specific occasions for both public and private fasting.

POINT 13: OF THE STATE OF PERFECTION AND WORSHIP OF SAINTS



OUR CONSENT.

I will set out our agreement in two conclusions. Conclusion 1. All true believers have a state of genuine perfection in this life. Matthew 5:48: 'Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.' Genesis 6:9: 'Noah was a righteous and blameless man in his generation, and he walked with God.' Genesis 17:1: 'Walk before Me and be blameless.' Several kings of Judah are also said to walk uprightly before God with a perfect heart — David, Josiah, Hezekiah, and others. Paul includes himself and all believers when he says, 'Let those of us who are mature think this way' (Philippians 3:15). This perfection has two parts. The first is the imputation of Christ's perfect obedience, which is the foundation and source of all our perfection. Hebrews 10:14: 'For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.' The second part of Christian perfection is sincerity, or uprightness, which consists of two things. The first is to acknowledge our own imperfection and unworthiness. So although Paul had said he was mature, he immediately added that he did not consider himself to have already at-

tained perfection — instead he forgot what was behind and pressed on toward what lay ahead. It is important to note that the perfection I am speaking of can coexist with many weaknesses and failures. Of Asa it is said that his heart was perfect with God all his days — yet he did not remove the high places, and when he was ill with a disease of his feet, he turned to physicians rather than to the Lord. Second, this uprightness consists in a consistent purpose, effort, and care to keep not just a few, but every commandment of God's law. As David says in Psalm 119:6: 'Then I will not be ashamed when I look upon all Your commandments.' This effort is a fruit of perfection because it flows from a regenerate person. Just as all people through Adam's fall carry by nature the seeds of every sin — none excluded, not even the sin against the Holy Spirit — so by the grace of regeneration through Christ, all believers likewise carry the seeds of every virtue needed for salvation. Because of this, they both can and do strive to yield perfect obedience to God according to the whole law. They may rightly be called perfect in the same sense that a child is called a complete human being — though lacking the perfection of age, size, and reason, the child still has every part and faculty of body and soul that a human being requires.

Conclusion 2. There are works of supererogation — that is, works that not only meet the law's demands and thus merit eternal life, but go beyond the law and merit more than the law alone could require of anyone. But where do we find such works? Not in any mere human being or angel, nor in all people and angels combined — but only in the person of Christ, who is both God and man. His works not only meet the law's full standard but exceed it. First, the obedience of His life, taken alone, fully satisfied even the

strict demands of the law. Therefore the suffering of His death and passion went beyond what the law could require of Him, since the law imposes no punishment on one who has done everything it commands. Second, the law in its strictness requires obedience only of mere human beings — but Christ's obedience was the obedience of a person who was both God and man. Third, the law requires personal obedience — each person must fulfill it for himself, and it requires nothing more. But the obedience Christ performed was not for Himself alone; it serves for all the elect. And since it was the obedience of God — as Paul implies when he says, 'Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood' — it was sufficient for many thousands of worlds. Because the law requires no obedience from one who is God, this obedience may truly be called a work of supererogation. This one work of supererogation we acknowledge — and beside this we dare acknowledge none. This is how far we agree with the Church of Rome on the doctrine of perfection, and no further.

THE DIFFERENCE.

The Roman Catholics teach -- as their learned writers make clear -- that a person in a state of grace can not only keep all the commandments of the law and thereby merit their own salvation, but also go beyond the law and perform works of supererogation that the law does not require -- such as taking the vow of celibacy, the vow of regular obedience, and similar acts. By these means, they say, people merit a higher degree of glory than the law alone can provide. They distinguish two kinds of perfection. The first they call necessary perfection -- fulfilling every commandment of the law, which earns eternal life. The second they call profitable per-

fection -- when people not only do what the law requires but also make certain vows and perform duties the law does not command, for which they will be rewarded with a greater measure of glory. They illustrate this with a comparison: Two soldiers fight on the field under the same commander. One simply holds his position and earns his pay. The other, while holding his position, also captures the enemy's standard or performs some other notable exploit -- and that man, in addition to his pay, deserves a higher reward. They say this is how it is for all true Catholics in a state of grace: those who keep the law will have eternal life, but those who do more than the law -- works of supererogation -- will be crowned with greater glory. This is their teaching. We, on the other hand, teach that although we should strive toward perfection as much as we can, no person can fulfill God's law in this life -- much less perform works of supererogation. These reasons support our position.

Reason 1. The moral law commands two things: first, the love of God and neighbor; and second, the manner of that love. The manner of loving God is to love Him with all our heart and strength. Luke 10:27: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind." As Bernard said: The measure of loving God is to love Him without measure -- that is, to love Him with the greatest perfection of love that a creature can offer. It follows that in loving God, no person can possibly do more than the law requires. Therefore all vows and similar duties fall short of the law's full intention.

Reason 2. The law is broad and contains more than the human mind can grasp at first -- because every commandment has two parts: the negative and the positive. In the negative, the law forbids not only the chief sin named -- such as murder, theft, or adul-

tery -- but all sins of the same kind, along with every occasion and provocation leading to them. In the positive, the law commands not only the opposing virtues -- such as love for God and love for our neighbor's honor, life, chastity, property, and reputation -- but also the use of every means by which those virtues may be maintained, promoted, and practiced. Christ Himself expounded the law this way in Matthew chapters 5 and 6. On this clear basis I conclude that all duties belonging to life and conduct fall within the scope of some moral commandment. The Roman Catholics make their works of supererogation means of furthering the love of God and neighbor -- which places them within the scope of the law. And if they fall within the law, they cannot possibly go beyond it.

Reason 3. Luke 17:10: "When you have done all the things that were commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'" The Roman Catholics answer that we are unprofitable to God but not to ourselves. But this misses the plain meaning of the passage -- for a servant doing his duty is unprofitable even to himself and does not so much as deserve his master's thanks, as Christ says in verse 9: "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?" They also answer that while we are unprofitable servants in doing what is commanded, we may profit ourselves and merit by doing things prescribed as counsel rather than command. But this reasoning fails -- because things that are commanded are more excellent than things left to our freedom, since God's will and commandment confer excellence and goodness. Furthermore, counsels are generally considered more demanding than moral

commandments. If people cannot profit themselves through obedience to moral precepts -- which are easier -- they will certainly not profit themselves through counsels, which are more difficult.

Reason 4. If it is beyond human ability to keep the law, then it is far beyond human ability to do anything above and beyond what the law requires. No person is able to fulfill the law -- and therefore no person is able to perform works of supererogation. The Roman Catholics deny this premise. They say that even though we do not keep the law, we may still do things above the law -- things of counsel -- and thereby merit. But with respect, this is absurd -- for common sense tells us that if a person fails at something lesser, he certainly cannot succeed at something greater. And as I have said, in Roman Catholic teaching it is easier to obey the moral law than to fulfill the counsels of perfection.

OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

Objection 1. Isaiah 56:4-5: The Lord promises to eunuchs who keep His Sabbath and choose what pleases Him that He will give them a place and a name better than sons and daughters. They argue that a eunuch is one who lives a celibate life and keeps the vow of chastity -- and therefore he is said to deserve a greater measure of glory. Answer: If the text is read carefully, it proves nothing of the kind -- for honor is promised to eunuchs not because they make and keep a vow of celibacy, but because -- as the text says -- they observe the Lord's Sabbath, choose what pleases God, and keep His covenant, which means believing God's word and obeying the commandments of the moral law.

Objection 2. Matthew 19:12: Christ says, 'There are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.' Therefore, they say, the vow of celibacy is warranted and is a work that earns special glory in heaven. Answer: The meaning of this text is that some people, having received the gift of continence, willingly choose the single life so that they may more freely and without distraction advance the good of God's church — the kingdom of grace in themselves and others. This is all the passage teaches. It does not teach that eternal glory is earned by living a celibate life.

Objection 3. Matthew 19:21: Christ says to the young man, 'If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.' Therefore, they say, a person can merit not only heaven but treasure there — that is, a greater measure of glory — by giving up everything. Answer: This young man was almost certainly a very strict Pharisee who thought he could merit eternal life by keeping the law — as his opening question shows: 'Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?' Christ's purpose was to expose the hidden corruption of his heart. With this in mind, the words Christ spoke were a personal command given to test him specifically — not a general command for all. God gave a similar specific command to Abraham: 'Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering' (Genesis 22:2).

Objection 4. 1 Corinthians 7:8: Paul says it is good for all to remain single as he was, and in verse 38 he says it is better for a virgin not to marry — and he says this by permission, not by commandment (verse 26). Answer: Here single life is not recom-

mended as simply superior, but only in light of the present necessity — because the church was then under persecution, and because those who remain single are freed from the cares and distractions of family life.

Objection 5. They also cite various passages about special rewards. Answer: The saints who excelled in faith during the times of the Old and New Testaments are to be honored in three ways. First, by giving thanks to God for them and for the blessings He bestowed through them on His church. So Paul writes that when the churches heard of his conversion, they glorified God because of him (Galatians 1:24). The same should be done for the saints who have died. Second, they are to be honored by imitating their faith, humility, meekness, repentance, the fear of God, and all the other virtues in which they excelled. For this reason the examples of godly people in the Old and New Testaments are called a cloud of witnesses — just as the cloud guided the Israelites through the wilderness to the land of Canaan, so believers today are to be guided to the heavenly Canaan by the examples of those who believed in God before us and walked the narrow way to eternal life.

Conclusion 2. Furthermore, we keep and respect with proper reverence their true relics — that is, their virtues and good examples left to all generations to follow. And if someone can show us a bodily relic of a true saint and prove it to be genuine, we will not worship it, but neither will we despise it. We will treat it as a monument, where this can be done conveniently and without causing offense. This is how far we agree with the Church of Rome — we must not go further.

THE DISSENT.

Our disagreement concerns the manner of worshipping the saints. The Roman Catholics recognize two degrees of religious worship. The highest they call *latria*, by which God alone is worshipped. The second, lower than the first, is called *dulia*, by which the saints and angels who are in God's special favor and glorified with everlasting glory in heaven are worshipped. This worship they express through outward adoration — kneeling and bowing before them in heaven, praying to them, dedicating churches and religious houses to them, observing Sabbaths and holy days in their honor, and making pilgrimages to their relics and images. We also distinguish between types of worship: religious and civil. Religious worship is given to the one who is Lord of all things — the searcher and examiner of hearts, omnipotent, present everywhere, able to hear and help those who call on Him from any place, the author and first cause of every good thing — worshipped simply for who He is, because He is absolute goodness itself. This worship is due to God alone, as commanded in the first and second commandments. Civil worship is the honor given to those whom God has placed in authority over us, either because of their excellent gifts or because of the offices and authority by which they govern others. The proper purpose of this honor is to show that we respect the gifts of God and the power He has placed in those who serve as His instruments. This kind of worship is commanded only in the second table, in its first commandment: 'Honor your father and mother.' On this distinction we can judge what honor is due to each. Honor is to be given to God and to those He commands us to honor. He commands that those under authority should honor those above them. Therefore, irrational creatures — and images most of all — are not to be worshipped with either civil or religious worship, be-

ing far inferior to human beings. Likewise, evil spirits — the enemies of God — must not be worshipped; even to honor them at all is to dishonor God. Good angels, who exceed human beings in both nature and gifts, were lawfully honored when they appeared — yet whenever any gesture of honor proper to God alone was offered to them, they refused it. And because they do not appear to us now as they did in former times, not even civil adoration in any bodily gesture should be directed to them. Finally, civil honor is properly due to rulers and magistrates and cannot be withheld without offense. Abraham showed this when he bowed to the Hittites (Genesis 23), and Joseph when he bowed to his brothers (Genesis 50). Now to the main point: based on this distinction, we deny — against the Roman Catholics — that any civil worship, such as kneeling or prostrating oneself, should be given to the saints, since they are absent from us. Much less should any religious worship be given to them — such as praying to them, accompanied by any bodily adoration. For that is the very honor due to God alone, whether they call it *latria* or *dulia* or any other name.

OUR REASONS.

Reason 1. Every true prayer and invocation that is offered according to God's will must rest on two foundations: a commandment and a promise — a commandment to move us to pray, and a promise to assure us we will be heard. Every prayer must be made in faith, and without a commandment or promise, there is no faith. On this solid ground I conclude that we may not pray to departed saints — because Scripture gives us no word commanding us to pray to them, nor any promise that we will be heard when we do. On the contrary, we are commanded to call on God alone: 'You

shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only' (Matthew 4:10). And: 'How will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?' (Romans 10:14). We have no promise of being heard except for Christ's sake. Therefore, prayers made to departed saints are unlawful. The response is that praying to saints is warranted by miracles and revelations, which function like commandments and promises. Answer: Miracles and revelations had already ceased before this practice of praying to saints entered the church — which was about three hundred years after Christ. Furthermore, using miracles to establish doctrine is unreliable unless three conditions are met: first, the doctrine confirmed must be a matter of faith and godliness; second, there must have been prayer to God asking for a miraculous confirmation of that doctrine; and third, the miracle must clearly build up the church through these two. Where any of these three are missing, miracles are suspect — because God warned that false prophets would sometimes work signs to test whether people would remain faithful to Him (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). Moreover, miracles are not performed for believers, but for unbelievers, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:22: 'Tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers.' Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Isidore agree — Isidore says: 'See, a sign is not needed for believers who have already believed, but for unbelievers so that they may be converted.' Finally, our faith is to be confirmed not by revelations and appearances of the dead, but by the writings of the apostles and prophets (Luke 16:29).

