The Spiritual Life

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Campegius Vitringa

Translated and Edited
by
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Filiis meis carissimis,
Victoriae, Joanni, Samueli, et Annae
et
nepotibus meis dilectissimis,
hoc opusculum dedicatur.

I have been crucified together with Christ, but I live.
Yet it is no longer I, but Christ lives in me.

—GALATIANS 2:20

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Foreword

It bears repeating that the frequent claim of a scholastic dogmatism—devoid of humanistic linguistic skills, lacking the techniques of critical textual exegesis, and set against the spirituality of a rising pietism—fails to grasp the patterns of thought and exposition characteristic of Protestant orthodoxy. A closer examination of the writings of Reformed orthodox theologians, as demonstrated in an increasing number of recent studies, has shown that the early modern exponents of scholastic method and the practitioners of academic disputation were also often engaged in exegetical work and highly skilled in ancient languages. Studies of the era (particularly of the Reformed orthodox) have shown not only significant evidence of piety or spirituality but also direct connections between the production of technical and even polemical expositions of doctrine and the creation of nontechnical but confessionally sound works of spiritual edification.

The writings of Campegius Vitringa the Elder provide an important window into the spirituality, doctrine, and exegesis of the era of orthodoxy and exemplify the interrelationships of these disciplines. Vitringa's work on Christian spirituality, originally published under the title *Essay on Practical Theology, or a Treatise on the Spiritual Life*, is found in the present volume. He also wrote a volume on the proper method of preaching in the church. His numerous biblical and exegetical works included six volumes of observations on various topics and a series of major commentaries on the Old Testament, including a massive two-volume commentary on Isaiah. On the doctrinal front, he wrote a basic work on Christian doctrine in the form of aphorisms or theses that was

later expanded into a larger body of doctrine, as well as an elenctical theology dealing with disputed issues. The interrelationship of all three emphases—the spiritual, the exegetical, and the doctrinal—is exhibited in Vitringa's homiletical method, in which the exposition begins in prayer, is rooted in the text, and moves on to both practical and doctrinal applications. This is also evident throughout *The Spiritual Life*.

The Spiritual Life, taken by itself, is a finely organized presentation of an older Reformed spirituality that bears the marks of a believer and scholar steeped both in the text of Scripture and a foundational Reformed theology. As with Reformed receptions of other aspects of the older tradition, Vitringa's approach to spirituality evinces an underlying sense of the decline of Christian thought and practice toward the close of the patristic period and an interest in recovering the purity and simplicity of the original Christian message while drawing on the best resources of the Christian tradition.

The treatise begins with four chapters that provide a general definition of the nature, origins, and causes of the spiritual life, concluded by a section of how the spiritual life arises in the individual. A second section presents the spiritual life in three parts—self-denial, cross-bearing, and following Christ. Important here is Vitringa's emphasis on the spiritual life as active, in opposition to the quietistic piety that dominated much Roman Catholic thought of his era and that carried over into Protestantism by way of the highly influential mysticism of Antoinette Bourignon. This emphasis is, arguably, reflected in the phrase in the original title, *Essay on Practical Theology*. Many of the Reformed theologians of the era held theology to be a practical or theoretical-practical discipline, with its practical aspect understood actively as a praxis directing believers toward salvation and godly living. Vitringa's second section also underlines an important and often neglected characteristic of traditional Reformed spirituality and ethics: it emphasizes the spiritual development of dispositions or capacities for virtuous conduct. The spiritual life, in other words, embodies a version of virtue ethics, defined by Vitringa as conforming one's "mores to those of Christ." Vitringa's argument here echoes the Reformed view of the relationship of right reason to biblical revelation: Christian virtues, as identified both in the Gospels and in the Pauline letters, do not

set aside the classical philosophical virtues—rather, they include the philosophical virtues even as they provide a deeper truth than can be known purely rationally.

The remaining three portions of *The Spiritual Life*—the challenges facing spirituality, the development of spiritual life in sanctification, and the goals of spiritual life—also contain significant echoes of Vitringa's larger theological project. The connection between spirituality and dogmatics is evident in the definition of theology found in Vitringa's early aphorisms: theology is "the Doctrine [or teaching] that instructs us concerning God and the ways of God toward a certain consolation in this life and salvation in the next."[1] The methods of doctrinal theology and Christian spirituality may be different, but they direct toward the same goals, both penultimate and ultimate.

In presenting the stages of spiritual development, Vitringa employs as a central metaphor the states of human life from infancy to childhood to adulthood that also reflects the concerns of Reformed orthodox theology and the broad outlines of a Reformed understanding of Scripture, both historically and doctrinally. While careful to note the imprecision of metaphors, he makes two significant comparisons: one between the development from infancy to adulthood that is identifiable in a person's life and the development of God's people through the economy of grace to its maturity in the New Testament, and the other between a person's development toward adulthood and the progress of the spiritual life from initial faith and regeneration toward the increase of spiritual capacities in sanctification. There is a probable reflection here of the federal theology of Johannes Cocceius, in which a view of the historical economy of the covenant in its progress from the beginnings of postlapsarian grace toward the New Testament was conjoined with an understanding of the order of salvation in the life of the individual Christian.[2] Vitringa's reading of the spiritual life of Christians offers a deeply biblical account of personal spiritual

1. Campegius Vitringa, *Aphorismi, quibus fundamenta sanctæ theologiæ comprehenduntur: in usum scholarum privatarum* (Franeker, Neth.: Johannes Gyselaar, 1688), i.1 (p. 1).

2. See Willem J. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669)*, trans. Raymond A. Blacketer (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 278–82. Note that Vitringa did not follow Cocceius in arguing a gradual abrogation of the covenant of works.

development that is closely coordinated with the Reformed understanding of the order of salvation: doctrine provides structure for spirituality, and spirituality breathes life into doctrine.

In sum, Charles Telfer's work on Vitringa marks a major contribution to our knowledge both of this incredibly prolific exegete and theologian and of the era in which he taught and wrote. As Telfer indicates, his project of translating *The Spiritual Life* into English originated during his work on Vitringa's exegesis. The translation therefore complements Telfer's study of Vitringa's commentary on Isaiah, in which Telfer not only analyzes Vitringa's methods in detail but also provides an extended description of Vitringa's many writings and a full bibliography of Vitringa's works, including a listing of the academic disputations over which Vitringa presided. Taken together, the books provide an excellent introduction to Vitringa's thought. The translation of *The Spiritual Life*, taken by itself, offers a major contribution to our understanding of traditional Reformed spirituality.

