

*Holy Helps for a
Godly Life*



SERIES EDITORS

Joel R. Beeke & Jay T. Collier

Interest in the Puritans continues to grow, but many people find the reading of these giants of the faith a bit unnerving. This series seeks to overcome that barrier by presenting Puritan books that are convenient in size and unimimidating in length. Each book is carefully edited with modern readers in mind, smoothing out difficult language of a bygone era while retaining the meaning of the original authors. Books for the series are thoughtfully selected to provide some of the best counsel on important subjects that people continue to wrestle with today.

Holy Helps for a Godly Life

Richard Rogers

Edited by
Brian G. Hedges



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Holy Helps for a Godly Life

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orders@heritagebooks.org

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Preface

Spiritual disciplines have now been a regular feature in evangelical teaching on discipleship for several decades. Interest in these disciplines surged following the 1978 publication of Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*, such that dozens of similar titles now fill our shelves. This has been a good development to the degree that it has led believers into renewed habits of Bible reading, meditation, and prayer.

Many of these books, however, freely utilize the devotional writings of contemplatives and mystics from medieval Roman Catholicism, Jesuit writings from the Counter-Reformation, and the devotional writings of the Quakers. These are often quoted alongside Reformed, Puritan, and evangelical authors, while paying little attention to their original theological and ecclesiastical contexts.¹ The result is that much evangelical teaching

1. Several books are happy exceptions to this trend and mostly quote from devotional literature in the Puritan and Reformed

on devotional practices is only loosely connected to a robust understanding of the gospel of grace—or worse, it leads undiscerning believers into practices more characterized by mysticism, asceticism, and legalism than the gospel-grounded, grace-oriented piety of which Calvin spoke, “that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces.”²

But godliness never flourishes unless it is planted in the fertile soil of God’s grace. Legalism subverts the gospel and obscures the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, which removes the debt of sin and cancels the curse of the law (Gal. 1:6–9; 3:13–14; Col. 2:11–17). Mystical experience, unmoored from God’s self-revelation in Scripture, leads to inflated emotionalism, but not genuine nourishment from Christ, the head of the body (Col. 2:18–19). And the practices of asceticism, while bearing a superficial resemblance to wisdom, are useless in truly mortifying the flesh (vv. 20–23).

The Puritans understood this and left behind for us the greatest library of biblical, evangelical (that is,

tradition. See especially Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014); David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through Spiritual Disciplines* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2016); and Murray G. Brett, *Growing Up in Grace: The Use of Means for Communion with God* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009).

2. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1.2.1.

gospel-oriented), practical, devotional literature that the church has ever produced. At the headwaters of the Puritan movement, there was a “spiritual brotherhood” of pastors and preachers, centered in Cambridge, who were heirs of the preceding Reformers and fathers to the generations that followed.³ This brotherhood included Lawrence Chaderton, William Perkins, Richard Greenham, John Downname, and Richard Rogers, the author of *Holy Helps for a Godly Life*. Together, these men became the leading “architects of the Puritan theology of godliness.”⁴

Richard Rogers: “The Enoch of His Age”

Born in 1551, Richard Rogers was the son of a “joiner,” or furniture maker. Thanks to the sponsorship of a wealthy patron, Rogers was educated at Christ’s College, Cambridge, and graduated with a bachelor of arts in 1571. In 1574, he earned a master of arts from Caius College. The next year he became curate of Radminster in Essex and two years later was appointed lecturer at Wethersfield, Essex, where he would spend the next four decades of his life. Rogers was temporarily suspended

3. See Paul R. Schaefer Jr., *The Spiritual Brotherhood: Cambridge Puritans and the Nature of Christian Piety* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).

4. Joel Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007), 188.

from his pulpit for nonconformity in 1583, and again in 1603. Though he had a reputation for austerity, his ministry was blessed with many conversions. Rogers's grandson William Jenkyn called him "the Enoch of his age," for Rogers walked with God and was sorry that each day was not his last.⁵

Rogers was not only a preacher and author—but also a husband and father. He had at least seven children with his first wife, Barbara. After her death, he married Susan Ward, the widow of another minister, becoming the stepfather to her six children. Of all these children, five—Daniel Rogers, Ezekiel Rogers, Samuel Ward, John Ward, and Nathaniel Ward—became Puritan ministers.