Reason 2. To pray to departed saints, to bow the knee to them in heaven, is to ascribe to them what belongs to God alone — namely, the ability to know every heart with its inward desires and movements, and to know the words and actions of all people in all

places on earth at all times. The Roman Catholics respond that the saints in heaven see and hear everything on earth — not by their own power (for that would make them gods), but in God and in the mirror of the Trinity, in which men's prayers are revealed to them. My first reply is that this still makes the saints more than creatures — for they are said to know the thoughts and all the actions of all people at all times, which no created power can adequately comprehend at once. My second reply is that this so-called mirror in which all things are said to be seen is a human invention. Here is my proof: the angels themselves, who see further into God than any human being, have never known all things in God. I confirm this as follows. In the temple under the law, two cherubim were placed on the ark, representing God's holy angels. They looked downward toward the mercy seat covering the ark, which was a figure of Christ. Their downward gaze represented their desire to look into the mystery of Christ's incarnation and our redemption through Him — as Peter, clearly alluding to this Old Testament type, says in 1 Peter 1:12: 'things into which angels long to look.' Paul says in Ephesians 3:10: 'so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places' — that is, to the angels. Through the church as an example, the angels saw God's boundless wisdom and mercy in calling the Gentiles; and through the church as it was founded and honored by apostolic preaching. For it appears that the apostolic ministry in the New Testament revealed things about Christ that the angels had not known before. Chrysostom, commenting on this text of Paul, says that the angels learned some things through the preaching of John the Baptist. Furthermore, Christ says that the angels do not know the hour of

the last judgment (Matthew 24:36) — much less, then, do the saints know all things in God. This is why the saints are described as crying from under the altar: 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood?' — not knowing the day of their full deliverance. And the Jews in their affliction confess that Abraham was unaware of them and their condition (Isaiah 63:16).

Reason 3. Matthew 4:10: Christ refused even to bow His knee to Satan on this very ground — that it is written: 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.' This is also why Peter would not allow Cornelius to kneel before him, even though Cornelius did not intend to honor him as God. Therefore no saint or angel is to be honored even with a bowing of the knee, if that gesture carries the least suggestion of divine or religious honor.

Reason 4: The testimony of the ancient church. Augustine: 'We honor the saints with love and not with servitude, nor do we build churches to them.' And: 'Let it not be our religion to worship the dead.' And: 'They are to be honored for imitation, not adored in worship.' Epiphanius: 'Neither Thecla nor any saint is to be adored — for that ancient error must not prevail over us, so that we leave the living God and worship what He has made.' And: 'Let Mary be honored; let the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be adored; let no one adore Mary.' And: 'Mary is beautiful and holy and honored, yet not for adoration.' When Julian accused Christians of worshipping their martyrs as gods, Cyril acknowledged honoring their memory but denied that they were adored — and he made no mention of invoking them at all. Ambrose, commenting on Romans 1: 'Is anyone so foolish as to give to a count the honor due a king? Yet these men do not think themselves guilty when they give to a creature the

honor that belongs to God's name — and, leaving the Lord, they adore their fellow servants, as if anything greater were reserved for God.'

OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

Objection 1. Genesis 48:16: 'The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.' They say this is a prayer addressed to an angel. Answer: By 'the angel' is meant Christ, who is called the angel of the covenant (Malachi 3:1) and the angel who led Israel through the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:9, compared with Exodus 23:20).

Objection 2. Exodus 32:13: Moses prays that God would remember His people for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel His servants — who were no longer living. Answer: Moses asks God to be merciful to the people not on the basis of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's intercession, but for the sake of His covenant with them (Psalm 105:8-11). Furthermore, by Roman Catholic teaching, the departed patriarchs did not know the condition of people on earth, nor did they pray for them — because at that time they were not yet in heaven but in what they call *Limbus Patrum*.

Objection 3. One living person makes intercession to God for another — therefore, all the more, the saints in glory, who are filled with love, must pray to God for us. And we pray to them no differently than we ask living people to pray for us. Answer: The reasoning is flawed. We have a clear commandment for one living person to pray for another and to ask others to pray for us — but there is no warrant in God's word to ask for the prayers of those who have died. Second, there is a significant difference between two things: asking a friend, by word or letter, to pray for us; and invoking by

prayer those who are absent from us and have departed this life. The latter is an act of worship in which we ascribe to them the power to hear and help all who call upon them at any place and any time, even when they are not physically present. This amounts to ascribing to them the knowledge of the heart, presence in all places, and unlimited power to help all who pray — things that belong to God alone, not to any creature. Third, when one living person asks another to pray for him, he simply makes that person a companion and fellow member in his prayer offered to God in the name of the one mediator, Christ. But when people invoke saints in heaven who are absent from them, they are not merely making them fellow members — they are making them mediators between Christ and themselves.

POINT 15: OF THE INTERCESSION OF SAINTS



OUR CONSENT.

Conclusion 1. The departed saints pray to God by giving thanks to Him for their own redemption and for the redemption of the whole church of God on earth. Revelation 5:8-9: 'The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.'" Revelation 5:13: 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.'

Conclusion 2. The departed saints pray generally for the state of the whole church. Revelation 6:9-10: 'I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"' In this we see that they desire the final deliverance of the church and the destruction of its

enemies — so that they, together with all God's people, might be brought to the fullness of glory in body and soul. Even the creation itself, in Romans 8:23, is said to groan and wait for the adoption — the redemption of our bodies. How much more, then, do the saints in heaven desire the same. This is how far we agree.

THE DISSENT OR DIFFERENCE.

The Roman Catholics hold and teach that the saints in heaven — such as the Virgin Mary, Peter, Paul, and others — make intercession to God for particular individuals according to their specific needs, and that upon receiving people's prayers they present them to God. We flatly reject this teaching for the following reasons.

Reason 1. Isaiah 63:16: The church says to God: 'Surely You are our Father, even though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not recognize us.' If Abraham did not know his own descendants, then neither Mary nor Peter nor any other departed saint knows us or our condition — and therefore they cannot make any particular intercession for us. If they respond that Abraham and Jacob were then in Limbo — which they consider a part of hell — how could Lazarus have had any joy in Abraham's presence (Luke 16:25)? And with what comfort could Jacob say on his deathbed, 'For Your salvation I wait, O Lord' (Genesis 49:18)?

Reason 2. 2 Kings 22:20: Huldah the prophetess tells Josiah that he will be gathered to his fathers and buried in peace, so that his eyes will not see all the disaster God would bring on that place. This shows that the departed saints do not see the condition of the

church on earth — much less do they know the thoughts and prayers of individual people. Augustine confirms this conclusion at length.

Reason 3. No creature — saint or angel — can be a mediator for us to God, except Christ alone, who is the only Advocate of His church. A true and sufficient mediator must have three qualities. First, God's word must reveal and identify him to the church, so that believers may be assured in their conscience that when they pray to God in his name, they will be heard. No Scripture presents any saint or angel as a mediator on our behalf — only Christ. Second, a mediator must be perfectly just, completely free from sin. 1 John 2:1: 'And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' The saints in heaven, however fully sanctified by Christ, were still conceived and born in sin — and therefore must stand before God eternally through the mediation and merit of another. Third, a mediator must be a propitiator — one who brings something to God that satisfies and appeases His wrath and justice for our sins. This is why John adds: 'And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.' No saint or angel can satisfy for even the least of our sins. Christ alone is the propitiation for them all. The Virgin Mary and the rest of the saints, being sinners, could not make satisfaction even for themselves.

Reason 4: The testimony of the church. Augustine: 'All Christians commend one another in their prayers to God.' And: 'He who prays for all and for whom none prays — that is the one true mediator.' And: 'Your Savior says: You have nowhere to go but to Me, and no way to go but through Me.' Chrysostom: 'You have no need of patrons or of elaborate words to smooth things over with others. Even if you are alone and lack a patron, and pray to

God by yourself, you will obtain what you ask.' On 1 John 2:1: 'Your prayers have no effect unless they are such as the Lord commends to your Father.' Augustine on the same passage: 'He, being what kind of man He is, said not "you have an advocate" but "we have" — he did not say "you have," nor did he say "you have me."' "

OBJECTIONS OF PAPISTS.

Objection 1. Revelation 5:8-9: The twenty-four elders fall before the Lamb holding harps and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. From this the Roman Catholics conclude that the saints in heaven receive the prayers of people on earth and offer them to the Father. Answer: In this passage, 'prayers of the saints' means the elders' own prayers — in which they sing praises to God and to the Lamb, as the following verses make plain. And even these prayers are presented to God from the hand of the angel, who is Christ Himself.

Objection 2. Luke 16:27: The rich man in hell prays for his brothers on earth — therefore, they say, the saints in heaven pray for us even more. Answer: From a parable, nothing can be drawn except what fits its purpose and scope. By the same logic, one could conclude that the soul of the rich man in hell had a physical tongue. Furthermore, if their reasoning were valid, we could also conclude that the wicked in hell have compassion and love for their brothers on earth, and a zeal for God's glory — all of which are false.

Objection 3. The angels in heaven know every person's condition, they know when a sinner repents and rejoice over it, and they pray for particular people. Therefore the saints in heaven do the

same — for they are equal to the good angels (Luke 20:36). Answer: The passage in Luke refers to the condition of holy people at the day of the last judgment, as Matthew 22:30 makes clear, where it says that God's servants in the resurrection are like the angels in heaven. Furthermore, the saints are like the angels not in office and ministry — by which angels are ministering spirits serving for the benefit of people — but in glory.

We also disagree with the Roman Catholics because they are not content to say that the departed saints pray for us personally — they go further and say the saints intercede for us by their merits in heaven. Peter Lombard says: 'I believe that a person of only modest goodness will, as it were passing through fire, be saved by the merits and intercessions of the heavenly church, which always intercedes for the faithful by both prayer and merit, until Christ is complete in His members.' The Roman Catechism says the same: 'The saints are to be venerated and invoked all the more because they pray daily for the salvation of people, and God for their merit and favor bestows many benefits upon us.' We do not deny that people on earth receive help and benefit from the faith and godliness that the departed saints demonstrated during their earthly lives — for God shows mercy to those who keep His commandments, to a thousand generations. Augustine said it was good for the Jews that they were loved by Moses, whom God loved. But we completely deny that we are helped by the merits of saints, whether living or departed — for the saints in glory have already received the full reward of all their merits (if merits they had), and therefore they have nothing further to merit.

POINT 16: OF IMPLICIT FAITH



OUR CONSENT.

We hold that there is such a thing as implicit or unexpressed faith, and that the faith of every person is implicit in some part of their life — such as during the time of first conversion, or during a time of severe temptation or distress. The Samaritans are said to believe (John 4:14) because they accepted Christ as the Messiah and were willing to hear and obey the good news of salvation. In the same chapter, verse 51, the official and his household are said to believe — he did nothing more than generally acknowledge that Christ was the Messiah and submitted himself to believe and obey His holy teaching, moved to do so by a miracle worked for his young son. Rahab is said to have believed (Hebrews 11:13) — indeed, she is commended for her faith at the very time she welcomed the spies. Yet we cannot find in the word of God that she had more than a general or undeveloped faith, by which she believed that the God of the Hebrews was the true God and that His word was to be obeyed. This faith seems to have been produced in her by reports of the miracles in Egypt, which moved her to join herself to God's people and believe as they did. These examples show clearly that even among God's servants,

there is — and for a time may be — an implicit faith. To understand this better, consider that faith may be implicit in two ways: first, with respect to knowledge of things to be believed; and second, with respect to grasping the object of faith — namely Christ and His benefits. Faith is implicit in terms of knowledge when several things necessary to salvation are not yet distinctly understood. Although Christ commended His disciples' faith — a faith that the gates of hell would not overcome — it was still unexpressed and undeveloped in regard to several points of doctrine. Peter, who confessed Christ on behalf of the rest, was at that point ignorant of the specific way his redemption would be accomplished — as shown when he tried to dissuade his Master from suffering and dying at Jerusalem, and Christ sharply rebuked him: 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me.' Furthermore, the disciples were all unaware of Christ's resurrection until the women who saw Him first told them, and they learned the truth by experiencing it in Christ's own person. They were also ignorant of the ascension — right at the moment He was about to ascend, they were still dreaming of an earthly kingdom: 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' (Acts 1:6). And even after the ascension, Peter knew nothing of the breaking down of the barrier between Jews and Gentiles until God instructed him in a vision (Acts 10:14). We have ordinary examples of this implicit faith around us today. Some people are slow both in understanding and memory, and therefore do not advance in knowledge as far as many others. Yet in sincerity and conscience in their actions — as far as they understand — they are not behind anyone, and they maintain a steady desire to grow in knowledge and walk in obedience to what they know. Such people, though ignorant in many

things, still possess the essence of true faith, and what is lacking in knowledge is supplied by genuine devotion. In some respects they are to be preferred above many who have a quick tongue and a head full of knowledge. Melancthon spoke well to this point: 'We must acknowledge the great mercy of God, who distinguishes between sins of ignorance and sins committed knowingly, and who forgives many ignorances in those who know only the foundation and are willing to learn — as we can see in the apostles, in whom there was much lack of understanding before the resurrection of Christ.' But as has been said, God requires that we be teachable — He will not allow us to remain hardened in laziness and dullness. As Psalm 1 says of the blessed man: 'He meditates on God's law day and night.'