—Richard A. Muller

Translator's Preface

The book that you hold in your hand is a remarkable effort by a remarkable man. Vitringa biographer Albert Schultens (1686–1750) called it "a very worthy book that should live and be carried around in our eyes, hands, bosoms and even our very bones and hearts."[1] It began as a course on Christian experience that Vitringa taught at the University of Franeker, one of the three great universities in the Netherlands during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There Vitringa taught biblical and theological courses and influenced students from across Protestant Europe for over forty years.[2] He had a particular concern for international students, as can be seen in the references and affectionate inscriptions he wrote for them. A few of Vitringa's students were so struck with his teaching that they translated and published his class lectures (with his authorization—and sometimes without it) into a variety of languages. *The Spiritual Life* was quickly printed not only in Dutch but in German, French, and even Magyar (Hungarian).[3]

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1. From his *Laudatio funebris*; see Charles Telfer, "Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722): A Biblical Theologian at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century," in *Biblical Theology: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Mark Elliot and Carey Walsh (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 30.

2. Charles Telfer, "Campegius Vitringa Sr.: 'Praefatio ad lectorem,' in: *Commentarius in librum prophetiarum Jesaiae*, 1716 and 'De interpretatione prophetiarum,' in: *Typus doctrinae propheticae, in quo de prophetis et prophetiis agitur, hujusque scientiae praecepta traduntur*, 1708," in *Handbuch der Bibelhermeneutiken*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 445.

3. For this and other biographical information, see the biography in Charles Telfer, *Wrestling with Isaiah: The Exegetical Methodology of Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722)*,

In Germany, Vitringa's influence was particularly far reaching. In terms of his emphasis on practical godliness, he certainly influenced the Pietists August Hermann Franke (1663–1727), Joachim Lange (1670–1744), and Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752), but some trace his impact even as far as Gotthold Lessing (1729–1781), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), and German Idealism.[4] And in terms of his emphasis on careful historical and linguistic analysis of the Bible, he was considered a model by many scholars (including Wilhelm Gesenius [1786–1842] and Franz Delitzsch [1813–1890]) far into the nineteenth century. In Britain and North America, Vitringa's commentaries and his writings on Christian experience were significant both in the eighteenth and even into the nineteenth century, particularly at Princeton Seminary.[5]

One of Vitringa's most enthusiastic francophone students was Henri-Philippe de Limiers (d. 1728). He was moved by the beauty of this guide to the spiritual life and translated it for the benefit of his French countrymen in a work entitled *Essai de Theologie Pratique, ou traité de la vie spirituelle et de ses caractères* (An essay on practical theology or a treatise on the spiritual life and its characteristics).[6] Vitringa

Reformed Historical Theology Series, ed. Herman Selderhuis (Göttingen, Ger.: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2016).

4. Klaas Marten Witteveen, "Campegius Vitringa und die prophetische Theologie," *Zwingliana* 19, no. 2 (1993): 359.

5. Brevard S. Childs, "Hermeneutical Reflections on Campegius Vitringa, Eighteenth-Century Interpreter of Isaiah," in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 90. "Vitringa's massive apologetic defense of the literal coherence between biblical text and historical reference became widespread by the early eighteenth century, especially in England, Scotland, and North America…. In North America Vitringa's approach was most systematically developed by the old Princeton School, emerging in full form already in one of its founders, A. A. Alexander." Childs, "Hermeneutical Reflections on Campegius Vitringa," 97.

6. The Latin original and the exemplar of this work which I used was published by Saurmann in Bremen in 1717. The French version was published by Strik in Amsterdam in 1721, a year before Vitringa's death. The scholarly reader will note just how much the French version has helped me in translating the Latin original. De Limiers dedicates his translation to Benedict Pictet, "Pastor of the Church at Geneva, Professor of Theology in the Genevan Academy and Member of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith established at London" and expresses his appreciation for Pictet's *Christian Morals* (1692), which overlaps somewhat in content with this present work.

himself approved of his translation. But up until now, this work has not been translated into English.

Translating Vitringa is as stimulating as it is challenging. Stylistically speaking, Vitringa's principal translator into German, Anton Friedrich Büsching, remarked, "[Vitringa's] style is manly, serious, clear and rich in expression. And when the topic requires, his Latin is magnificent and noble."[7] Although Vitringa's page-length sentences may have seemed noble and Ciceronian in the eighteenth century, I have reduced many of his long expressions to a more manageable size while still attempting to cleave to the thought of the original. I have produced a version that is somewhat more literal than the French while enabling Vitringa to speak in contemporary English. I have left out references to unfamiliar books and certain sections of little interest to moderns (the original Latin and the other versions are easily available to the curious through the Post-Reformation Digital Library). Regarding the mistakes that surely remain, I can only say with de Limiers, "If there are certain defects in this work, one must hold the translator alone responsible. But even as we ask grace for the faults that escaped us, we ask those familiar with the original that they acknowledge the difficulty of the enterprise we have undertaken."[8]

The project of bringing this book into English was conceived while I was a doctoral student. As I was slogging through a translation of Vitringa's rather technical Isaiah commentary, I read *The Spiritual Life* and was enraptured by its lofty vision. Some sections of this book were so uplifting, even breathtaking, that I resolved to try to bring something of its beauty into English. De Limiers spoke well of "the piety and the unction that one can feel so well in the original."[9] If you happen to find the detail in some of the early chapters less than scintillating, please do not put this book down without reading the later material. Chapter 12 on the means of grace, chapter 15 on God's chastening us,

7. A. F. Büsching, "Fortsetzung des Lebenslaufs des selige Herrn Vitringa: von seinem natürlichen und sitlichen Character," in *Auslegung der Weissagung Jesaiae* (Halle, Ger.: Johann Gottlob Bierwirth, 1751), 2:8–9.

8. Campegius Vitringa, *Essai de Theologie Pratique, ou traité de la vie spirituelle et de ses caractères*, trans. Henri-Philippe de Limiers (Amsterdam: H. Strik, 1721), Avant-Propos du Traducteur, n.p.

9. Vitringa, *Essai de Theologie Pratique*.

and, of course, chapter 18 about our life with Christ in eternity are particularly helpful and have some glorious insights. Profiting from the perspective of our forebears is excellent for our spiritual health, and though parts of old books may seem prosaic, those who press on surely will be inspired by many arresting and delightful passages.