Rogers's diary reveals him to be a sincere and godly man who yet struggled with ongoing conflicts with sin and the flesh. He especially lamented four besetting sins that gave him most trouble: "light thoughts' or 'roving fantasies'; 'liking of worldly profit' (financial gain, that is); 'unprofitableness' or ineffectiveness in communicating his attitude to others; and, lastly, neglect of study."⁶ But his heart was bent toward God. As he wrote on

5. Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 507. Unless otherwise noted, all bibliographical details in this preface are drawn from Beeke and Pederson's biographical sketch of Rogers in *Meet the Puritans*, 505–8.

6. M. M. Knappen, ed., *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries by Richard Rogers and Samuel Ward* (Chicago: American Society of Church History, 1933), 5. In this and all following excerpts from the diary, I have updated spelling and grammar to reflect modern use.

November 17, 1587, “I have firmly purposed to make my whole life a meditation of a better life, and godliness in every part even mine occupation and trade, that I may from point to point and from step to step with more watchfulness walk with the Lord. Oh the infinite gain of it.”⁷ And on November 29, 1587, “And this is mine hearty desire that I may make godliness, I mean one part or other of it, to be my delight through my whole life.”⁸

Seven Treatises: A Christian Travel Guide

Though not as famous as William Perkins (not to mention John Owen, Richard Baxter, and other pastor-theologians of subsequent generations), Rogers was a significant leader among nonconformists in Elizabethan England. Rogers, like Enoch, walked with God. And he wrote a massive travel guide to help fellow pilgrims in their journey.

This guide, Rogers’s most important contribution to Puritan literature, was called *Seven Treatises*. One scholarly source names Rogers as one of “the most influential of the spiritual authors,” noting that *Seven Treatises* “went through six editions between 1603 and 1630, with a further five editions of an abridgment by Stephen Egerton.... The influence of [*Seven Treatises*] can be traced in the lives of a whole generation of Puritan

7. Knappen, *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, 64.

8. Knappen, *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, 65.

laymen.”⁹ In the words of William Haller, “*Seven Treatises* was the first important exposition of the code of behavior which expressed the English Calvinist, or more broadly speaking, the Puritan conception of the spiritual and moral life. As such it inaugurated a literature the extent and influence of which in all departments of life can hardly be exaggerated.”¹⁰ It will be helpful for us to consider the purpose, scope, and importance of this book.

Purpose

The full title of the book reveals its purpose:

SEVEN TREATISES
CONTAINING SUCH DIRECTION
AS IS GATHERED OUT OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES,
LEADING AND GUIDING
to true happiness, both in this life, and
in the life to come:
and may be called the practice
of *Christianity*.

9. Patrick Collinson, Arnold Hunt, and Alexandra Walsam, “Religious Publishing in England 1557–1640,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume IV, 1557–1695*, ed. John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie, and Maureen Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 42.

10. William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 36. Quoted in Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 506.

PROFITABLE FOR ALL SUCH AS
HEARTILY DESIRE THE SAME:
IN THE WHICH,
more particularly true Christians may learn how to lead
a godly and comfortable life every day,
*notwithstanding their tribulations.*¹¹

This book, then, was practical in its focus, a manual or guidebook that marked out the scriptural signposts for walking in the way of the Lord, as it directed the earnest Christian in the pursuit of true happiness, the practice of godliness, and the path to eternal life. It was, in fact, written as a distinctively *Protestant* guidebook to counteract and correct the popular Roman Catholic devotional manuals of the Jesuits and their tendency to “ensnare and entangle the minds of ignorant and simple Christians, in the corrupt and filthy puddle of Popish devotion.”¹²

Scope

The scope of the *Seven Treatises* is remarkably comprehensive, as indicated by the following descriptions of each treatise (each of which contains between ten and twenty chapters):

11. Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises* (London: Felix Kynston, for Thomas Man, 1616), title page. In this and all subsequent references, I have updated the spelling and grammar to reflect modern use.

12. “To the Christian Reader,” in Rogers, *Seven Treatises*.

The first treatise shows who are the true children of God.