The second kind of implicit faith concerns apprehension — when a person cannot say distinctly and certainly, 'I believe in the forgiveness of my sins,' but sincerely desires to believe in that forgiveness and desires to repent. This happens to many of God's children when their conscience is troubled over their sins. But where people are genuinely displeased with themselves for their offenses and from the heart desire to believe and be reconciled to God, faith and many other graces of God are present in seed form — just as in a small, tender bud the leaf, the blossom, and the fruit are all contained. For although a desire to repent and believe is not faith and repentance in their full nature, yet in God's reckoning it is — since God accepts the sincere will in place of the full deed. Isaiah 42:3: Christ will not quench the smoldering wick — which as yet, due to its weakness, gives neither light nor heat. Matthew 5:6: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied' — by those who hunger and thirst are meant

all who feel the grief of their own lack of righteousness and desire to be justified and sanctified. Romans 8:26: God hears and honors even the groans and sighs of His servants — even when they are inexpressible because they are faint, weak, and confused — because they are the work of His own Spirit. So we see that in a troubled heart desiring to believe, an implicit faith is present. And this is the faith that many of God's true servants possess. Our salvation rests not so much on our grasping Christ as on Christ's grasping us. Paul expresses this in Philippians 3:12: 'I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.' If someone says that a person cannot be saved without a living faith in Christ, I answer that God accepts the desire to believe as living faith during times of temptation and during the time of first conversion. Consider this case: a man who has never repented falls into a severe illness. There his conscience begins to be struck over his sins and he is genuinely humbled. He is urged to believe in his reconciliation with God in Christ and in the forgiveness of his sins. He tries, as much as his measure of grace allows, to believe. Yet after much striving, he cannot settle within himself that he distinctly and certainly believes in the forgiveness of his own sins. All he can say is that he heartily desires to believe — that he wishes this above all things in the world, and that he counts all things as loss for Christ. And then he dies. What do we say about him? We can say nothing except that he died as a child of God and is without question saved. It would certainly be a blessing if everyone could come to the fullness of faith that Abraham and many of God's servants had — but it is certain that God in various situations accepts this desire to believe as genuine faith. Consider how this mirrors what happens in nature: some people die as children, some in old age,

some in the fullness of their strength — yet all die as human beings. In the same way, some die as infants in Christ, others with a more mature faith — yet even the weakest, who carries the seeds of grace, is a child of God. Faith in its infancy is still faith. One important clarification: I am not saying there can be true faith without any apprehension at all — only that there can be true faith without a distinct apprehension for a period of time. For the very desire to apprehend Christ and His merits by faith is itself a kind of apprehension. And so we have seen the kinds of implicit or implicit faith.

This teaching is worth learning for two reasons. First, it serves to settle the consciences of weaker believers, so they are not deceived about their spiritual condition. If we insist that no faith can save except a full persuasion like Abraham's, then many people who truly bear the name of Christ must be removed from the roll of God's children. We need to understand that there is growth in grace just as in nature, and that there are different degrees of true faith — the least of which is this implicit faith. This is essentially Calvin's teaching: when we begin by faith to know something and have a desire to learn more, that may be called an implicit or unexpressed faith. Second, this teaching helps correct and partly explain various catechisms that seem to set the standard of faith so high that few can reach it — defining faith as a certain and full persuasion of God's love and favor in Christ. While it is true that every genuine faith is by nature a kind of persuasion, only strong faith reaches full persuasion. Therefore faith should not only be defined in general terms, but its degrees and measures should also be explained — so that weaker believers may be truly and comfortingly informed of their condition. Even so, although we teach that there

is an implicit faith which is the beginning of true and living faith, no one should be content to remain there — but should labor to grow and move from faith to faith. And indeed everyone who has any genuine beginnings of faith, however small, will naturally do this. The person who thinks he has a desire to believe but is content to stop there in fact has no genuine desire to believe.

THE DIFFERENCE.

The leading scholars of the Roman Church lay down this foundation: that faith in its own nature is not a knowledge of things to be believed, but a reverent assent to them whether they are known or unknown. On this they build the argument that if a person knows some necessary points of doctrine — such as the teaching on God, the Trinity, Christ's incarnation, and our redemption — it is unnecessary to know the rest in particular or with any distinctness. It is enough to yield one's consent to the church and believe as the pastors believe. This is a ruinous structure built on a rotten foundation — for faith contains a knowledge of things to be believed, and knowledge is of the very nature of faith. Nothing is believed that is not in some way known. Isaiah 53:11: 'By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many.' John 17:3: 'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.' In these passages, knowledge means faith grounded in understanding — by which we know and are assured that Christ and His benefits belong to us. Second, this kind of mere assent is the mother of ignorance. When people are taught that for various points of doctrine they may simply believe as the church believes — that study of the Scriptures is not required of them, that for their own good they may be kept from

reading them, as long as they know a few central things in the articles of faith, and that ordinary believers are not required to explicitly believe all the articles of the Apostles' Creed — then few or none will care to grow in knowledge. Yet God's commandment is that we should grow in knowledge and that His word should dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16). The Roman Catholics also claim that the devotion of the ignorant is often more acceptable to God than worship offered with knowledge. They say that those who pray in Latin pray with just as much spiritual comfort, just as little weariness, just as much devotion and affection, and often more than others — and always more than any schismatic or heretic praying in his own language. Finally, they teach that some articles of faith are held by the whole church only through a simple or implicit faith — and that these are later, by the authority of a general council, put forward to be believed explicitly by the church. The bishop of Rochester, writing against Luther, gives an example of this when he admits that purgatory was little known at first, but became known over time partly through Scripture and partly through revelation. This kind of implicit faith regarding articles of doctrine we reject entirely — holding that all things concerning faith and conduct necessary to salvation are plainly set out in Scripture and are accordingly to be believed.

POINT 17: OF PURGATORY



OUR CONSENT.

We affirm a Christian purgatory — understood according to what God's word has revealed. First, by this purgatory we mean the afflictions of God's children here on earth. Jeremiah 3: The afflicted people say, 'You have sent fire into my bones.' Psalm 66:12: 'We went through fire and through water.' Malachi 3:3: The sons of Levi must be purified in a purging fire of affliction. 1 Peter 1:7: Afflictions are called the fiery trial by which people are cleansed from their corruptions, as gold is purified from its dross by fire. Second, the blood of Christ is the purgatory for our sins. 1 John 1:7: 'The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.' Hebrews 9:14: It purifies our consciences from dead works. And Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire — for our inward cleansing is by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is like fire, consuming and destroying the inward corruption of our nature. Origen says: 'Without doubt we will feel the unquenchable fire, unless we now ask the Lord to send down from heaven a purifying fire to us, by which worldly desires may be utterly burned away from our minds.' Augustine says: 'Think of the mercy of God as your purgatory.'

THE DIFFERENCE OR DISSENT.

We differ from the Roman Catholics on purgatory in two ways. First, regarding the place. They hold purgatory to be a part of hell, entered only after this life. We deny this, since there is no warrant for it in the word of God, which speaks of only two places after death — heaven and hell — with their twofold conditions: joy and torment (Luke 16:25-26; John 3:36; Revelation 22:14-15; Revelation 21:7-8; Matthew 8:11). Indeed, we find the opposite: Revelation 14:13 says that those who die in the Lord rest from their labors — which cannot be true if any of them go to purgatory. And to close off any escape, it is further said that their works — that is, the reward of their works — follow right at their heels, like an attendant following his master. Augustine says well: 'After this life there remains no repentance or satisfaction.' And: 'Here is where all remission of sin occurs; here are the temptations that lead us to sin; here is the evil from which we ask to be delivered — none of these exist there.' And: 'We are not without sin here, but we will depart hence without sin.' Cyril says: 'Those who have once died can add nothing to what they have done, but will remain as they were left, and wait for the time of the last judgment.' Chrysostom: 'After this life ends, there are no further opportunities for merit.'

Second, we differ from them regarding the means of purification. They say that people are purified by suffering pains in purgatory, by which they satisfy for their venial sins and for the temporal punishment of their mortal sins. We teach the opposite — that nothing can free us from the least punishment of the smallest sin except the sufferings of Christ, and nothing can cleanse us from the least trace of corruption except the blood of Christ. They say that human sufferings do not purify or satisfy in themselves, but

only as they are made meritorious by Christ's sufferings. To this I set one text of Scripture: Hebrews 1:3, which says that Christ purged our sins by Himself — the final phrase cutting the throat of all human satisfactions and merits. It tells us that whatever purges us from our sins is found not in us but in Christ alone. Otherwise, the text would have said that Christ purges people's sins by themselves as well as by Himself — as if His death had merited that we should become our own partial saviors.

Here I will address prayer for the dead, setting out two positive conclusions and one negative. Conclusion 1. We hold that Christian love should extend even to the dead — shown in giving them an honorable burial, preserving their good name, and helping and providing for their families as time and opportunity allow (Ruth 1:8; John 19:23).

Conclusion 2. We also pray in a general way for the faithful departed — that God would hasten their joyful resurrection and the full completion of their happiness in both body and soul. We include this when we pray, 'Your kingdom come' — meaning not only the kingdom of grace but also the kingdom of glory in heaven. This is as far as we go — we dare not approach nearer to the gates of Babylon.

Conclusion 3. We believe it is unlawful to pray for specific departed individuals or to pray for their release from purgatory, because we have neither a promise nor a commandment to do so.

POINT 18: OF ECCLESIASTICAL SUPREMACY



OUR CONSENT.

On the point of ecclesiastical supremacy, I will set out in two conclusions how close we can come to the Roman Church.

Conclusion 1. For the founding of the early church, the ministry of the word was organized in degrees — not only of order but also of authority — and Peter was called to the highest degree. Ephesians 4:11: Christ ascended on high and gave gifts to people for the good of His church — some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. One apostle may not have been above another, nor one evangelist above another, nor one pastor above another within their respective ranks — yet an apostle was above an evangelist, and an evangelist above all pastors and teachers. Peter was by calling an apostle, and therefore stood above all evangelists and pastors, holding the highest place in the ministry of the New Testament both in order and authority.

Conclusion 2. Among the twelve apostles, Peter held three privileges or distinctions: of authority, of primacy, and of leadership. First, the privilege of authority — by this I mean a distinction in terms of esteem, by which he was held in greater honor than the

other eleven apostles. Cephas, together with James and John, were called pillars and were recognized as prominent (Galatians 2:6, 9). Second, he held the privilege of primacy — he was named first, as the foremost of the group. Matthew 10:2: 'The names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter...' Third, he held the privilege of leadership among the twelve, because in terms of the measure of grace he excelled the rest. When Christ asked His disciples who they said He was, Peter — as the one with the greatest ability and zeal — answered on behalf of them all (Matthew 16:16). I say 'among the twelve' deliberately — because Paul excelled Peter in every way, in learning, zeal, and understanding, as much as Peter excelled the other eleven. This is as close as we can come to the Roman doctrine of supremacy.

THE DIFFERENCE.

The Church of Rome gives Peter a supremacy under Christ over all matters and persons — that is, full power to govern and order the entire catholic church on earth, in both doctrine and governance. This supremacy, as they teach, consists in: the power to determine the true meaning of all Scripture; to settle all questions of faith; to convene general councils; to ratify the decrees of those councils; to excommunicate any person on earth within the church, including princes and nations; to properly absolve and forgive sins; to decide cases brought to him by appeal from all parts of the earth; and finally, to make laws that bind the conscience. This fullness of power is unanimously attributed to Peter and to the bishops of Rome who succeed him in an alleged succession. We hold the opposite — that neither Peter nor any bishop of Rome has any supremacy over the catholic church, and that all supremacy under Christ belongs to

kings and princes within their own domains. I will demonstrate that our doctrine is correct and theirs is false and fabricated, by several reasons.

Reason 1. Christ must be considered in two ways. First, as He is God — in this capacity He is an absolute king over all things in heaven and earth, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, by right of creation. Second, He is king as the Redeemer of humanity — and by right of redemption He is sovereign king over the whole church, in a special and particular way. Now as Christ is God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He has deputies on earth to govern the world — namely kings and princes, who are therefore called gods in Scripture. But as Christ is Mediator, and thus king over His redeemed people, He has neither equal nor deputy. No equal — for that would make Him an imperfect mediator. No deputy — because no creature is capable of acting in Christ's place in the way that He Himself acts, since every work of the Mediator is a compound work arising from the effects of two natures working together in one and the same action — the divine nature and the human nature. To accomplish that work requires infinite power, which far exceeds the capacity of any created being. Furthermore, Hebrews 7:24 states that Christ holds a priesthood that cannot be transferred from His person to any other. It follows that neither His kingly nor His prophetic office can pass from Him to any creature — either in whole or in part — since all three offices of mediation are equal in this regard. Moreover, it would be pointless for Christ to have a deputy to carry out any part of His mediatorship — since a deputy only serves to cover the absence of the one in authority, and Christ is always present with His church through His word and Spirit. For where two or three are gathered in His name,

He is there among them. It might be said that ministers are Christ's deputies in their ministry. My answer is that they are not deputies but active instruments. In the preaching of the word there are two actions: first, the speaking and delivering of the word to the ear; second, the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart — which is the principal action and belongs to Christ alone. The minister's speaking is only instrumental. In the same way, when the church cuts off a member through excommunication, it is no more than an instrument carrying out a ministry in Christ's name — declaring and testifying whom Christ Himself has cut off from the kingdom of heaven. This single conclusion dismantles not only the pope's supremacy but also many other points of Roman Catholic doctrine.