The university course that Vitringa taught, which led to *The Spiritual Life*, was undertaken partly to "avert the criticism often made in our day that theological professors only deal with abstract theology and neglect practical theology."[10] I hope you will see that Vitringa's whole life, in preaching and in practice, was an extended refutation of the idea that truth can be separated from practical godliness, or faith from charity. "Practical theology" in Vitringa's course meant in part the classic discussion of virtues and vices, but he wanted to "trace the streams to their source." Vitringa wanted to "see where the bubbling springs come from. Life comes from life, and I wanted to explain how all the lively acts of the true virtues come from the fountain and principle that produced them, which is regeneration."[11] Thus a class in ethics evolved into a discussion about the states, the progress, and the affections of the spiritual life.

It is beyond the scope of this preface to set *The Spiritual Life* in its fuller historical context (either tracing the influences on Vitringa or the specific impact that the book had on other people).[12] Though it should prove interesting to those interested in early modern spirituality, theological anthropology, and ethics, I have intended this work for a popular rather than a scholarly audience. But I do hope Vitringa's book will provide one more piece of evidence of how vibrant Christian life and thought was at this period of Reformed high orthodoxy, contrary to its stereotype as a hidebound and dead period of Protestantism.[13]

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10. Campegius Vitringa, *Typus theologiae praticae, sive de vita spirituali, ejusque affectionibus commentatio* (Bremen, Ger.: Saurmann, 1717), Praefatio.

11. Vitringa, *Typus theologiae praticae*. Praefatio, 16.

12. For some introduction to the background, see Luca Baschera, "Ethics in Reformed Orthodoxy," in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 519–52.

13. For periodization, see Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520–1725*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 31.

This book breathes the refreshing air of *Nadere Reformatie* spirituality, the heartfelt, orthodox devotion of Dutch Further Reformation piety. To a certain extent, this quality is evident from Vitringa's own preface to the reader.

I have include an excellent biography of Vitringa to introduce the author of *The Spiritual Life*. It is my edited translation of the German *Lebenslauf* (lit. life-course) done by Anton Friedrich Büsching (1724–1793), who published it alongside his own translation of Vitringa's famous Isaiah commentary.[14] Büsching had a high view of Vitringa both as a scholar and as a devoted Christian, but he did not produce a hagiography. The *Lebenslauf* is typically eighteenth-century German in its accuracy and thoroughness. Readers who love scholarly details and are looking for an unedited version may find it in my doctoral dissertation.[15] I trust you will find this life sketch to be a stirring and edifying portrait of a notable but often overlooked servant of Christ.

Tolle, lege—take up and read this work, and you will find Vitringa to be not just a profound theologian and insightful exegete of Scripture but an honest and helpful counselor for your own pilgrimage and spiritual life as a Christian. With so little of Vitringa having been translated, I am delighted that this much-appreciated book now makes its appearance in English.

—CKT

14. Campegius Vitringa, *Auslegung Der Weissagung Jesaiae, übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen Begleitet von M. Anton Friederich Büsching. Mit einer Vorrede von Hern J. L. von Mosheim. Mit Lebenslauf von Vitringa*, trans. M. Anton Friederich Büsching, 2 vols. (Halle, Ger.: Johann Gottlob Bierwirth, 1749). Parts 1 and 2 of this *Lebenslauf* are taken from this 1749 publication of the German edition of Vitringa's commentary on Isaiah. Part 3 was added at the beginning of volume 2 in the 1751 edition: Anton Friederich Büsching, "Fortsetzung des Lebenslaufs des selige Herrn Vitringa: von seinem natürlichen und sitlichen Character," in *Auslegung der Weissagung Jesaiae*, vol. 2 (Halle, Ger.: Johann Gottlob Bierwirth, 1751). Let me again thank W. Kendrick Doolan, a former teaching assistant, for his valuable German translation assistance *auld lang syne.*

15. Charles Telfer, "The Exegetical Methodology of Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722), Especially as Expressed in His *Commentarius in Librum Prophetiarum Jesaiae*" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2015).

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CAMPEGIUS VITRINGA P. S. S. Th. Doctor ejusdemque & Historiæ S. Prof. Ordin. Franequeræ. Natus d. XVI Mai. a. C. MDCLIX. Denatus d. XXXI Mart. a. C. MDCCXXII.
B. Akkuma Pinx.
P. Tanjé Sculp.
Vitringam Frisii decus Lycaei
Expressam variae eruditionis,
Quos plenos pietate fabricavit,
Et magnum columen vides videbis
Et sacrae effigiem libros per omnes,
Doctos, quis neget? et laboriosos.
P. W.

The Life and Work of Campegius Vitringa Sr. (1659–1722)

Part I: Biography

Campegius Vitringa is indisputably considered one of the greats. He gained respect and a lasting name not only for his sincere godliness but also for his broad and deep scholarship and his great service to the church. I hope that distant posterity learns about his life and background, his excellent writings, and his commendable character qualities. This is the order I shall follow in the following sketch.[1]

In Leeuwarden, the capital city of Friesland in the north of the Netherlands, Campegius Vitringa first saw the light of this world on the sixteenth day of May in the year 1659. His father, Horatius, was chief secretary of the provincial high court and eventually became judge of the city of Leeuwarden. For the love of the Protestant faith, some of his ancestors suffered persecution from the Spaniards under the Duke of Alba. Forced to forsake their considerable fortune, they fled north from Belgium to Friesland. Vitringa's mother, Albertina von Haen, was well known for her many virtues but died when Campegius

1. Campegius Vitringa, *Auslegung Der Weissagung Jesaiae, übersetzt Und Mit Anmerkungen Begleitet von M. Anton Friederich Büsching. Mit Einer Vorrede von Hern J. L. von Mosheim. Mit Lebenslauf von Vitringa*, trans. M. Anton Friederich Büsching, 2 vols. (Halle, Ger.: Johann Gottlob Bierwirth, 1749). Parts 1 and 2 of this *Lebenslauf* are taken from this 1749 publication of the German edition of Vitringa's commentary on Isaiah. Part 3 was added at the beginning of volume 2 in the 1751 edition: Anton Friederich Büsching, "Fortsetzung des Lebenslaufs des selige Herrn Vitringa: von seinem natürlichen und sitlichen Character," in *Auslegung der Weissagung Jesaiae*, vol. 2 (Halle, Ger.: Johann Gottlob Bierwirth, 1751). The main sources for Büsching's *Lebenslauf* are Schultens, von Hase, Nicéron, and personal correspondence with J. G. Michaelis (one of Vitringa's students).

was young. His father remarried, but again little Campegius lost his stepmother to death after a short time.