The second treatise declares at large, what the life of the true believer is, and the conversation [behavior] of such as have assured hope of salvation.

The third treatise lays forth the means, whereby a godly life is helped and continued.

The fourth treatise directs the believer unto a daily practice of a Christian life.

The fifth treatise shows the lets [hindrances] which hinder the sincere course of the Christian life before described.

The sixth treatise sets down the privileges which belong to every true Christian: and how he may have his part in them.

The seventh treatise contains the objections and cavils [complaints], which may be brought against the doctrine before set down, and answer[s] to them.¹³

The whole project, therefore, covered everything from the nature of true conversion (treatise 1), its moral, ethical outworking in a life of godliness (treatise 2), and

13. "The Sum of All the Seven Treatises, and the Contents of Every Chapter in Them," in Rogers, *Seven Treatises*.

the means for nourishing and maintaining such a life (treatise 3), to the daily practice of Christianity (treatise 4), the manifold hindrances that confront the Christian walking this path (treatise 5), the privileges that sustain his hope along the way (treatise 6), and a final wrap-up treatise answering objections to all that came before (treatise 7).

A basic understanding of this superstructure will be important for knowing how best to read and profit from the present volume, which is a modernized abridgment of treatise 3.

Importance

We should also note the importance of the *Seven Treatises*, especially treatise 3. As O. R. Johnston observed, "Rogers' work is of paramount importance here, for he seems to have been the first man explicitly to state the nature and aims of Meditation as a Scriptural means of grace."¹⁴ In fact, Rogers was the first Puritan to treat these means in a systematic and cohesive way. Though Luther, Calvin, and other Reformers had written much about prayer and the sacraments, and though general exhortations to devotional practices were scattered in the sermons and treatises of Perkins and Greenham, Rogers was apparently the first Protestant to compile a

14. O. R. Johnston, "The Means of Grace in Puritan Theology," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1953): 212.

full list of the means of grace, both public and private, to help Christians in the pursuit of godliness.¹⁵

Rogers was also a pioneer in explaining the pieces of the Christian armor from Ephesians 6 for the believer's devotional benefit and growth in godliness. Readers who are already familiar with Puritan literature will know of William Gurnall's *The Christian in Complete Armour*, which was published in three parts in 1655, 1658, and 1662.¹⁶ Less well-known is John Downe's *The Christian Warfare*, its four parts having been published separately from 1609 to 1618.¹⁷ But Rogers predates both.

The importance of Rogers's work is also seen in its thoroughness. As fellow minister Ezekiel Culverwel said

15. Although one might say this honor belongs to Richard Greenham's *Godly Instruction for the Due Examination and Direction of All Good Men for the Attaining and Retaining of Faith and a Good Conscience*. Published posthumously by Henry Holland in 1599, this treatise contains seventy-five alphabetically arranged chapters on a myriad of subjects, ranging from admonition to zeal. Greenham includes numerous means to godliness, such as baptism (ch. 8), keeping watch over our hearts (chs. 34–35), hearing God's word (ch. 36), prayer and meditation (ch. 58), and the sacraments (ch. 61). Other chapters address both doctrinal topics (like justification, regeneration, and sanctification) and practical moral issues (like anger, matrimony, and temptation). Rogers's *Seven Treatises*, published a few years later, marks an advance in both the scope and organization of Protestant devotional material.

16. Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 306.

17. Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 188.

in a preface to the *Seven Treatises*: “In my simple opinion it might in one principal respect be called the Anatomy of the soul, wherein not only the great and principal parts are laid open, but every vein and little nerve are so discovered, that we may as it were, with the eye behold, as the right constitution of the whole and every part of a true Christian; so the manifold defects and imperfections thereof.”¹⁸

Holy Helps for a Godly Life

As mentioned above, the present volume, *Holy Helps for a Godly Life*, is an abridged modernization of Rogers’s third treatise, which “lays forth the means, whereby a godly life is helped and continued.” These means or helps (the terms are interchangeable for Rogers) are the spiritual disciplines, or what believers in the Reformed tradition sometimes call the “means of grace.” Though Rogers himself does not use the term “means of grace,” it may be helpful to define this phrase, which can be used in both a narrower and broader sense.