Reason 2. All the apostles were equal in power and authority — the apostolic commission, both in right and in practice, was given equally to them all, as the very words make plain. Matthew 28:19: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them...' And the promise, 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' is not personal to Peter alone — it was made in his person on behalf of the rest, just as his confession was made in the name of the rest. Theophylact says: 'Those who receive the gift of a bishop as Peter did receive the power of binding and loosing.' Ambrose says: 'What is said to Peter is said to the apostles.' Therefore Peter had no supremacy over the other apostles in terms of the right to the commission — which the Roman Catholics claim belonged to him alone, with only its execution passing to the rest. But even if we granted that Peter held a superior commission above the rest for the duration of his life — still no authority for the bishops of Rome could be derived from this, because the apostles'

authority was personal and therefore ended with them, not being transferred to anyone else. The Lord did not grant the same honor to those who came after them. The apostles had three unique privileges: first, they were called directly and had seen the Lord Jesus; second, they had the power to confer the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands; third, they had such a measure of the Spirit's assistance that in their public preaching and in writing the word they could not err. All these things were denied to those who followed them. It also stands to reason that their authority ended with their persons — because it was given in such an extraordinary measure specifically for the founding of the New Testament church. Once that church was founded, what was needed going forward was simply pastors and teachers to build it up until the end of the world.

Reason 3. When the sons of Zebedee asked Christ for the highest positions of honor in His kingdom — thinking He would establish an earthly kingdom — Christ answered them: 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you.' Bernard applies these very words to Pope Eugenius in this way: 'It is plain,' he says, 'that dominion is here forbidden to the apostles. Go then — dare, if you will, to claim for yourself a ruling apostleship, or to exercise rulership and dominion alongside apostleship. If you insist on having both alike, you will lose both. Otherwise, do not think yourself excluded from the number of those about whom the Lord says: "They have reigned, but not by Me; they have been princes, but I did not recognize them."'

Reason 4. Ephesians 4 lists the gifts Christ gave to His church after His ascension — by which some were apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. If there had been an ongoing office through which persons as Christ's deputies were to govern the whole church to the end of the world, that calling would most naturally have been named here, along with its corresponding gift. Paul would certainly not have left it out here, where he mentions offices of lesser importance.

Reason 5. The pope's supremacy was judged by Scripture and condemned long before it appeared in the world — the spirit of prophecy foreseeing and foretelling what was to come. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4: 'The man of lawlessness' — that is, the Antichrist — 'will exalt himself over everything that is called God.' The entire chapter, with all its details, fits the see of Rome and its head most precisely. What was restraining the revealing of the man of lawlessness at that time (verse 6) is interpreted by most as the Roman Emperor. One quotation in place of many: Chrysostom says on this passage: 'As long as the empire commands fear, no one will fully submit himself to Antichrist. But when the empire is dissolved, Antichrist will seize the vacant seat of the empire and will strive to pull to himself the dominion over both humanity and God.' We find this confirmed by experience — the see of Rome never flourished until the empire declined and its seat was removed from the city of Rome. Furthermore, Revelation 13 speaks of two beasts: one coming out of the sea, which even the Roman Catholics acknowledge to be the pagan Roman Emperor; and a second coming out of the earth, which does everything the first

beast had done before it. This fits the popes of Rome, who have done and continue to do everything the Emperor did or could do — and that in his very sight.

Reason 6: The testimony of the ancient church. Cyprian says: 'Without doubt the rest of the apostles were what Peter was — endowed with an equal share of honor and power. But a beginning of unity is made in order that the church may appear to be one.' Gregory says: 'If any bishop is called universal, the universal church goes to ruin.' And: 'I say boldly that whoever calls himself universal priest, or desires to be called so, in his pride is a forerunner of Antichrist.' And: 'Look, in the introduction to the letter you sent me, you have caused a proud title to be written, calling me universal Pope.' Bernard says: 'Understand that you are not lord of the bishops but one of them. The churches are being crippled because the Roman bishop draws all power to himself.' Gregory himself, as pope, said to the Emperor: 'I who am subject to your command have in every way done my duty — I have performed my allegiance to the Emperor and have not concealed what I believed on God's behalf.' And Pope Leo IV, two hundred years after Gregory, acknowledged the Emperor Lothair as his sovereign prince and professed his obedience to his imperial commands without objection.

In conclusion: when the Roman Catholics say there is a double head of the church — one supreme, which is Christ alone, and the other ministerial, which is the pope governing the whole church under Christ — I answer that this distinction robs Christ of His honor. For in establishing their ministerial head, they are forced to borrow from Christ things that belong to Him alone — such as the

privilege of truly forgiving sins, and the power to govern the whole earth by making laws that bind the conscience just as truly as the laws of God.

POINT 19: OF THE EFFICACY OF THE SACRAMENTS



OUR CONSENT.

Conclusion 1. We hold that the sacraments are signs that represent Christ and His benefits to us.

Conclusion 2. We further teach that the sacraments are instruments through which God offers and gives these benefits to us. This is as far as we agree with the Roman Church.

THE DIFFERENCE.

Our disagreement concerns several points. First, the most learned among them teach that sacraments are physical instruments — that is, true and proper instrumental causes that possess inherent force and efficacy to produce and confer grace. They express this with comparisons: when a scribe takes a pen and writes, the action of writing proceeds from the pen as it is moved by the writer's hand; and in cutting wood or stone, the division comes from the saw moved by the workman's hand. In the same way, they say, grace is given by God through the sacrament itself. We hold the opposite — that sacraments are not physical instruments but vol-

untary ones. Voluntary, because it is God's will and appointment to use them as specific outward means of grace. Instruments, because when we use them rightly according to their institution, God correspondingly confers grace from Himself. In this sense alone do we call them instruments — in no other.

The second difference is this: they teach that the very act of the minister administering the sacrament, simply as an action performed, immediately gives grace to a properly prepared recipient — such as the act of washing or sprinkling with water in baptism, or the giving of bread in the Lord's Supper. We teach the opposite — that no sacramental action confers grace simply as a performed work, through the power or force of the sacramental action itself, even though it was ordained by God. Rather, grace is conferred in two ways. First, through signification. God declares His will and goodwill to us partly through the word of promise and partly through the sacrament — the signs presenting to the eyes what the word presents to the ears, and serving as types and images of the very same things promised in the word, nothing else. The elements are not general signs addressed to a crowd, but particular signs addressed to each individual communicant. By virtue of their institution, when believers receive the signs from God through the minister's hands, it is as though God Himself personally spoke to each one by name, promising them the forgiveness of sins. Words spoken directly to a person individually affect them far more deeply and remove doubt far more effectively than words spoken generally to a whole assembly. Therefore sacramental signs function as a kind of applying and sealing of the promise of salvation to

each individual believer. This is why the more often they are received, the more they strengthen our weakness and confirm our assurance of mercy.

Furthermore, the sacrament confers grace in that its sign confirms faith as a pledge, because a promise is attached to it. When God commands us to receive the signs in faith and promises to give the thing signified to those who receive them, He binds Himself, as it were, to stand by His own word — just as people bind themselves in formal agreements by putting their hands and seals to them so that they cannot go back. When the signs are used this way as pledges, and used repeatedly, they greatly increase God's grace in us — just as a gift sent from one friend to another renews and confirms the sense of love between them.

These are the two principal ways the sacraments are said to confer grace: through their signification, and as pledges of God's favor to us. The key question here is the order and manner in which they confirm faith. The manner is this: the visible signs and elements affect both the outward and inward senses; the senses carry their object to the mind; and the mind, directed by the Holy Spirit, reasons from the promise attached to the sacrament: whoever uses the elements rightly will receive grace through them. But I am using the elements rightly, in faith and repentance, the believing mind concludes — therefore I will receive from God an increase of grace. In this way faith is confirmed not by the work performed, but through a kind of reasoning produced in the mind — reasoning whose basis is drawn from the elements as signs and pledges of God's mercy.

The third difference. The Roman Catholics teach that in the sacrament, by the act of administering it, the very grace of justification is conferred. We say no — because an adult must first believe and be justified before he can properly receive any sacrament. The grace conferred through the sacrament is only the increase of our faith, hope, sanctification, and similar graces.

OUR REASONS.

Reason 1. The preached word and the sacraments differ in the manner in which they give Christ and His benefits to us — in the word, the Spirit of God teaches us through a voice that reaches the mind through the ears; in the sacraments attached to the word, He does so through certain visible, physical signs perceived by the eye. Sacraments are simply visible words and promises. In this way only do they differ from the word — not in the giving of Christ itself. Christ Himself says that in the very word His flesh is eaten — the flesh He was to give for the life of the world. What more could be said of the Lord's Supper? Augustine says that believers partake of the body and blood of Christ in baptism. Jerome, writing to Hedobia, says that in baptism we eat and drink the body and blood of Christ. If this much can be said of baptism, why cannot the same be said of the preached word? Jerome, commenting on Ecclesiastes, says: 'It is profitable to be filled with the body of Christ and to drink His blood — not only in the sacrament, but in the knowledge of Holy Scripture.' From all this it follows that since the act of preaching does not confer grace by the mere work performed, neither does the act of administering a sacrament confer grace in that way.

Reason 2. Matthew 3:11: 'As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I — He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.' This makes it clear that grace in the sacrament does not come from any action within the sacrament. Although John does not separate himself and his action from Christ and the action of His Spirit, he clearly distinguishes them — as different persons, different acts, and different effects. Paul, who had said of the Galatians that he labored over them and brought them to birth through the Gospel, also said of himself that he was nothing — not merely as a man, but even as a faithful apostle. In this he excluded the entire ministry of the Gospel — of which the sacrament is a part — from playing any part in the divine work of conferring grace.

Reason 3. The blessed angels — and indeed the very flesh of the Son of God — have no life-giving power from themselves. All efficacy and virtue belongs to and proceeds from the Godhead of the Son, who through His flesh, apprehended by faith, channels heavenly and spiritual life from Himself to His members. If there is no life-giving power even in the flesh of Christ except by virtue of the hypostatic union, how could bodily actions performed over physical elements immediately confer grace?

Reason 4. Paul in Romans 4 presses this point at length — that justification by faith is not conferred by the sacraments. From the timing of events he shows that Abraham was first justified and only afterward received circumcision, the sign and seal of that righteousness. We know that the general condition of all sacraments is the same, and that baptism succeeded circumcision. And what could be clearer than the example of Cornelius (Acts 10)? Before Peter came to him, Cornelius was already commended for

his fear of God and was endowed with a spirit of prayer. Then, when Peter arrived and more fully opened the way of the Lord through preaching, Cornelius and the others received the Holy Spirit. After all this, they were baptized. If they received the Holy Spirit before baptism, then they received forgiveness of sins and were justified before baptism.

Reason 5: The testimony of the church. Basil: 'If there is any grace in the water, it is not from the nature of the water, but from the presence of the Spirit.' Jerome says: 'Man gives water, but God gives the Holy Spirit.' Augustine says: 'Water touches the body and washes the heart.' Elsewhere he explains his meaning further: 'There is one water of the sacrament, another of the Spirit. The water of the sacrament is visible; the water of the Spirit is invisible. The former washes the body and signifies what is done in the soul. By the latter the soul is purged and sealed.'

Objection. Forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and salvation are attributed to the sacrament of baptism in Acts 22:16, Ephesians 5, Galatians 3:27, and Titus 3:5. Answer: Salvation and forgiveness of sins are attributed to baptism and the Lord's Supper in the same sense they are attributed to the word, which is 'the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.' They are attributed to the sacraments as instruments of the Holy Spirit to signify, seal, and present these benefits to the believing mind. But the proper instrument through which salvation is received is faith. The sacraments are simply supports for faith, furthering salvation in two ways: first, because through their signification they help nourish and preserve faith; and second, because they seal grace and salvation to us. Indeed, God gives grace and salvation when we use the sacraments rightly — provided we believe the word of promise at-

tached to the sacrament, of which the sacraments are also seals. In this way we hold a middle position — giving the sacraments neither too much nor too little.

POINT 20: OF SAVING FAITH



OUR CONSENT.

Conclusion 1. They teach that it is the property of faith to believe the whole word of God — and especially the redemption of humanity by Christ.

Conclusion 2. They declare that they believe and expect to be saved by Christ and by Christ alone, and by the pure mercy of God in Christ.

Conclusion 3. The most learned among them hold and acknowledge that the obedience of Christ is imputed to them for the satisfaction of the law and for their reconciliation with God.

Conclusion 4. They declare that they place their whole trust and confidence in Christ and in the pure mercy of God for their salvation.

Conclusion 5. Finally, they hold that every person must personally apply the promise of eternal life through Christ to himself — and they acknowledge we are bound to do this. On these five points they and we agree, at least in the words used.

By affirming these five conclusions, Roman Catholics can easily escape the scrutiny of many authorities. And unless the inner workings of Roman Catholic teaching are well understood, an ordinary person can easily be deceived — taking a Roman Catholic priest for a genuine Protestant. For this reason, so we can better detect their deception, I will show where they fall short in each of their conclusions and how they differ from us.

THE DIFFERENCE.