Campegius was the second son of the family. His father had an affectionate love for his children, and he attended to their upbringing with the greatest possible diligence. He trained them in the fear of God and tutored them as carefully in the arts and sciences as time allowed. This careful nurture from his father was not without effect. From childhood Campegius demonstrated a reverence for God and called on His gracious presence as he bent his knee. When a God-fearing heart is connected to a sharp head and to earnest industriousness, a happy outcome is inevitable. Casparus Rhomberg, the rector of the school at Leeuwarden, regarded him highly and sought to cultivate his excellent mind, sharp discrimination, remarkable teachableness, and unflagging thirst for knowledge. He also publicly praised his modesty and piety as an example to others. He even produced a couplet in Latin for him, "Blossom, O choicest portion of our school, that you may be the flower and honor of your lonely father."

Rhomberg was impressed not just because of Vitringa's mastery of Latin but because he learned Greek well and had read through the New Testament at least four times. So he added Hebrew to Vitringa's curriculum. The young scholar was so industrious that, except where obscure words and difficult passages tripped him up, he became able to translate any part of the Old Testament from beginning to end without the help of a version—a rare and admirable expertise for one so young!

Vitringa transferred to the university at the age of sixteen in 1675. His farewell address at grammar school commencement was an oration in Latin entitled, "On Christian Endurance." He delivered it with such skill, such agreeable speech and gestures, and with so much brilliance that the hearers were left astonished. The famous Herman Witsius [1636–1708], at that time still a preacher in Leeuwarden, was on hand for this presentation. He was so moved by the quality and vivacity with which the young man spoke that he could not restrain himself from weeping. Soon thereafter when the learned Witsius was called to the university of Franeker as professor of theology, he became not only Vitringa's teacher but also his special patron, as we shall see from later developments.

Campegius moved to the illustrious university at Franeker together with his oldest brother, Wigerus, who, truth be told, had never proven himself to be much of a scholar. But "Kempe" (as he was known to his Dutch-speaking friends) studiously sought to better himself. He tackled a wide variety of subjects, including all the disciplines preparatory to the study of theology. Vitringa studied history and chronology carefully. He patiently worked through all the *Chronicles* of [Johan] Carion [1499–1537]. He read the best Greek and Latin authors carefully and collected important quotations into a series of notebooks, which served him for a lifetime. When the professor of history, [Michael] Buschius [d. 1681], became ill, Vitringa took over his lectures for a time. He studied mathematics and astronomy with Ravius, and logic, natural sciences, and the other branches of "philosophy" with Johan Wubbena [d. 1681], who testified that he was "born for philosophy." He even produced a disputation, "On Fire," and defended it successfully against many skilled opponents.

Vitringa wanted to become solidly familiar with the biblical languages and availed himself of the finest teachers there. He listened to Nicolaus Blancard [1624–1703], who gave instruction in Greek literature. And he had Witsius as a private tutor in Greek. They read together the beautiful *Zyropaedia* of Xenophon, and checked the Latin translation themselves. He studied biblical Hebrew with Johannes Terentius [1628?–1677]. And after Terentius died, Vitringa went on to the study of rabbinical Hebrew and Aramaic through private study with a local Jewish teacher. Spending much time learning Rashi [1040–1105], Vitringa gained for himself access to an unhindered reading of the rabbis.

Vitringa spent two years at Franeker studying and writing on theology. The good catechetical education he had received as a youth gave him a solid foundation for his work with theologians Nicholas Arnold [1618–1680] and particularly with Herman Witsius, who was well-disposed toward him and for whom he had a high esteem. In his third academic year he produced three disputations on the origin of monasticism and defended them to great acclaim.

But Vitringa was not content with this state of his knowledge and burned with desire to see and to hear still other great scholars, especially the theologians of the university at Leiden who were famous at that

time. He knew some of them by reputation and others through their writings. His previous teachers sent along excellent references for him. The famous Witsius wrote among other things that he considered him worthy to someday be successor to his position, which later took place.

He arrived happily at Leiden. Here he admired the excellent eloquence of Friedrich Spanheim Jr. [1632–1701], the uncommon acuity of Christoph Wittichius [1625–1687], and the prodigious erudition of Stephanus Le Moine [1624–1689]. He followed these men who were so great in his eyes, but not blindly since the desire for truth above all else had mastered him. He managed to navigate the controversies of the day in full boil at Leiden over the philosophy of [René] Descartes [1596–1650] and the theology of [Johannes] Cocceius [1603–1669], and won the esteem of all parties for his impartiality and freedom from bias.

Shortly after his arrival, the famous Professor Spanheim held a public disputation in which Vitringa took the opposition. He conducted himself so admirably that he not only earned the respect of Spanheim but amazed the whole assembly. Everyone praised the scholarship and oratorical abilities that Vitringa demonstrated even as a youth. After a year in Leiden, having conducted extensive research, he gave three disputations on the second psalm. During the first, Le Moine held the chair, Spanheim during the second, and [Antonius] Hulsius [1615–1685] during the third. The last, held on the ninth of July 1679, enabled him to graduate with highest honors in theology. He was twenty years old at the time.

At that time Vitringa very much wanted to go to England, especially to visit Oxford, but his father refused, partly from the hope that he would be given a position as professor of Eastern languages in the academy of his homeland (i.e., Friesland). Though he did not get the academic post just then, it came to him a few months later through an alternate route. Meanwhile, our young doctor was able to employ his gifts for the building up of the church. In Leeuwarden he was received as a candidate for the holy ministry on the third of June 1680. His natural congeniality and honest eloquence won his preaching thorough approval. The administrators of the university saw how useful he would be for his homeland and sought his advancement. They favored him with the position of professor of Hebrew language and

holy antiquities by a unanimous vote. He took up this call on the nineteenth of August 1680. This position opened when Witsius departed for Utrecht and his successor, Johan van der Waeyen [1639–1701], stepped in as professor of theology, leaving the position as professor of Hebrew language to Vitringa, who then was twenty-one years old. On the eleventh of January 1681 he presented his inaugural address, "On the Duty of an Honest Interpreter of Holy Scripture." This magisterial presentation became even more notable due to the personal presence of Heinrich Casimir [1657–1696], Prince of Nassau-Dietz and hereditary Stadholder in Friesland.