In the narrower sense, the means of grace refer to the ordinary channels through which God communicates His grace to men—namely, the preaching of the word, the sacraments, and prayer.¹⁹ These means do not

18. “To the Christian Reader,” in Rogers, *Seven Treatises*.

19. As Charles Hodge writes, “By means of grace are not meant every instrumentality which God may please to make the means of spiritual edification to his children. The phrase is intended to

work *ex opere operato*—that is, in a magical or mechanical way, conferring grace in and of themselves, so that any recipient of the external sacraments thereby also necessarily and automatically receives grace. The means are rather channels through which God communicates His grace to the believer, who receives this grace through the divine gift of faith.

In the broader sense, the means of grace are synonymous with spiritual disciplines, including such practices as Bible reading, meditation, private prayer, and fasting. In Puritan and later evangelical devotional literature, this latter, broader understanding is common.²⁰

While Rogers does not use the full phrase “means of grace,” he does use the term “means” often, calling the focus of his third treatise, “the means whereby a godly life is helped and continued.” In his introductory remarks, Rogers explains, “The Christian life is upheld and continued by means. Everyone who sets upon this life will desire to know these means and how to rightly use them, because the hindrances and discouragements

indicate those institutions which God has ordained to be the ordinary channels of grace, *i.e.*, of the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit, to the souls of men. The means of grace, according to the standards of our Church, are the word, sacraments, and prayer.” *Systematic Theology* (Oak Harbor, Wash.: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 3:466.

20. For example, see Walter Marshall, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1999), direction 13.

in the Christian life are many and great. It is therefore fitting for me to show what I understand by these means or helps.... As the Christian life does not begin without means, neither can it grow without them." In defining these means or helps, Rogers says, "The means God has appointed to help His people to continue and grow in a godly life, are those religious exercises, by which Christians may be made fit to practice it." These he divides into ordinary and extraordinary and public and private.

The public (and ordinary) means are the preaching of the word, the sacraments, and public prayers, with the singing of psalms. Rogers lists seven private (also ordinary) helps—namely, watchfulness, meditation, putting and keeping on the Christian armor, reflection on personal spiritual experience, godly conversation with other believers and within one's family, private prayer, and the reading of both Scripture and godly literature. Finally, Rogers addresses two extraordinary means: solemn thanksgiving and fasting.

Some of these helps, such as watchfulness or the Christian armor, are surprising. These are rarely, if ever, included in contemporary books on spiritual disciplines. Rogers's treatment of other helps, especially godly conversation ("the use of company"), is disappointingly brief. This is because he addressed it elsewhere in the overall project of *Seven Treatises*. In other cases, Rogers is brief because the help in question was more familiar to the original audience.

Readers will benefit from Rogers most when they keep two things in mind. First, these helps are for Christians—that is, for true believers who have rested in the finished work of Christ for their justification. This is assumed by Rogers throughout, since he had already established it in the first treatise where he treats both man’s misery (ch. 2) and God’s way of redemption from it (ch. 3)—that is, the way of faith alone in Christ alone. Rogers could hardly be clearer on this point. “There is no way to receive Christ and all His merits (the full medicine of man’s misery) but by faith,” he writes. And what is faith? Rogers continues:

Now this true faith (which for the worthy effect of it, we call justifying faith,) is nothing else but a sound belief in that promise of life, that poor sinners coming unto Christ, He will ease them (Matt. 11:28), that is, free them from all woe, and restore them to all happiness here and forever (Acts 26:18; Heb. 4:1); and to be short, so to give credit to God’s Word (Rom. 10:17), as they rest thereon that He will save them.

This true faith is wrought in them by the ministry of the Word, revealing this mercy and truth of God. And by these, the Holy Ghost enlightening them to conceive, and drawing them to believe, and so uniting them to Christ. Whoever receives this, is hereby made the child

of God (so as he himself will see it) and an inheritor by sure hope of eternal life.