Regarding the first conclusion: they do believe the entire written word of God — and more than that — for they also believe the Apocryphal books, which Christian antiquity for many centuries excluded from the canon. They also believe unwritten traditions received (as they claim) from councils, the writings of the fathers, and the decisions of the church — treating these as equal in authority to the written word of God given by the inspiration of the Spirit. We, for our part, do not despise the Apocrypha — for example, the books of Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus, and the rest. We treat them with due respect, placing them above all other human writings in that they have been approved by the universal consent of the church. Yet we do not regard them as fitting to be received into the canon of Holy Scripture — and therefore they are to be believed only insofar as they agree with the written word. In this we follow the guidance of Athanasius, Origen, Jerome, and the Council of Laodicea. As for unwritten traditions — they fall outside the scope of our faith, and rightly so, because they reach us through human hands that can both deceive and be deceived. We hold and believe that the proper canon of the books of the Old and New Testaments contains sufficient direction for God's church to

lead them to eternal life, in both faith and practice. Here is the point of difference: they make the object of faith broader than it should be or can be, while we hold to the written word alone — believing nothing to salvation beyond it.

In the second conclusion, regarding salvation by Christ alone, there is an obvious deception: they cleverly conceal their own works under the name of Christ. They say that works done by regenerate people are not their own but Christ's working in them — and as Christ's works, they contribute to salvation, but not otherwise. We, for our part, look to be saved only by the works that Christ Himself performed in His own person — not by any work done by Him in us. For all works that we do are, in the matter of justification and salvation, set in opposition to the grace of Christ. Romans 11:6: 'But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.' Furthermore, when they teach that we are saved by the works of Christ which He works in us and enables us to perform, this is directly contrary to the word. Paul says we are not saved by the good works that God has ordained for regenerate people to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). He also says that he counted everything as loss — even after his conversion — so that he might be found in Christ, 'not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law' (Philippians 3:8). Again, Hebrews 1:3: 'He made purification of sins' by Himself — which final words exclude the merit of any work done by Christ within a person. In this way the Roman Catholics overturn in practice all that they claim to hold in theory about their justification and salvation. We agree with them that good works in us are the works of Christ — yet they are not Christ's alone but ours as well, since they proceed from Christ through the mind and will of the

person, just as water from a spring flows through a channel. And just as a contaminated channel contaminates water that was pure at the source, so the mind and will of a person — defiled by the remains of sin — contaminates the works that, as they come from Christ, are undefiled. This is why the works of grace that we do through Christ, or that Christ does in us, are defective — and must be set aside from Christ in the act of justification and salvation.

The third conclusion concerns the imputation of Christ's obedience, which some of the most learned among them acknowledge. Our difference is as follows. They hold that Christ's obedience is imputed only to make satisfaction for sin — not to justify us before God. We hold and believe that the obedience of Christ is imputed to us as our righteousness before God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:30: 'Christ Jesus has become to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.' From this I reason: if Christ is both our sanctification and our righteousness, then He is not only our inherent righteousness but also our imputed righteousness. He is not only our sanctification — which the Roman Catholics themselves interpret as inherent or habitual righteousness — but also our righteousness, since Paul distinguishes these two. Therefore He is to us both inherent and imputed righteousness. Reason itself leads to the same conclusion. At the end of the world, before God's judgment seat, we must bring some kind of righteousness for our justification — a righteousness that can stand up under the strict demands of the law by which we will be judged. But our inherent righteousness is imperfect and stained with countless flaws, and will remain so as long as we live in this world, as experience confirms — and therefore it cannot satisfy the demands of the law. If we look outside ourselves, we will find no

righteousness sufficient for our purposes either in men or in angels — nothing that can secure our acquittal before God and our acceptance to eternal life. We must therefore turn to the person of Christ. His obedience, imputed to us, must serve not only as satisfaction to God for all our sins, but also as our perfect justification — in that God is pleased to accept it as our righteousness, as if it were inherent in us or performed by us personally.

Regarding the fourth conclusion: they hold it the safest and surest course to put their trust and confidence in God's mercy alone for their salvation. Yet they also teach that people may place confidence in the merit of their own works and in the merits of others — provided this is done in moderation. But this teaching completely undermines the conclusion — for by teaching that people are to put confidence in a creature, they overthrow all confidence in the Creator. The first commandment teaches us to choose the true God as our God, and we do this by giving Him our hearts — and we give God our hearts when we place our whole confidence in Him for the salvation of our souls. To place confidence in people or in works is to make them our gods. The true and ancient form of confession was: 'I believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit' — with no mention of any confidence in works or creatures. The ancient church never knew any such confession or confidence. Cyprian says: 'He does not believe in God who does not put his trust concerning his salvation in God alone.' Indeed, even the Roman Catholics themselves, when death approaches, abandon confidence in their merits and flee to the pure mercy of God in Christ. As confirmation, I cite the testimony of Vlinbergius of Cologne, who writes that a book was found in the vestry of a parish in Cologne, written in Dutch in the year 1475, used by

priests when visiting the sick. In it, these questions were found: 'Do you believe that you cannot be saved except by the death of Christ?' The sick person answered, 'Yes.' Then the priest said to him: 'Go then, while breath remains in you, put your confidence in this death alone. Trust in nothing else. Commit yourself wholly to this death. Cover yourself with it alone. Plunge yourself entirely into this death; in every part pierce yourself with it; enfold yourself in this death. And if the Lord should judge you, say: "Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Your judgment, and by no other means do I contend with You." And if He should say you are a sinner, say: "Lord, the death of my Lord Jesus Christ I place between You and my sins." If He should say you have deserved damnation, say: "Lord, I oppose the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between You and my evil merits, and I offer His merit in place of the merit I should have but do not." If He should say He is angry with you, say: "Lord, I oppose the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Your anger.'" Here we see what Roman Catholics do and have done at the time of death. And what they hold and practice when they are dying, they should hold and practice every day while they are living.

In the last conclusion, they teach that we must not only believe in general terms but also apply the promises of eternal life to ourselves personally. But they differ from us in the very manner of applying. They teach that the promise is to be applied not by faith that assures us of our salvation, but only by a probable, conjectural hope. We hold that we are bound in duty to apply the promise of life by faith — without wavering about it — and by hope to sustain that certainty after faith has grasped it. We do not teach that every person living within the bounds of the church, professing Christ's

name, is already certain of his salvation by faith — but that he ought to be, and must strive to attain it. This is a major point in the mystery of iniquity to consider: through this uncertain application of the promise of salvation and this wavering hope, they overthrow half the doctrine of the Gospel. The Gospel requires two things: first, to believe that its promises are true in themselves; second, to believe and by faith to apply them to ourselves personally. This second part — without which the first brings no comfort — is entirely overturned. The objections they raise against our teaching I have already answered elsewhere, and so I pass over them here.

In conclusion: though in carefully chosen words the Roman Catholics appear to agree with us on the doctrine of faith, they in fact deny and destroy its substance — namely, the personal and certain application of Christ crucified and His benefits to ourselves. Furthermore, they fall short in that they cut off the primary duty and purpose of true saving faith — which is to receive and apply the promised blessing.

POINT 21: OF REPENTANCE



E^{nd.}

OUR CONSENT.

Conclusion 1. Repentance is the conversion of a sinner. Conversion is of two kinds — passive and active. Passive conversion is an action of God by which He converts the one who is as yet unconverted. Active conversion is the action by which a person, once turned by God, turns himself. This conclusion must be understood of the latter — the active — kind. The first conversion, being God's work of turning us to Himself, is not the repentance Scripture so often speaks about. It goes by the name of regeneration. Repentance, by which we — having first been turned by God — turn ourselves and do good works, is the fruit of regeneration.

Conclusion 2. Repentance consists, in its practical expression, in contrition of heart, confession of mouth, and satisfaction in works or deeds. Regarding contrition, there are two kinds: legal and evangelical. Legal contrition is nothing but a guilty conscience over sin in view of God's wrath and judgment. It is no grace of God at all, nor any part or cause of repentance — only an occasion for it, and that through God's mercy alone. In itself it is the sting of the

law and the very entrance into the pit of hell. Evangelical contrition is when a repentant sinner grieves over his sins not so much from fear of hell or punishment, but because he has offended and grieved so good and merciful a God. This contrition is produced by the ministry of the Gospel, and in the practice of repentance it is always necessary — coming first, as the beginning of repentance. Second, we hold and affirm that confession must be made, and this in several ways. First, to God — both publicly in the congregation and privately in our personal prayers. Second, to the church, when any person has openly offended the congregation through some wrongdoing and has been excommunicated. Third, to our neighbor, when we have offended or wronged him in any way — Matthew 5:23: 'If you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother.' Reconciliation presupposes confession. Finally, in all genuine repentance we hold and acknowledge that satisfaction must be made. First, to God — by entreating Him in our prayers to accept the death and passion of Christ as a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for all our sins. Second, satisfaction is to be made to the church, after excommunication for public offenses, through acts of humiliation that fittingly testify to the sincerity of our repentance. Third, satisfaction must be made to our neighbor — for if he has been wronged, he must receive recompense and restitution (Luke 19:8). Where no satisfaction is made when it is within our power to make it, the reality of repentance may justly be questioned.

Conclusion 3. In repentance we are to produce outward fruits worthy of an amended life. Repentance itself is in the heart and must therefore be expressed through every kind of good work — the chief of which is striving, day by day by God's grace, to forsake and renounce every sin and in all things to do the will of God. Here let it be remembered: we are not promoters of lawlessness or enemies of good works. Though we exclude works from the act of our justification and salvation, we maintain their useful and necessary place in the life of every Christian. This usefulness is threefold — in relation to God, to others, and to ourselves. Works are to be done in relation to God: that His commandments may be obeyed (1 John 5:12); that His will may be done (1 Thessalonians 4:3); that we may show ourselves obedient children to God our Father (1 Peter 1:14); that we may show ourselves thankful for our redemption by Christ (Titus 2:14); that we may not grieve the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30) but walk according to Him (Galatians 5:22); that God may be glorified through our good works (Matthew 5:16); and that we may be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1). Works are also to be done in relation to other people: that our neighbor may be helped in practical ways (Luke 6:38); that he may be won by our example to godliness (1 Peter 3:14); that we may avoid giving offense (1 Corinthians 10:32); and that by doing good we may silence our opponents. Third and finally, good works are useful in relation to ourselves: that we may show ourselves to be new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17); that we may walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8); that we may have assurance of our faith and salvation (2 Peter 1:8, 10); that we may distinguish dead and counterfeit faith from genuine faith (James 2:17); that faith and God's gifts may be exercised and continued to the end (2 Timothy 1:6); that the pun-

ishments of sin — both temporal and eternal — may be avoided (Psalm 89:32); and that we may obtain the reward which God has freely promised in His mercy to those who do good works (Galatians 6:9).

THE DIFFERENCE.

Our disagreement with the Roman Church is not with the doctrine of repentance itself, but with its damnable abuses — which are of two kinds: general and specific. The general abuses concern repentance considered as a whole, and they are as follows. The first is that they locate the beginning of repentance partly in themselves and partly in the Holy Spirit — that is, in the power of natural free will as assisted by the Holy Spirit. Paul, however, attributes this work entirely to God: 2 Timothy 2:25 speaks of 'if perhaps God may grant them repentance.' People who are not merely weak but dead in their sins and offenses cannot do anything to further their own conversion, however much they might be assisted — no more than a dead man in his grave can rise from it on his own. The second abuse is that they treat penance — or rather repentance — as that public discipline and order of correction used against notorious offenders in the open congregation. But Scripture sets out only one repentance, and it applies to all people without exception, to be practiced throughout every stage of life for the necessary putting to death of sin. Open ecclesiastical correction, on the other hand, applied not to all church members but only to those who had given open offense. The third abuse is that they make repentance not only a virtue but also a sacrament — even though for more than a thousand years after Christ it was not counted among the sacraments. Lombard appears to have been one of the first to call

it a sacrament. The scholastic theologians who followed him debated its matter and form, yet not one of them could clearly define what the outward element should be. The fourth abuse concerns the effect and efficacy of repentance — for they make it a meritorious cause of the forgiveness of sins and of eternal life. This is directly contrary to God's word. Paul says clearly in Romans 4:24 that we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. The phrases here — 'redemption in Christ,' 'propitiation by His blood,' 'by faith,' 'freely by grace' — must be carefully observed, for they show plainly that no part of satisfaction or redemption is worked in us or by us, but only outside of us, in the person of Christ. Therefore we regard repentance only as a fruit of faith. Its effect and purpose is to testify to the forgiveness of our sins and our reconciliation before God. It may be said that forgiveness of sins and eternal life are promised to repentance. The answer is that the promise is not made to the work of repentance, but to the person who repents — and not for his own merit or act of repentance, but for the merits of Christ, which he applies to himself by faith. This is how we must understand all the Gospel promises in which works are mentioned — always presupposing in them the reconciliation of the person with God to whom the promise is made. This is why we dissent from the Roman Church on the doctrine of repentance.