Vitringa handled the duties of his position so well that, upon the departure of [Johan] Markius [1655–1731] to Erdningen, Vitringa was called to be professor of theology. On May 10, 1683, he gave a fine inaugural address, "On the Love of Truth." Ten years later, when [Jacobus] Perizonius [1651–1715] had been called to Leiden, Vitringa was also made professor of sacred history.

As Vitringa's fame as a scholar spread, it won him a call to the University of Utrecht, which unfortunately brought him all kinds of trouble. When Witsius was called from Utrecht to Leiden in 1698, the directors of Utrecht had earmarked Vitringa as his successor, promising an annual salary of 2,000 Dutch guilders. Though Vitringa had accepted this call, its consummation was unexpectedly blocked. It seems that [Willem IV, Prince of Orange, 1711–1751] the Stadholder of Holland and Utrecht (who had with his wife, Mary, just become king and queen of England) had been unjustly prejudiced against Vitringa, thinking that he was a proponent of Cocceius's dangerous doctrines. It is likely that Melchior Leydeker [1642–1721], a theologian at Utrecht, had a large part to do with this. The termination of the call to Utrecht arrived on the very day before Vitringa was to undertake his journey to Leeuwarden to receive a dismissal from the directors of the Friesian university. The directors were pleased at this turn of events, thanked him for his service, and assured him that they wanted him to continue in his present position.

Vitringa responded to this faithfulness in kind when the directors of the University of Utrecht called him again in 1702 on the same generous terms. Though they sent particularly respectable men to urge

him to accept, Vitringa rejected the call. This magnanimous response so impressed and moved the directors of the University of Franeker that they matched this lordly salary offer, which no professor but the famous jurist Ulrich Huber [1636–1694] had ever enjoyed.

The Utrechters still did not give up hope to steal him for their university. The next year directors of the city of Utrecht renewed for the third time an offer to teach for them. But they now added two further enticements: not only a theological professorate but a position as city preacher that would bring the yearly salary to 2,800 guilders, along with a special gift of 8,000 guilders (in compensation for the four years of salary he had not received because of their failure to fulfill the first call they made to him). You might expect that this superabundant windfall would have altered Vitringa's previous resolution. But Vitringa showed his devotion to his fatherland, and no amount of money or honors could tear him away. It was love, not stubbornness or pride, that led him to remain at the University of Franeker.

As he began, Vitringa continued to serve faithfully as professor. The considerable influx his school experienced for the entire forty-one years he was there demonstrates in part how much he was esteemed. He was sought out by such a quantity of Hungarian, Polish, French, Scottish, German, and Dutch young people that his lecture hall often was not able to accommodate the multitude. Many learned and distinguished men resulted from his excellent instruction. All his students cherished a great love and esteem for him and considered themselves truly fortunate to have had him as a teacher.

Though he was growing old, in 1716 Vitringa had the joy to see his twenty-three-year-old son Campegius Jr. installed as an assistant professor of theology at Franeker. Vitringa Sr. continued to weaken, largely due to overwork and his habit of studying at night. His hearing declined after an infection, and during the last year of his life he suffered a series of strokes. But as the signs of his dissolution came nearer, he was able to speak about his imminent death to his friends with joy. Even on the very day that he himself died, he was able to comfort his daughter-in-law at the death of her grandmother. He testified that he had joy at the thought of his own death and that he did not feel particularly burdened about it. At 4:50 in the afternoon of March 21,

1722, he suffered a stroke and lost speech, movement, and all feeling. Someone quickly fetched a doctor, who used powerful means for his strengthening and recovery. But the nerves were so debilitated and the sickness taken hold to such an extent that at approximately ten thirty that night, under the tears and prayers of his own dear ones, he gave over his well-prepared spirit into the hands of his Creator and Redeemer. He was one month and sixteen days short of being sixty-three years old. His son had traveled to Holland and was not present at the time of his father's death.

Considering Vitringa briefly as a family man, he married Wilhelmina van Hell [1660–1728], a pastor's daughter from Haarlem, in the fall of 1681. They had a peaceful and happy life together. She supported and encouraged him in his frequent ill health and was always a great comfort to him. They had five children together. The oldest son, Simon, made a very hopeful beginning but later fell into the way of vice and caused great pain to his parents. At the end of his life, however, he reformed himself and died in the presence and under the prayers of his excellent father. The second, Horatius, died young at age two. The Vitringas had a daughter, Johanna Margaretha. The records contain little about her except that she married Wilhelm Ruitz, a well-to-do merchant and elder of the church at Haarlem, who died a few weeks before Vitringa.

Vitringa's third son, also named Horatius, became a young scholar of note and left behind touching proofs of his academic industriousness. But he died in 1704 at eighteen years of age to the indescribable pain of his tender father. Vitringa wrote,

> Indeed, in these recent years (in which the sun's appearances have been less bright to me) I have been hard pressed by the divine hand and struggled with troubles. Among which you, my clever and precious son Horatius, have left me indeed plenty of reason for bitter grief. You were carried off by death before your time, in the very flower of your age. You were my delight and showed such uncommonly promising erudition. Although I cause these things to be inserted here to honor your memory, I do desire for you a fully peaceable rest. And I will neither envy your happiness nor rebel against the rule of the divine will.

The fourth son, Campegius Jr., was born on the twenty-third of March in 1693; studied in Franeker, Leiden, and Utrecht; and in 1715 became a much-appreciated professor of theology in Franeker. In the following year a call came to him from Zerbst, which he turned down since he wanted to aid his father. But he did not long survive him, and on the eleventh of January 1723 he went the way of all flesh. His widow later became the wife of the famous Old Testament professor Herman Venema [1697–1787].

Part II: A Bibliography of the Author

I will now go on to produce an account of the excellent publications of the blessed Vitringa, which have been received by the learned world with almost universal approbation.[2] They are filled with very broad and deep scholarship and contain countless traces of his God-fearing heart. His books have been useful both to the church and to the scholarly world. And I trust that these books with their many beneficial insights will be treasured for years to come.