This therefore is to be known of him who will be saved, and his judgment is to be settled in this truth, before he enjoys it as his own, or can have his part in it. He must be able to see clearly and soundly, that God has made this Christ Jesus His Son Lord over all creatures (Acts 2:36), Conqueror of the devils, Deliverer of the captives, and Comforter of the heavy hearts: so that by Him there is as full pardon of sin purchased (Rom. 5:15), as ever was by Adam procured guiltiness and condemnation.²¹

Second, the aim of these helps is to lead believers into both holiness and happiness. Remember the overall purpose of the *Seven Treatises* as expressed in the title: “leading and guiding to true happiness, both in this life, and in the life to come...in the which...true Christians may learn how to lead a godly and comfortable life every day, notwithstanding their tribulations.” Rogers knew what modern believers sometimes forget: holiness is the way to true happiness. Discipline, though a restriction of sorts, leads to greater freedom. Godliness is the indispensable key to a comfortable life (that is, a life filled with spiritual comforts).

21. Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, 9.

Rogers does not leave his readers wondering what he meant by godliness, for this is the subject of the second treatise, which “declares at large, what the life of the true believer is, and the conversation [behavior] of such as have assured hope of salvation.” In the exposition that follows, Rogers delineates the necessary ingredients to a godly life: unfeigned faith; faith in the temporal promises of God and hearty assent to the commands and threats in Scripture; a cleansed heart; the renunciation of all sins, both inward and outward; the virtues of uprightness, diligence, continuance, humility, and meekness; and the fulfillment of our duties to both God and man, as expounded through the Ten Commandments.²²

There is nothing innovative in this approach. Readers can easily glean the same teaching from books 2 and 3 in Calvin’s *Institutes* or from later Puritan authors, such as Thomas Watson. The real value of Rogers here is his thoroughness and precision. In an often-repeated story, Rogers was once riding with the lord of a nearby manor, who said, “Mr. Rogers, I like you and your company very well, only you are too precise.” Rogers replied, “Oh, sir, I serve a very precise God.” This precision in godliness is the goal for which we discipline ourselves. As Paul told Timothy, “Exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable

22. Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, 9. See also “The Sum of All the Seven Treatises, and the Contents of Every Chapter in Them,” in the front matter of Rogers, *Seven Treatises*.

unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:7b–8). Spiritual disciplines, or helps, are the means to this end.

A Note on the Editing

This book is both a modernization and an abridgement of Rogers's third treatise. Archaic words have been replaced with modern words. Long, complex sentences have been broken down into shorter, simpler sentences. When appropriate, marginal notes have been revised and inserted into the text as headings. In other places, I have added headings. Many redundancies and irrelevant asides have been removed, while other material has been condensed. The appendix, "Helps for Meditation," was originally in a chapter on rules and examples of meditation. I have included it as an appendix because it serves as a convenient summary of Rogers's teaching in this treatise. Other material from that chapter has either been combined with chapter 6 (on meditation) or has been removed. These changes were deemed best for bringing Rogers's work into the twenty-first century, but I have sought to preserve the substance of Rogers's teaching without adding anything to his content.

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, there is a scene when Christian comes to the Interpreter's House and is brought into a candlelit room. Bunyan writes, "Christian saw the picture of a very grave person against the wall; and this was the fashion of it. It had eyes lifted

up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back. It stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head." When Christian asks what this means, his guide explains that this man is "one of a thousand; he can beget children (1 Cor. 4:15), travail in birth with children (Gal. 4:19), and nurse them himself when they are born." The grave man's work is to "know and unfold dark things to sinners." And for love of his Master, he has turned his back on this present world and awaits his reward in the glorious world to come. The Interpreter further explains that it is only such a man "whom the Lord of the place whither thou art going, hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places thou mayest meet with in the way."²³

Richard Rogers was such a man. He will prove a worthy guide on your own pilgrimage to the Celestial City.

—Brian G. Hedges
August 2017

23. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1977), 25–26.

INTRODUCTION

Means to Living a Godly Life

Believers must walk in a safe and godly way throughout their pilgrimage to heaven. But the Christian life is upheld and continued by means.

Everyone who sets upon this life will desire to know these means and how to rightly use them, because the hindrances and discouragements in the Christian life are many and great. It is therefore fitting for me to show what I understand by these means or helps. What are they, what is their nature, and how should they be used? God has promised to give grace to those who use these means in a right and reverent way in order to enable them to live a godly life. As the Christian life does not begin without means, neither can it grow without them.