The specific abuses concern contrition, confession, and satisfaction. The first abuse regarding contrition is that they teach it must be sufficient and perfect. To navigate this, they now use a distinction — saying that the sorrow of contrition must be greatest in terms of value and estimation, but not necessarily in terms of

intensity. Yet Adrian held a different view: that in true repentance a person must grieve with all his effort. The Roman Catechism says as much: that the sorrow conceived for our sins must be so great that no greater can be imagined; that we must be contrite in the same measure we love God — that is, with all our heart and strength in the most intense sorrow; and that the hatred of sin must be not only the greatest but also the most intense and perfect, so as to exclude all sluggishness and slackness. But then they add that true contrition can be effective even if imperfect — how can this stand, if they prescribe and insist that contrition must be most perfect and intense? We teach only that God requires not the fullness of any grace so much as its genuineness, and that it is itself a degree of sincere contrition to be grieved that we cannot grieve for our sins as we should. The second abuse is that they attribute the merit of congruity to their contrition. But this cannot stand alongside the all-sufficient merit of Christ. An ancient council declares: 'God inspires in us first of all the faith and love of Himself — no merits going before — so that we may faithfully receive the sacrament of baptism and afterward do the things that please Him.' We hold that God requires contrition from us not to merit forgiveness, but so that we may acknowledge our own unworthiness and be humbled before God and distrust all our own merits — and so that we may value all the more the benefits of Christ by which we are received into God's favor — and so that we may more carefully avoid all sin going forward, by which so many torments and terrors of conscience are brought upon us. We acknowledge no contrition to be meritorious at all, except Christ's own contrition, by which He was crushed for our iniquities. The third abuse is that they treat imperfect contrition, or attrition — arising from the fear

of hell — as good and profitable. They apply to it the saying: 'The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.' But servile fear in itself is a fruit of the law — which is the ministry of death and condemnation — and is consequently the road to eternal destruction if God leaves people to themselves. If it turns to anyone's good, it is only incidentally, because God in mercy uses it as an occasion before the giving of grace. Otherwise, remorse of conscience for sin is not the beginning of repentance or the restraint of any sin — it is, properly speaking, the beginning of unspeakable horrors of conscience and eternal death, unless God shows mercy. And yet this fear of punishment, when tempered and mixed with other graces and gifts of God in holy people, is not without profit — for in such people there is sorrow not only for punishment but even more for the offense itself. This kind of fear or sorrow is commanded in Malachi 1:6: 'A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' Chrysostom says that the fear of hell in the heart of a righteous person is like an armed man defending against thieves and robbers, driving them from the house. Ambrose says that martyrs during their sufferings strengthened themselves against the cruelty of their persecutors by placing the fear of hell before their eyes.

The abuses touching confession are as follows. The first is that they use a form of confession to God spoken in an unknown language — which is therefore foolish and ridiculous — and they call on the aid and intercession of the dead and of those who are absent, when in fact there is only one mediator between God and man: the man Christ Jesus. The second is that in practice they confess their sins not only to God but also to the departed saints, in

that they pray to those saints asking for their intercession for the pardon of their sins. This not only equals them with God in seeing and knowing the heart, but also gives a portion of His divine worship to creatures. The third and chief abuse is that they have corrupted what was once open, public confession by turning it into private, auricular confession — binding all people in conscience by a law requiring them to confess all their mortal sins with every circumstance that changes the nature of the sin, as far as they can possibly remember, at least once a year to a priest — unless in a case of extreme necessity. But there is no warrant for this kind of confession in the word of God, nor in orthodox Christian writings for many centuries after Christ, as one of their own side acknowledges. The Holy Spirit's command — 'confess your sins to one another and pray for one another' (James 5:17) — binds the priest to confess to us just as much as it binds any of us to confess to the priest. And where Matthew 3 records that many were baptized while confessing their sins, and Acts 19:18 records that many who believed came and openly confessed their deeds — the confession was voluntary, not compelled; it was also general, not a detailed enumeration of every sin with all its necessary circumstances. The church remained in this freedom of confession for 1,200 years until the Fourth Lateran Council, in which the law of auricular confession was first enacted — a notable invention serving to uncover people's secrets and enrich that greedy and ambitious see with the revenues of the world. Augustine was not aware of it when he said: 'What do I have to do with people that they should hear my confessions, as if they could heal all my diseases?' Nor was Chrysostom, when he says: 'I do not compel you to confess your sins to others.' And: 'If you are ashamed to confess them to any person because

you have sinned, say them daily in your own heart. I do not tell you to confess them to your fellow servant, so he might mock you — confess them to God, who heals them.'

The abuse of satisfaction is this: they have turned what was once canonical satisfaction — made to the congregation by open offenders — into a satisfaction of God's justice for the temporal punishment of sins. This is a most horrible profanation of the entire Gospel, and especially of Christ's satisfaction, which is in itself, without any supplement, fully sufficient for the remission of both guilt and punishment. But I have already addressed this point earlier.

To this point I have examined and demonstrated, by working through a number of specific topics, that we must separate from the present Church of Rome in regard to the foundation and substance of true religion. Much more could be added on this point, but I conclude here — with only this one caution: that we make this separation from Roman religion without any hatred toward the persons who hold and defend it. Indeed, we extend more affection toward them than they do toward us. They do not die for their religion — though their actions may warrant it — but for the treasons they plan and carry out. We are prepared to perform every act of love toward them that the word requires of us. We respect the good gifts of God in many of them. We pray for them, genuinely desiring their repentance and eternal salvation.

Now I intend to move forward and briefly address other points of doctrine contained in the portion of Scripture I have been working through. From this commandment — 'Come out of her, my people' — I draw a second conclusion: the true church of God is and has been present within the Roman Church, as grain within a

heap of chaff. Though the Roman Catholic religion ruled and spread across the face of the earth for many centuries, God preserved a people for Himself in the midst of it who truly worshipped Him. To this effect the Holy Spirit says that the dragon — that is, the devil — caused the woman — that is, the church — to flee into the wilderness, where he sought to destroy her but could not. And she still retained a remnant of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17). What I am saying about the Roman Church cannot be said in the same way about the congregations of Muslims and other unbelievers — that the hidden church of God is preserved among them — because there is no means of salvation present at all. The Roman Church, on the other hand, has the Scriptures — though in a foreign language — and baptism in its outward form. Through these means God in every age preserved the means by which His elect could be gathered out of the midst of Babylon. This silences the Roman Catholics who demand of us where our church was eighty years ago, before Luther's time — as if to suggest to the world that our church and religion are new. The answer comes from this very text: our church has existed since the days of the apostles, including in the very midst of the papacy. It was always a church and did not first come into existence in Luther's time — it only began to be visible then, having been hidden by a universal apostasy for many centuries. This also gives us occasion to reflect on how God deals with His own church and people. He wills that they be outwardly mixed with their enemies — and that for a specific purpose — namely, to exercise the humility and patience of His few servants. When Elijah saw idolatry spread over all Israel, he withdrew to the wilderness and in grief asked to

die. David cried out: 'Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, for I dwell among the tents of Kedar' (Psalm 120:5). And righteous Lot had his soul tormented day after day by seeing and hearing the wickedness of Sodom.

Third, this commandment teaches us what to think of the present Church of Rome. It is often asked whether it is a church or not, and the answer may be framed as follows. If by this church we mean the institution and organization headed by the Pope — whose members are all who acknowledge him as their head and believe the doctrine established at the Council of Trent — we do not regard it as a church of God. This is because Babylon — which I have demonstrated to be the Church of Rome — is here set in opposition to the people of God, and we are commanded to come out of it. We may not completely forsake any people until they have first forsaken Christ. Some will perhaps say that the Church of Rome has the Scriptures and the sacrament of baptism. My first reply is that while they do have the books of Holy Scripture among them, the rest of their teaching overturns the true meaning of Scripture at its foundation, as I have shown. And while they have the outward form of baptism, they overturn the inward baptism that is its substance — namely, the justification and sanctification of a sinner. Furthermore, they have the word and baptism not for themselves, but for the sake of the true church of God within them — as a lantern holds a candle not for its own benefit but for others. Second, it is objected that if the Pope is Antichrist, then he sits in the temple — that is, in the church of God — and therefore the Roman Church must be the true church. The answer is that he sits in the temple of God, but notice how: as if he were God — not as a member, but as an open usurper, just as a thief sits in an honest

man's house. The Roman Church and God's true church are mixed together like chaff and grain in one pile. The Church of Rome may be said to be in God's church, and God's church to be in the Church of Rome — just as we say the wheat is among the chaff and the chaff is among the wheat. Moreover, he is said to sit in the temple of God because the Roman Church, though falsely, claims for itself the title of the true catholic church. Some try to soften the matter by comparing this church to a man lying sick and covered with sores, his throat also cut, yet still alive — body and soul remaining joined. But on honest reflection, it is more like a dead body — entirely empty of spiritual life, as the foundational errors of the Roman Catholic system make plain. It is true that a known adulteress may afterward remain a wife and be called one — but after the bill of divorce is given, she ceases to be a wife, even if she can show her marriage ring. Now the Roman Church has received its bill of divorce in the written word — namely 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13:11-12.

This commandment also gives us a vivid picture of the condition of all humanity. We see two kinds of people: some belong to Babylon, rushing toward their own destruction; others are a people of God, separated from Babylon and kept for eternal life. If anyone asks the cause of this distinction, I answer: it is the very will of God, choosing to show mercy to some and withholding it from others — not continuing mercy to them — for the greater display of His justice. The Lord says in Romans 11:4: 'I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' And Isaiah says: 'Unless the Lord of hosts had left us a few survivors, we would be like Sodom and Gomorrah.' This distinction teaches us above all things to seek to be among God's people, and to strive

for assurance of this in our own consciences. If all were to be saved, less urgency would be needed — but this mercy is not common to all, and therefore it deserves all the more thought.

Finally, I note here the special care God has over His own children. He first gives them warning to depart before He begins to execute His judgment on the enemies among whom they live — so that they might not be partakers of their sins or punishments. Before God punished Jerusalem, an angel was sent to mark on the forehead those who mourned for the abominations of the people. And in the destruction of the firstborn in Egypt, the angel passed over the homes of the Jews whose doorposts were sprinkled with the blood of the Passover lamb — and this passing over signifies safety and preservation in the midst of common destruction for those whose hearts are sprinkled with the blood of Christ. This blessing of protection should move us all to become genuine and wholehearted servants of God. People commonly seek membership in societies and organizations where they can enjoy privileges and freedoms. Look: in the company of God's saints — the true church — there is freedom from danger in every common catastrophe and from eternal vengeance at the last day. When Esther had secured the safety of the Jews and permission for them to defend themselves against their enemies, many people of the land became Jews. In the same way, since Christ has secured freedom from hell, death, and condemnation for all who believe in Him, we should strive above all things to become new creatures — always joining ourselves to the true church of God.

So far I have addressed the commandment; now follows the reason given for it — drawn from its purpose: that they not share in her sins and that they not receive her plagues. I could spend

much time here showing what the sins of the Church of Rome are, but I will name only the principal ones. The first sin is atheism, and I demonstrate it as follows. Atheism is of two kinds: open and concealed. Open atheism is when people deny God and His word in both word and deed. Concealed atheism is less obvious, and it has two degrees. The first degree is when people acknowledge God as creator and governor of heaven and earth, yet deny the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Ephesians before receiving the Gospel are said to have been without God — though in their natural reasoning they acknowledged Him — because they denied Christ. Consequently they worshipped an idol of their own imagination when they worshipped God outside of Christ. In the same way, though the Samaritans worshipped the God of Abraham, our Savior Christ said they worshipped what they did not know. And the Psalmist says of all the Gentiles that their gods are idols. In this degree of atheism stand Muslims and Jews today, along with anti-Trinitarians and Arians, and all who conceive of and worship God outside of the Trinity. The second degree is when people rightly acknowledge the unity of God in the Trinity of persons, yet by the necessary consequences of their doctrine and worship, they overturn what they have correctly stated. In this sense I say that the religion of the Church of Rome is itself a form of atheism. By making the merit of human works cooperate with God's grace, it overthrows the grace of God (Romans 11). In words they acknowledge the infinite justice and mercy of God, but in practice both are denied. How can God's justice be infinite if it can be appeased in any way by human satisfactions? And how can God's mercy be infinite if our own satisfactions must supplement the satisfaction of Christ? Furthermore: he who does not have the Son does not have

the Father, and he who has neither Father nor Son denies God. But the present Roman religion does not have the Son — that is, Jesus Christ, God and man, the Mediator of humanity — but has fashioned a false Christ. Here is how I show it. In place of one Jesus Christ, fully human like us in every way except sin, they have constructed a Christ to whom they ascribe two modes of existence: one natural, by which He is visible, tangible, and located in heaven; the other not merely above nature but contrary to it — by which He is physically present, according to His flesh, in the hands of every priest, in every consecrated host, and in the mouth of every communicant — invisible, intangible, and without location. In this way they effectively abolish His humanity. They also strip Him of His offices. In place of one Jesus Christ, the only king, lawgiver, and head of the church, they attach the Pope to Him — not merely as a deputy but as an equal — by giving the Pope power to make laws binding on conscience, to determine the meaning of Holy Scripture infallibly, to properly pardon sin with respect to both guilt and temporal punishment, to exercise authority over the entire earth and a portion of hell, to depose kings to whom every soul is subject under Christ, to release subjects from their oath of allegiance, and so on. In place of one Jesus Christ, the only real priest of the New Testament, they add to Him many secondary priests who daily offer Christ in the Mass for the sins of the living and the dead. In place of one Jesus Christ, the all-sufficient Mediator of intercession, they have added many companions to Him who make requests on our behalf — as many saints as are in the Pope's calendar. Finally, in place of the sole merits of Christ — in whom alone the Father is well pleased — they have devised a treasury of the church containing, alongside the merits of Christ, the surplus mer-

its of the saints, to be distributed to people at the Pope's discretion. And so we see that Christ — and consequently God Himself, to be worshipped in Christ — has been transformed into a fantasy or idol of human invention. There is always a correspondence between a person's worship of God and their understanding of Him. In whatever worship they offer to God, they have in mind some sense of His nature, so that the worship may be fitting and pleasing to Him. Let us then look at what kind of worship Roman religion provides. It is for the most part mere will-worship — invented by human beings without any allowance or command from God. It is an outward, bodily religion consisting of countless ceremonies borrowed partly from the Jews and partly from the pagans. It is divided between God and some of His creatures, who are worshipped together with a similar kind of honor — let them dress it up however they will. If we may judge by their manner of worshipping God what they actually believe about Him — and we may — they have plainly turned the true God into a fantasy of their own making. For God is not to be conceived of in any way except as He has revealed Himself in creation and in His word — and especially in Christ, who is the exact image of the Father's person.