In 1683, shortly after he became a professor, he produced his first book, *A Survey of Sacred Things*, at twenty-two years of age. Throughout his life Vitringa added to this collection of essays, most of which were written as summaries of the public disputations in which the author participated. They amounted to six volumes dealing mostly with the exegesis of Scripture, though some raise theological questions or explore New Testament church history. [Theodor Christoph] Lilienthal [1717–1781] said that "not only does one find there a treasure of exegetical knowledge, but also they will be of use as an example wherever the clarity of Scripture is assailed." [Johann Franz] Buddeus [1667–1729] called them "books bursting with remarkable learning." They were reprinted numerous times in the Netherlands and Germany.

Vitringa's second work is his *Ruler of the Synagogue*, which arose out of his research in the talmudic and rabbinical writings and was published in 1685. It enters into the debate about the nomenclature

2. Unfortunately, apart from this work and short selections from his Isaiah commentary, Vitringa's only writings to be translated into English are an abbreviated form of *On the Old Synagogue* and *Outline of Prophetic Teaching*.

used in the early synagogue (e.g., titles such as bishop, elder, deacon) and how the order and constitution of the early church related to that of the synagogue. The book defends Presbyterianism with its parity of church leaders and critiques [John] Lightfoot [1602–1675], who was a champion of Episcopalianism. Unfortunately, it became the spark for an extensive debate with Vitringa's colleague Jacob Rhenferd [1654–1712] (who had been passed over in favor of Vitringa for the chair of theology and was not well disposed to him). Both men produced polemical works in a series of exchanges. Vitringa acknowledges the strength of Rhenferd's arguments at points, and one happy outcome of the conflict was the production of a greatly strengthened work, *On the Old Synagogue*, ten years later. [Albert] Schultens [1686–1750] appreciated *Ruler of the Synagogue* for its erudition and Vitringa's personal example throughout the debate for "remembering virtue and upholding the name of a Christian when assailed by a bitter adversary."

In 1687 Vitringa published a two-volume *Introduction to a Proper Understanding of the Temple as Seen by Ezekiel*, in which he argues (a) that Ezekiel's famous temple was modeled after the plan of Solomon's temple, (b) that the prophecy of it was literally fulfilled in the building of the temples of Zerubabel and Herod, and (c) that at the same time this was a particular foreshadowing of the glory and excellence of the New Testament church of the end times. He wrote this work in Dutch for the benefit of his unlearned countrymen. But since Vitringa departed from the views of the famous Cocceius at points, the latter's son, Johannes Heinrich Cocceius [1653–1719], wrote a refutation to which Vitringa produced a rejoinder. It is worth noting (a) that Vitringa appreciated both the "literal sense" as well as a "mystical or spiritual sense" in the biblical text and (b) that he recognizes Cocceius's many contributions but was willing to disagree with him where truth required.

In 1689 Vitringa became involved in a heated dispute with another colleague, the famous philosopher and theologian Herman Alexander Röell [1653–1718]. Among others at Franeker, Vitringa was concerned that Röell gave human reason too high a place. He was especially concerned about Röell's teaching (a) that the second person of the Godhead was indeed true God but not actually and truly engendered of the Father (which seemed to introduce a type of tritheism or

more exactly Sabellianism) and (b) that the death of believers was a punishment. Pieces both in Latin and in Dutch were produced in the course of the back-and-forth that ensued. Though Röell disturbed the peace of the local churches with his teachings, Vitringa distinguished himself for not losing proper restraint despite the use of many heated expressions on the part of his antagonist.

Next, our author produced a useful little work, *Summary of the Teaching of the Christian Religion*, which went through many editions beginning in 1690 and was translated into Dutch.

I have mentioned it already, but Vitringa published his *On the Old Synagogue* in 1696. It is a precise and in-depth study of the offices, ministries, and worship of the synagogue in relation to those of the early church. [Johann Georg] Pritius [1662–1732] called it "an outstanding work," and [Hieronymus] Grundling [1671–1729] said it was indispensable for understanding church history.

In 1705 he produced his *Examination of the Apocalypse of John the Apostle*. Schultens called this "a work of solid judgment…a lighthouse amidst the most dense clouds." Grundling, [Joachim] Lange [1670–1744], and [Johann Gustav] Reinbeck [1683–1741] went on record to praise it. In the second edition, which was published thirteen years later, Vitringa himself said it had become "a book valued by learned Europe…even men with fair judgment of the Roman sect." In the preface he lays out his hypotheses: what he sees as the foundational principles on which the entire system of the book's teachings rests and on which the teachers of the Christian church must come to agreement if they wish to achieve harmony in the interpretation of apocalyptic prophecies. He seeks to establish these principles through comparing different parts of the book itself that are parallel to one another, through comparing related prophecies from the Old Testament, and through ascertaining the purpose of the author.

The year 1706 saw the publication of his little book *Discourse on the Usefulness, Necessity and Authority of Church Synods*. Such a work is typical of Vitringa's concern for the practical life and health of the churches. In 1708 he came out with a revised edition of his *Outline of Sacred History and Chronology from the Foundation of the World to the End of the First Century AD*. He presents a chronology of biblical

history in connection with Mesopotamian sources, and he gives students a helpful set of rules as they approach the study of history and chronology. [Johann Benedict] Carpzov [1675–1739] called it a "nice abridgement of nearly everything which has been written more at length." Vitringa went on to attach another work to this edition entitled *An Outline of Prophetic Teaching*. This was written for theological students to help them understand the function of prophets in biblical times, the nature of biblical prophecy, and sound rules for correctly understanding and interpreting the prophecies. Though not slavishly, he generally follows the hypothesis of Cocceius concerning the seven periods through which the New Testament church will have to pass. He interacts with [Benedict] Spinoza's [1632–1677] godless *Tractatus theologico-politicus* on prophecy somewhat as well. [Johann Jakob] Rambach [1693–1735] said that among the smaller compendia this was one of the best and most useful historical helps on the art of interpretation. Schultens calls these two outlines one of Vitringa's "gifts to the public."

Vitringa's best work, a monument to his great learning and incomparable skill in expounding the Holy Scriptures, is his *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*. The first volume appeared in 1714 and the second in 1720. The value of the preface for laying out a solid approach to interpretation and of the thorough commentary itself for its careful handling of words and of historical matters is well known. Despite its great length, the work went through many editions in the Netherlands and Germany and has been received throughout Europe with great applause. Buddeus said it was "the model of a perfect commentary in every respect." [Theodore] von Hase [1682–1731] called it "a distinguished treasury of vast and rare learning." Rambach said Vitringa should be considered "among the ornaments of our age." Lange said that "in terms of exegetical method, exposition and laying the foundations for a proper understanding of…Isaiah, the best and most excellent commentary of the famous Dutch theologian Campegius Vitringa stands out." Schultens said, "The public acclaims you, Campegius Vitringa, as one of the greatest examples of interpreters." Another proof of the value of this work is that it has been appallingly plagiarized!