The goodness and kindness of our God is seen in His ordaining these means for our great benefit and comfort. In the same way, it is necessary for us to use them with the degree of care and constancy as will make them most profitable to us. Only in this way

will we discover in these means the fruit that God has promised.

What Are the Means God Appointed?

The means God has appointed to help His people continue and grow in a godly life are those religious exercises by which Christians may be made fit to practice godliness. These means include both the ordinary and the extraordinary. The ordinary means are those which should be regularly used, while the extraordinary are those which are only used occasionally for a special time, such as fasting, or for rare solemnities in feasting and thanksgiving. Both sorts of means (ordinary and extraordinary) are either public or private.

Public Means

The public means, which are ordinarily used in our public assemblies, are these three.

1. The ministry of the word read, preached, and heard, as the Lord prescribes
2. The administration and worthy receiving of the holy sacraments
3. The exercise of prayer with thanksgiving and singing of psalms

Private Means

But we cannot daily use and enjoy the public means (though we need daily relief and help); and even if we

could, the public means are not sufficient to enable us to honor God as we should or as He commands us. Therefore, God has commanded us to use private exercises, especially the following seven:

1. Watchfulness
2. Meditation
3. The armor of a Christian
4. Reflecting on our own experience
5. The use of company by godly conversation¹ and family exercises
6. Prayer
7. Reading

The first four belong to each individual believer; the fifth believers use with others; and the last two can be used by both individuals *and* in company with others.

The necessity of these private helps is so great that if they are not known and rightly used, the public means will prove unprofitable, and, as we will see in future chapters, the believer's Christian life will lose its proper shape.

This briefly explains what the means for living a godly life are and what specific practices they include.

1. Rogers's original term is "conference," often used by the Puritans to refer to the practice of intentional godly conversation with fellow believers. For more, see Joanne J. Jung, *Godly Conversations: Rediscovering the Puritan Practice of Conference* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).

In future chapters, I will more fully explain the nature and use of each one of these means, and how God works through them to uphold the weight of a godly life. In this way, all who desire to wisely consider these means may do so. And those who use these means will discover their value for themselves. First, I will begin with the public means and afterward speak of the private.

And I will so handle and speak of each one according to the skill which God has given me, as may make most for this present purpose: I will more fully explain those means which are lesser known and more briefly treated than those with which men are most acquainted.

Though the Means Are Duties, They Are Also Helps

For those who object that I have called these means “helps,” whereas the same means are elsewhere described as parts of our Christian duty, I do not deny that they are duties. But though they are duties, they are also helps. In fact, the duties we will consider here (such as hearing the word, receiving the sacraments, watching, prayer, and the others) are rightly called “helps” because they fit us for the right performance of all other duties.

CHAPTER 1

The Ministry of the Word

We begin therefore with the public means and helps, which God has appointed to strengthen the believer and settle him in a godly life. The ministry of the word is the first and principal of these means.

The Attributes of the Scriptures

This comes as no surprise when we consider the royal and most excellent commendations that we hear and read concerning the canonical Scriptures, which are this word of God.

Excellency and Power

The Scriptures are proved by good evidence and testimony to be the very truth of the word of God (and not the fantasies of men). This is seen in both the excellency of the matter contained in the Scriptures (Ps. 119:129) and by the mighty operation of the Scriptures (Heb. 4:12). God commands us to search these Scriptures

(John 5:39) and sends us to them if we desire to know His mind and will toward us.

Authority

The authority of the Scriptures is such that we do not need to be troubled by those who oppose them or call them into question. For even if it were an angel from heaven (Gal. 1:8) (if this were possible), much less the Man of Sin, who yet challenges authority to be heard before the Scriptures, we should not be troubled.

Sufficiency

We are also taught that the Scriptures are all-sufficient, so that we may not doubt that all God's will is revealed in them (2 Tim. 3:16). The Scriptures thus contain those things necessary to make us true Christians and the inheritors of salvation, in which our true happiness consists.

Clarity

The plainness of the heavenly matter contained in the Scriptures by the means which God has used and the order that He has taken for laying out their sweetness and beauty (Matt. 11:25) is evident in that the most necessary points are easy to be understood even by the simple and ignorant (Prov. 14:6).