The second sin is idolatry — as gross as anything ever practiced among the pagans. It can be seen in two things. First, they worship the saints with religious worship that is, without exception, proper to God alone. They go so far as to transform some of them into abominable idols, making them in reality mediators of redemption — especially the Virgin Mary, whom they call a lady, a goddess, a queen whom Christ her Son obeys in heaven, a mediatrix, life itself, hope, and the healer of the sick. They pray to her: 'Prepare glory for us; defend us from our enemies; receive us at the hour of

death; loose the bonds of the guilty; bring light to the blind; drive away all demons. Show yourself to be a mother; let him receive our prayers.' Second, their idolatry is evident in that they worship God in, at, and before images — without any commandment to do so, and in fact contrary to explicit command. They claim they use and venerate images only to remind them of God. But this is like an unfaithful wife who brings many lovers into her home during her husband's absence and, when rebuked, answers that these are her husband's friends and she keeps them there only to remind herself of him. Third, their idolatry exceeds even that of the pagans — for they worship a bread-god, worshipping Christ in and under the form of bread and wine. And if Christ in His humanity is absent from the earth — as I have demonstrated — the Roman consecrated host is as abominable an idol as any that has ever existed.

The third sin is the promotion of sexual immorality, which is evident in two things. First, in the toleration of houses of prostitution — directly contrary to the commandment of God. Deuteronomy 23:17: 'None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute.' This toleration is an occasion of sexual immorality for many young men and women who would otherwise abstain from all such filth. And what an abomination it is when brothers, fathers and sons, nephews and uncles, come to the same prostitute, one after another. Second, their law permits the marriage of any persons beyond the fourth degree — and by this means they sometimes allow what amounts to incest. In the unequal collateral line, the person nearest the common ancestor stands in the relationship of a parent to the descendants of that ancestor's sibling, as the following example shows.

John had two children: Nicholas and Anne. Nicholas had children Thomas and Lewes. Anne had children Roger, Anthony, and James. Here Anne and Nicholas are brother and sister, making Anne in the position of a mother to all who are descended from Nicholas.

Anne and Nicholas are brother and sister, and Anne is six degrees removed from James — he being her great-nephew. The Church of Rome permits the marriage between them, since they fall outside the four-degree limit. Nevertheless this is contrary to the law of nature — for since Anne is Nicholas's sister, she stands in the position of a mother to all of Nicholas's descendants, including James and James's descendants. I do grant this much: that Anne's daughter may lawfully marry James or Anthony — that case is different, because they are not to each other in the relationship of parent and child.

The fourth sin is magic, sorcery, and witchcraft — seen in the consecration of the host, by which they make their bread-god; in exorcisms performed over holy bread, holy water, and salt; in the casting out or driving away of demons by the sign of the cross, solemn conjurations, holy water, the ringing of bells, the lighting of candles, relics, and similar means. These things have no actual power, either from creation or from any institution of God in His word — and therefore, if anything is accomplished by them, it comes from the secret operation of the devil himself.

The fifth sin is that their doctrine promotes perjury. They teach with one voice that a Roman Catholic under examination may give deliberately ambiguous answers contrary to what the examiner is asking — by privately assigning a different meaning to his words. For example: if a man is asked whether he said or heard Mass at a

particular place — though he did — they say he may answer no and swear to it, because he was not there to disclose it to the examiner. Yet by the very law of nature, a person taking an oath must swear according to the intention of the one authorized to administer it, and must do so in truth, justice, and judgment. Let them clear their teaching of all support for perjury, if they can.

The sixth sin is that they reverse many of God's commandments — treating as no sin what God's word calls sin. They teach that stealing a small thing that is not thought to cause serious harm is no mortal sin. That a lie told in someone's interest, or a lie made in jest, is only a venial sin. That praying for our enemies specifically is not a commandment but only a counsel — and that no one is bound to greet an enemy in a friendly manner. This is directly contrary to Christ's rule in Matthew 5:47. They also teach that a rash judgment, even when consented to, is ordinarily only a venial sin; that it is sometimes lawful to pretend to be holy; that wearing face paint is ordinarily only a venial sin; and that it is not lawful to forbid begging, even though the Lord commanded that there should be no poor person in Israel. They further teach that men who swear oaths of violence in the heat of anger are not true blasphemers.

Finally, their writers resort to outright lying to defend their doctrine. They falsely claim that all of Christian antiquity is on their side — when in fact the ancient writers are as much against them as for them, and as much for us as for them. Furthermore, they have a practice — continuing to this day — of supporting their positions by forged and counterfeit writings attributed to respected men. I will name several of these.

Among the forged writings used by Rome to prove their positions are these: the Liturgy of Saint James; the Canons of the Apostles; the books of Dionysius the Areopagite, including his work on ecclesiastical hierarchy; the Decretal Epistles of the Popes; the works of Pope Clement; some of the epistles of Ignatius; Origen's book on repentance, his homilies on various saints, commentaries on Job, and his book on Lamentations; the Liturgy of Chrysostom; the Liturgy of Basil and his *Ascetica*; various works falsely attributed to Augustine; the Questions and Answers of Justin Martyr; the epistle of Athanasius to Pope Felix; Bernard's sermons on the Lord's Supper; Jerome's epistle to Demetrias, which smacks of Pelagius; Tertullian's work on monogamy; Cyprian on chrism and on the washing of feet. In the Council of Sardica, the third, fourth, and fifth canons are forged. In the Council of Nicea, all canons except twenty are forged. Certain Roman councils under Silvester are forged, since he was dead at the time and could not have confirmed them. To the sixth canon of the Council of Nicea, the words 'the Roman Church has always had the supremacy' were inserted. And finally, Popes Zosimus, Boniface, and Celestine falsified the canons of the Council of Nicea to prove that appeals could be made from all places to Rome — so that the bishops of Africa were forced to send for the true copies of that council from Constantinople and the churches of Greece.

I could rehearse many other sins which, together with those already named, call for judgment upon the Roman Church — but it will suffice to have named a few of the chief ones.

In this reason our Savior Christ prescribes another important duty to His own people — to take care to avoid all the sins of the Church of Rome, so that they may escape its deserved plagues and

punishments. From this prescribed duty I draw two observations. The first is that every faithful servant of God must carefully avoid marriage with committed Roman Catholics — that is, with those who acknowledge the Pope as their head and believe the doctrine of the Council of Trent. In such marriages, people find it very hard to maintain faith and a good conscience, and very hard to avoid sharing in the sins of the Roman Church. I ground this further on the following reasoning. Scripture speaks of two kinds of alliances between persons, or between nations. The first is a league of peace — when one kingdom binds itself to live peacefully with another for the sake of undisturbed trade. This kind of alliance may exist between God's church and its enemies. The second is a league of friendship — when people, communities, or nations bind themselves to defend each other in all causes, making each other's wars their own. This kind of alliance may not be made with enemies of God. Jehoshaphat, otherwise a good king, made this kind of alliance with Ahab and was accordingly rebuked by the prophet: 'Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?' (2 Chronicles 19:2). Marriages between Protestants and Roman Catholics are private leagues of friendship between individuals — and therefore are not to be permitted. Furthermore, Malachi 2:11 says: 'Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord which He loves and has married the daughter of a foreign god' — where marriage with the people of a false god is plainly condemned. The Roman Catholics, as I have shown, by the consequences of their doctrine and religion, have turned the true God into an idol of their own imagination, and the true Christ revealed in the written word into a fabricated Christ made of

bread. That said, if such a marriage has already been made and completed, it may not be dissolved. The parties sin not simply in being married, but in marrying outside the Lord — being of different religions. The fault is not in the substance of the marriage but in the manner of entering into it. For this reason the apostle commands the believing party not to abandon or refuse the unbelieving party — even if that person were a pagan, which no Roman Catholic is — if that party is willing to remain (1 Corinthians 7:13).

The second observation is that every servant of God must take care when traveling to countries where Roman Catholicism is the established religion — lest he share in its sins and punishments. To go as an ambassador to any place, or to travel in order to fulfill the necessary duties of one's particular or general calling, is not unlawful. But to travel outside the bounds of the church purely for pleasure and to observe foreign fashions has no warrant. This is why many people who depart in good order and with right intentions return home with damaged consciences. The best traveler of all is the one who — whether at home or abroad — can journey out of himself and depart from his own sins and corruptions through genuine repentance.

ADVERTISEMENT: ROMAN RELIGION AGAINST THE GROUNDS OF THE CATECHISM



Great numbers of people embrace the religion of the present Church of Rome, deceived by its impressive claims of universality, antiquity, and unbroken succession. And no doubt, though some are willfully blind, many who have committed themselves to this path have never seen any other truth. Of these and the rest I ask one favor: that they will weigh and consider for themselves this one thing I am now setting before them. The Roman religion as established by the Council of Trent is, in its principal points, contrary to the very foundations of the catechism that all churches have agreed on since the days of the apostles. These foundations are four: first, the Apostles' Creed; second, the Decalogue or Ten Commandments; third, the form of prayer called the Lord's Prayer; and fourth, the institution of the two sacraments — baptism and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23).

To show this in an orderly way, I will begin with the Creed. First, consider that some of the principal doctrines believed in the Roman Church are these: that the Pope or Bishop of Rome is the vicar of Christ and head of the catholic church; that there is a fire

of purgatory after this life; that images of God and the saints are to be placed in churches and venerated; that prayer is to be made to departed saints and their intercession sought; and that a propitiatory sacrifice is daily offered in the Mass for the sins of the living and the dead. These points are so essential to Roman Catholic teaching that without them it cannot stand — and in the Council of Trent, the curse of anathema is pronounced on all who deny any one of them. And yet notice: the Apostles' Creed — which has long been regarded as containing all necessary points of religion to be believed, and has therefore been called the key and rule of faith — contains none of these points. Neither do the ancient fathers' explanations of it, nor any other creed or confession of faith produced by any council or church for many centuries. This is plain evidence to any fair-minded person that these are new articles of faith never known in the apostolic church — and that the fathers and councils could find no such articles of faith in the books of the Old and New Testaments. The response is made that all these teachings are believed under the article 'I believe the holy catholic church' — the meaning of which they take to be: 'I believe everything which the catholic church holds and requires to be believed.' If this is so, we must in effect believe in the church itself — that is, place our confidence in the church for the manifestation and certainty of all doctrines necessary to salvation. And thus the eternal truth of God the Creator would depend on the determinations of a creature, and the written word of God would in this regard be declared insufficient — as if it had not plainly revealed all points of doctrine necessary to salvation. And the ancient churches would be greatly at fault for not setting forth the above points as articles of faith, but leaving them to these later times.

Second: in the Creed, 'to believe in God' and 'to believe the church' are distinguished. 'To believe in' applies to the Creator; 'to believe' applies to a creature — as Rufinus has noted, saying that by the preposition 'in,' the Creator is distinguished from the creature, and things belonging to God are distinguished from things belonging to people. Augustine says: 'It must be understood that we believe the church, but do not believe in the church — because the church is not God but the house of God.' It follows that we must not believe in the saints, nor place our confidence in our works, as the learned Roman Catholics teach. Therefore Eusebius says: 'We rightly believe Peter and Paul — but to believe in Peter and Paul, that is, to give to the servants the honor due to the Lord, we ought not.' And Cyprian says: 'He does not believe in God who does not place in Him alone the trust of his whole happiness.'

Third: the article 'conceived by the Holy Spirit' is overturned by the transubstantiation of bread and wine in the Mass into the body and blood of Christ. In this article we confess the true and permanent incarnation of Christ — beginning in His conception and never ending — and we acknowledge the truth of His humanity. His body has the essential properties of a real body: it consists of flesh and bone, has quantity, shape, and dimensions (length, breadth, and thickness), has parts distinct from one another (head distinct from feet, feet from head), and is bounded in space, visible, and tangible. In short, His body has everything that by the order of creation belongs to a physical body. It may be objected that Christ's body can remain a true body while being altered in some qualities — such as its spatial location. But I say again that spatial location cannot be separated from a body if it is to remain a body. To be located in space is an essential property of every quantity,

and quantity is the common essence of every body. Therefore a body, by virtue of its quantity, must necessarily be located in one place. Leo spoke to this when he said: 'The body of Christ in no way falls outside the truth of our body.' Augustine said: 'Only God in Christ so comes that He does not depart; so returns that He does not leave us. But a human being, with respect to his body, is in one place — when he goes to another place, he is no longer in the place from which he came.' To get around this, they draw a distinction: Christ's body may be in many places with respect to its whole essence, they say, but not with respect to its whole quantity, by which it is in only one place. But as I have said, this is self-contradictory — for quantity, according to all sound reasoning, is of the essence of a body, without which a body cannot be.