Though Vitringa did not prepare the text with an eye to publication, his colleague Johannes d'Outrein translated from Latin and expanded Vitringa's reflections into *Exposition of the Gospel Parables*. This came out in 1715 and was translated into German as well. It examines the literal and spiritual meanings of the parables and can be of great assistance in preaching because suggestions for practical applications accompany each section.

In 1716 Vitringa published *The Spiritual Life*. This work came out of his lectures on Christian practice at the university. Its usefulness is shown by the fact that it went through many editions and was translated into German, Dutch, French, and Hungarian.

The last of Vitringa's writings published while he was alive is his *Observations on the Proper Form of Preaching*. This was first published in 1721 as an effort to improve preaching in the Dutch churches. It also gives suggestions on public prayer. Schultens said of it,

> This was the swan song of a most faithful minister of Jesus Christ, whose permanent concern was not for the academy only, but indeed he expended himself for the protection of (and in watchful care for) the church universal. And he made the attempt as his final will, even as he had continually instilled such wise counsels and precepts and such practical discipline into his students, to press the concern on all their minds (even with his voice dying and his hand weak) that by dividing and dispensing the true, solid, vital, living, spiritual, and fully rational word of God in preaching, they were to feed the Lord's flock and to lead them to the springs of living water.

Numerous books were published after Vitringa's death that stem from his notes and from his lectures, which were recorded by others. Theodore von Hase published a useful *Sacred Geography* in Vitringa's name in 1723. This would have become a major work on biblical geography if Vitringa had not been hindered by death.

The next year a book entitled *Observations on the Miracles of Jesus Christ* was published in Dutch and soon translated into German. It was prepared for publication by Campegius Jr. before he too died, and was completed by his successor Venema. Though it would have been better if Vitringa Sr. himself had finished it, it helps the reader understand the spiritual meaning of the miracles, how they throw light on

the transformations of the believer's spiritual life and in part point to the future transformations and destinies of the church.

Another book collected from his lectures on the Bible is his *Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Congregations of the Galatians and Also to Titus*. The lectures were in Latin, but this work is a Dutch version published in 1728, which contains some excellent insights. It was often cited and praised by Johann Christoph Wolf [1683–1739] in his *Curis philologicis et criticis*.

Similar to this is his *Exposition of the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, which treats the first eight chapters of that letter and was translated into Dutch. Lilienthal said about the work, "It contains many beautiful things, especially the word studies. He is able to analyze things and unwind the many difficult connections involved in this epistle. This *theologus pacificus* has done as much as possible to avoid *controversiae*, but has diligently carried out the *exegesis*."

After finishing his commentary on Isaiah, Vitringa pushed himself despite his bodily weaknesses to complete a commentary on the prophecies of Zechariah. He reached 4:6 before succumbing to death. The prolegomena alone is an adequate introduction to this prophet. Venema, who followed Campegius Vitringa Jr. both in his professorate and in his marriage, received all of Vitringa Sr.'s manuscripts. He published this unfinished work in 1734 under the title *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophecies of Zechariah*. That same year Venema published Vitringa's *Commentary on the Song of Moses (Deut. 32)* and noted that it "is able to throw light on many very difficult and contested passages."

This is a catalog of all the books and writings by Vitringa that I know.

Part III: The Sequel of the Biography of the Late Vitringa—Regarding His Natural and True Character

Though I may lack the skill to describe vividly the beautiful character of this blessed man, the truth should make up for my lack of elegance.

Vitringa was rather tall, thin, and had a noble and pleasant appearance. His face had something honest, modest, solid, and serious about

it. His eyes were clear, cheerful, and pointed to a calmness of spirit. His body had been weak since he was a child, but his habits of intensive studying debilitated him even more. Over time he developed a stoop, not because of age but because he was constantly reading and writing. He pressed himself continually [literally, he tried to keep himself in sweat day and night] even though he became exhausted because of it. He was often seriously ill and more than once was very close to death. But God, who apparently wanted the best for His church through him, marvelously strengthened him and sustained his dilapidated dwelling for longer than one might have expected. In 1702, he was plagued by a violent kidney stone pain that threatened him with imminent death; only through God's help and the skill of Dr. Latanäus was he eventually freed from this troublesome affliction. In the same year he was also beset by another infection, which was very strong and settled into his ears, causing deafness, an affliction that troubled him the rest of his life. It taught him much patience, but he was able to maintain his daily work schedule.

He was still able to govern his voice well for his public lectures at the university. And in private conversation he used a hearing horn. But if the person's voice was still not sufficiently audible and Vitringa could not understand, he would graciously ask the person to have patience with his weakness, which was ordained by God. This hardness of hearing made it difficult for him to participate in the public debates and disputations, and he sometimes required the other participants to put their arguments into writing, to which he would respond in public. When he was asked his thoughts on vexed and difficult questions, he requested people to present the issues in written form, to which he would give thorough answers.

God often manifests his riches in vessels of clay. Vitringa's body was weak and frail, but God furnished him with many gifts. His mind was keen, fruitful, and wide-ranging. His intellect was deep and sharp, and his style of writing was not only thorough in detail but pleasant and even witty. His outstanding commentary on the prophet Isaiah is read with as much pleasure as profit. He seemed continually able to turn mountains of difficulties into comfortable plains for the gratification of his readers. Vitringa was not infallible (for only God can claim that!).

But throughout his life he had a careful system of note taking and an accurate memory, which combined to make him a dependable scholar.

Vitringa climbed to an advanced level of scholarship. He had a sound, accurate, and well-ordered knowledge of philosophy and other disciplines ancillary to the study of theology, the queen of the sciences, which was his focus. He was a great connoisseur and lover of history. This is abundantly clear from his writings, especially his *Outline of Sacred History and Chronology from the Foundation of the World to the End of the First Century AD.* He particularly recommends the study of history to theological students, along with the study of chronology, geography, and antiquities. All should learn to see in historical events not only the actions of men but the hand of the most-wise Ruler of the world as well.