Fourth: in the Creed we confess that Christ ascended into heaven and sits there, after His ascension, at the right hand of the Father — and this according to His humanity. From this I conclude that Christ's body is not really and locally present in the sacrament or in every host the priest consecrates. This argument was already sound when Vigilius, writing against Eutyches, said: 'When it — the flesh — was on earth, it was not in heaven; and because it is now in heaven, it is not on earth.' He then adds that this is the catholic faith and confession. It was sound when Fulgentius said: 'According to His human substance He was absent from earth when He was in heaven, and He left the earth when He ascended into heaven.' And: 'The same inseparable Christ, according to His whole humanity, departed from earth and bodily ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand, and according to that same complete humanity He will come to judgment.' It was sound when Cyril said: 'No one doubts that when He ascended into heaven, al-

though He is always present by the power of His Spirit, He was absent as to the presence of His flesh.' And it was sound when Augustine said: 'According to the flesh which the Word assumed, He ascended into heaven — He is not here; there He sits at the right hand of the Father; and He is here according to the presence of His majesty.' And: 'He departed as He was man, and He remained as He was God. He departed by that by which He was in one place; He remained by that by which He was everywhere.'

Fifth: when the Creed says we believe 'the holy catholic church,' it follows that the catholic church is in some sense invisible — because things seen are not believed. The common reply — that we believe only the holiness of the church — will not serve. The words are clear: in the Creed we confess that we believe not only the holiness of the church but the church itself.

Sixth and finally, the articles — 'the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting' — contain a confession of personal and particular faith. Their meaning is: I believe the forgiveness of my own sins and the resurrection of my own body to everlasting life. This is the judgment of learned antiquity. Augustine says: 'If you also believe that you will rise again and ascend into heaven — since you are assured of so great a Patron — you are certain of so great a gift.' And: 'Do not diminish Christ, who brings you to the kingdom of heaven for the remission of sins; without this faith, anyone who comes to baptism shuts the gate of mercy against himself.' And: 'Whoever faithfully believes and holds this profession of faith — in which all his sins are forgiven — let him make his will conform to the will of God and not fear his passage through death.' And: 'The entire sacrament of baptism rests on this: that we believe the resurrection of the body and the

remission of sins to be given us by God.' And: 'He gave these keys to the church, so that whoever within His church does not believe his sins to be forgiven, they will not be forgiven; and whoever believed and turned from them, remaining in the bosom of the church, will at last be healed by faith and amendment of life.' And: 'What you have heard fulfilled in the glorious resurrection of Christ, believe that the very same will be fulfilled in you — in the last judgment, the resurrection of your flesh will restore you for all eternity. For unless you believe you are to be repaired through death, you cannot come to the reward of eternal life.' In ancient times, the article of the resurrection was recited in this form: 'the resurrection of this flesh' — and to it was joined: 'to everlasting life.' Two major teachings of the Roman Church are thus completely overturned: first, the claim that we cannot by personal faith be certain of the forgiveness of our sins and the salvation of our souls; and second, the claim that a person truly justified may fall away and be damned. Neither of these can stand if the practice of the ancient church is valid — which has taught us to believe everlasting life in direct connection with the forgiveness of sins.

Turning now to the Decalogue: a standard rule for explaining the individual commandments is this — where a vice is forbidden, the opposite virtue is commanded, along with all virtues of the same kind, including their causes, occasions, and means of support. This rule is universally acknowledged. From this it follows that the so-called counsels of perfection — if they contribute in any way to virtue — are already required by the law. They therefore describe no state of perfection beyond the scope of the law.

Second, the commandment 'You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness' has two distinct parts. The first forbids the making of carved or graven images; the second forbids their adoration. The first part is ably explained by Moses in Deuteronomy 4:16: 'So that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female.' Note the reason given for this prohibition in the same passage: 'since you saw no form on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire' (verse 15). Since this reason concerns the image of God Himself, the prohibition must be understood in the same way. Furthermore, God is clearly directing His commandment not against a theoretical sin but against the common and wicked practice of the Israelites — representing God Himself in likenesses and physical forms (Isaiah 40:18). This was also the practice of the Gentiles, who were even more extreme in this than the Jews (Romans 1:23). To any fair-minded person it is plain: the first part of the commandment forbids making graven images or likenesses of the true God — and the Roman Catechism itself understands the words this way. The second part must be understood in light of the first, and therefore forbids bowing down to any image of God. It follows that to worship God or the saints in or before images, and to worship images with religious worship, is abominable idolatry. Common reason alone should teach us this: those who adore and worship the true God in images bind God's presence, His grace, His working, and His hearing of prayer to certain objects, places, and signs to which He has not bound Himself by any commandment or promise. That is to worship God and seek His blessings in a way other than He has commanded Himself to be worshipped or promised to hear us. This plainly overturns the

excuse they make — that they worship not images but God and the saints in images. For neither God nor the saints acknowledge this kind of honor; they abhor it. It necessarily follows that what they are actually worshipping is nothing more than the image itself, or a fabrication of their own imagination — a god of their own devising who is pleased to be worshipped and to receive prayers at images. It may be said that the Roman Catholics tie the worship and invocation of God to images in the same way God tied Himself to the sanctuary and the temple of Solomon. My answer is: it was God's own will to show His presence and be worshipped at the sanctuary, and the Jews had God's explicit word as their warrant. But we have no similar warrant — neither by promise nor commandment — to tie God's presence to any image or crucifix. Reason can expose their idolatry yet further. Those who worship what they do not know are worshipping an idol. But the Roman Catholics worship what they do not know — and I prove it thus: for the consecration of the host, the priest's intention is required, at least in a general sense, as they themselves say. If this is true, then no Roman Catholic can come to Mass or pray with genuine faith — they must always doubt what is being raised up by the priest's hands: is it bread, or the body and blood of Christ? No one can have any certainty about the priest's intention in consecrating, and they have good reason for doubt given the widespread ignorance and moral looseness among such persons.

Third, the commandment concerning the Sabbath grants freedom to work six days in the ordinary duties of one's calling — and this freedom cannot be taken away by any creature. The Roman Church therefore errs in prescribing regular and fixed festival days

not only to honor God but also to honor the saints — requiring them to be observed with the same strictness and solemnity as the Lord's Sabbath.

Fourth, the third commandment — or as they number it, the fourth — requires children to obey their father and mother in all things, especially in weighty matters such as marriage and the choice of their calling, and to do so even to the point of death. Yet the Roman Church, contrary to the intent of this commandment, allows clandestine marriages and the vow of religious life to be binding even when made without — and contrary to — the consent of wise and concerned parents.

Fifth, the last commandment against coveting forbids the first movements toward sin that arise before any act of the will. I demonstrate it this way: coveting is already forbidden in earlier commandments — coveting joined with consent — as in 'You shall not commit adultery,' where lusting after a neighbor's wife is forbidden, and in the next commandment, lusting after a neighbor's goods, and so on. Now if the final commandment also forbade nothing more than lust that involves consent, it would be redundant with the others — and by this reasoning there would not be ten distinct words or commandments. That conclusion is absurd. It follows that the lust forbidden in the last commandment is the kind that comes before any consent of the will. Furthermore, the philosophers, by the light of nature alone, already knew that lust with consent was evil. But Paul — a learned Pharisee and therefore more knowledgeable than any philosopher — confesses in Romans 7 that he did not know lust to be sin until the commandment revealed it. Therefore the lust forbidden by this commandment is the kind that exists without consent. Wicked, then, is the teaching of

the Roman Church — that for any mortal sin, a deliberate act of the will is required. On this basis they conclude that many thoughts against faith and unclean imaginations are not sins.

Sixth and finally: the words of the second commandment — 'showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments' — overthrow all human merits. If the reward is given by mercy to those who keep the law, it is not given on the basis of the merit of the work done.

Turning to the third part of the catechism: the Lord's Prayer is a complete and perfect form of prayer. For this reason Tertullian called it the summary of the Gospel, and Celestine says: 'The law of praying is the law of believing and the law of working.' In this prayer we are taught to direct our prayers to God alone — 'Our Father,' and so on — and to do so only in the name and through the mediation of Christ. God is our Father only through Christ. It is therefore unnecessary to invoke the saints or make them our mediators of intercession to God. It is sufficient to pray to God alone in the name of Christ alone.

Second: in the fourth petition we say: 'Give us this day our daily bread.' In these words we acknowledge that every piece of bread is a pure gift from God. What madness, then, to think that we could merit the kingdom of heaven by works that cannot even merit bread?

Third: in the next petition — 'Forgive us our debts' — four Roman Catholic teachings are directly overturned. The first is human satisfaction. Every child of God, even after conversion, is here taught to humble himself day by day and pray for the pardon of his daily sins. But making satisfaction and asking for pardon are con-

tradictory. The second is merit. Here we acknowledge ourselves to be debtors to God — indeed, bankrupts — and that beyond the principal debt of many thousands of talents, we increase our debt day by day. Therefore we cannot possibly merit any of God's blessings. It is pure madness to think that those who cannot pay their debts but only increase them daily could deserve or earn any of the creditor's goods or the pardon of what they owe. Whatever favor is shown to them comes from pure goodwill, without the slightest desert. In short: if everything we can do is not enough to stop us from adding to the sum of our debt, much less will any merit of ours reduce it. All God's servants are therefore right to cast themselves down and pray: 'Forgive us our debts.' The third opinion overturned is that punishment may be retained while the guilt is completely remitted. This cannot stand — for sin is called our debt because by nature we owe God obedience, and for our failure to pay it, we further owe Him the penalty of punishment. Sin is called our debt in respect of the punishment. Therefore when we pray for the pardon of sin, we are asking for pardon not only of the guilt but of the entire punishment. And when a debt is forgiven, it is absurd to think that even the smallest payment remains owing. The fourth opinion overturned is that a person in this life can fulfill the law — since in this very petition every servant of God is taught to ask daily pardon for breaking the law. The reply is made that our daily sins are venial and not against the law but merely alongside it. But this contradicts the petition itself — for a debt arising from a penalty is against the bond or obligation. And every sin is a debt that incurs the forfeiture of punishment, and therefore stands not alongside but directly against the law.

Fourth: in the clause 'as we forgive our debtors,' it is assumed as obvious that we can know with certainty that we are in love and charity with people when we make reconciliation with them. Why then may we not know with certainty that we repent, believe, and are reconciled to God — which is exactly what all Roman Catholics deny?

Fifth: in the final words 'lead us not into temptation,' we do not pray to be freed from all temptation — for it is sometimes good to be tempted (Psalm 26:1). Rather, we pray that we not be abandoned to the power of Satan and held captive by temptation, since 'lead us into temptation' and 'deliver us' are set in opposition. From this I conclude that the one who is truly a child of God — genuinely justified and sanctified — will never fall completely and finally from God's grace. My reasoning: whatever we ask according to God's will shall be granted (1 John 5). Every child of God asks this — that he may never be completely abandoned by his Father and left captive in temptation. Therefore this will be granted.

Sixth: the word 'Amen' signifies a particular faith regarding all the foregoing petitions — that they will be granted. It therefore expresses a particular faith concerning the forgiveness of sins, which the Roman Church denies.

Turning finally to the institution of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23: the real presence is overturned here by several considerations. From the words 'He took and broke,' it is clear that what Christ took was not His own body — for He cannot be said to have taken, held, and broken Himself with His own hands. He took the bread. Second, Christ did not say 'under the form of bread' or 'in bread,' but: 'This — that is, bread — is My body.' Third, bread was not given for us — only the body of Christ was. And at the first

institution, Christ's body had not yet actually been given to death. Fourth, the cup is 'the new covenant' by a figure — why may not the bread be the body of Christ by a figure also? Fifth, Christ ate the supper but did not eat Himself. Sixth, we are told to do this 'until He comes' — therefore Christ is not bodily present. Seventh, Christ says the bread is to be eaten in remembrance of Him — but signs of remembrance point to things that are absent. Eighth, if the Roman real presence were granted, the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament would either be separated from each other or joined together. If separated, then Christ is still being crucified. If joined, then the bread would be both the body and blood — whereas the institution says the bread is the body and the wine is the blood.

Furthermore, the practice of administering the sacrament under only one kind is condemned here. Christ's commandment is: 'Drink from it, all of you' (Matthew 26:27). And this commandment is repeated to the church at Corinth in these words: 'Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me' (verse 25). No power can repeal this commandment, for it was established by the sovereign head of the church.

These few pages, along with the main treatise, I offer to the reading of those who favor the Roman religion — asking them to consider patiently just this one thing: if their religion truly were catholic and apostolic, as they claim, it could not be contrary even in a single point to the foundations of all catechisms that have been used in every church confessing the name of Christ since the days of the apostles. And since it contradicts those foundations in several points of doctrine — as I have shown — this is plain evidence that the present Roman religion has fallen away from the

truth. I write this not despising or hating the persons who hold this religion, but genuinely desiring their conversion in this world and their salvation in the world to come.

End.

THANKS FOR READING



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