In terms of languages, Vitringa attained a thorough knowledge of the old Latin and Greek writers and went on to attain a wide grasp of Hebrew, Aramaic, and rabbinic literatures. He would never have become such a great interpreter of Holy Scripture if he had not become a master and skillful critic of all these languages. In terms of his own writing, he sometimes invented new Latin words in order to bring out a proper sense of the stress of the biblical languages. But his style is manly, serious, clear, and rich in expression. And when the topic requires, his Latin is magnificent and noble.

Vitringa preached as well as practiced the principle that ministers should have a broad liberal arts education in preparation for their theological studies. Those who argued for a shorter, streamlined course of training were seriously mistaken. Ministers must become people of broad scholarship. Knowing great thinkers of earlier times produces humility and modesty and teaches us to be patient with those who hold opinions other than our own in secondary matters. Haughty pride typifies the semischolarly, and superficial scholarship tends to stir up unnecessary disputes.

Vitringa believed that piety goes hand in hand with learning. The theologian should be able to give an accurate opinion on any subject that pertains to his area of science [*Wissenschaft*]. But he will only attain to this (unless it be given him by an extraordinary grace of the Holy Spirit) through labor and strenuous effort. Walking with God

by faith in Christ does not dull but sharpens the mind. Meditation on spiritual things and the practice of true piety provokes rather than stifles academic achievement and true scholarship. The true Christian must seek the honor of God and not his own in all his studies. Because he truly reverences God, he dedicates to God and the benefit of His church all his intellect, all his diligence, and all his labors, which are God's gifts anyway. Christianity can boast above other religions that true piety and true scholarship and rationality shine most brightly when they are combined.

We have seen how highly Vitringa praised the combination of learning and godliness. Let us now examine his own attainments in each, starting with his scholarship. Of course, the sound theologian needs to be a skilled interpreter of the Holy Scriptures since they comprise the foundation of our faith and conduct. Who is unacquainted with the fruits of Vitringa's exceptional exegetical skill? He will surely take a permanent place among the greatest and most respected interpreters of the priceless Word of the Lord. He read, studied, and interacted daily with the books of the Holy Scriptures throughout his life. It was his particular concern to clarify for others the more difficult and obscure parts of the Bible, particularly in the prophetic books. In his day Dutch theologians were divided into the Cocceians and the Voetians. But Vitringa managed to steer clear of any party spirit. Cocceius was his friend as was [Gisbertus] Voetius [1589–1676], but his dearest friend was truth. As you can see from the famous preface to the Isaiah commentary, he was able to make use of as well as disagree with Cocceius. Through his love of truth, Vitringa was able to keep a good conscience and to please God and those quiet minds who love the peace of Zion.

His presentation of Christian doctrine was balanced and biblically supported. His teaching and writing lacked the polemical strife that typified some others. Even in conflicts he did not allow himself to be drawn in by vehement and immoderate opponents or to be stirred to similar behavior. He handled the controversies with Rhenferd, Cocceius Jr., and Röell in a calm and praiseworthy manner. His sound arguments and humility earned him the respect of all reasonable, truth-loving, and honest people. As a Lutheran myself, I do not appreciate his defense of the Reformed church concerning predestination

and particular redemption (I appreciate Vitringa very much but not blindly). But it serves as a singular honor to Vitringa that Lutheran and even Roman Catholic writers settled on him the well-deserved title of "irenic theologian" and have rushed to shower him with fine and solid compliments.

Another demonstration of Vitringa's ability is his beautiful book *The Spiritual Life*. He was able to motivate people for the Christian life and to stir them up to pursue a Christian lifestyle very affectively and with proper biblical support. For this reason, he was also a pleasant and edifying preacher. From the pulpit as well as from the lectern he addressed audiences of many eager listeners.

Rambach calls Vitringa a *miraculum viri docti et pii*, a marvel of a learned and pious man. Having dealt with his learning, let us now consider its principal ornament: his unfeigned godliness. Vitringa did not teach godliness and live godlessness. The high opinion of many Reformed and Lutheran men about his writings is confirmed unanimously by those who knew him in person. He was a godly man and a regenerated as well as an enlightened and illuminated theologian.

Vitringa not only gained the respect of men through his great scholarship but of God through his true Christianity. He belongs to that rare group of scholars who become not only learned but wise. Vitringa's example undermines the harmful prejudice that thorough scholarship and a genuine fear of God cannot be brought together properly or usefully. He served his generation while his eye was on the next world.

Vitringa understood the vast difference between virtues exercised by a person in a state of grace (which one enters through true faith) and the outwardly good deeds of a person still in the state of nature that are performed out of fear of divine punishment or for purely earthly motivations. Many people are satisfied with an outward profession of Christianity but do not consider the inner state and motivations of their hearts. Vitringa felt that the power of Christianity consists in the inner communion of the soul with God in Christ and the constant sense of this communion in all the activities of life. His exposition of Isaiah 28:10 is particularly beautiful, and I hope it makes an impression on many others besides myself. There he affirms that merely theoretical erudition means nothing in the kingdom of God, which

consists not in words but in power. Though founded on knowledge, living faith alone makes the mind capable of grasping spiritual and heavenly things. He who without the Holy Spirit studies the truths of our faith simply from books but without a taste and feeling for these truths may easily go astray. He may quote others well, but he has no felt or experiential knowledge consistent with these truths, which contributes more to understanding these things than merely intellectual and bookish efforts that do not involve a person's soul and spirit.

Unfeigned piety expressed itself in the various areas of Vitringa's life. In his preaching and lecturing, people often sensed the divine anointing in a special way. Vitringa became a bright light in the church and the academy and was esteemed by his colleagues, his students, his congregation (of which he was an elder), and the entire community. Though due to his deafness he could not hear the preaching, he continued to attend public worship so that at least he might edify others by his example. And he always had open the text of the preacher on which he engaged in private devotions. He was a vigilant servant who attended day and night on the coming of his Lord and kept himself in readiness for it. He was very careful in the use of his time and redeemed it. The health and safety of the kingdom of God on earth was very dear to him. Does he not write very movingly about the deterioration of the inner condition of the Protestant churches in his preface to the commentary on Revelation? Vitringa's humility was apparent. He refused all flattery and praise, which in fact made him more honorable in others' sight.

In all things Vitringa acted wisely, respectably, and conscientiously. Throughout his life he showed himself to be a fair, upright, and friendly person. He was affectionate, pleasant, and agreeable in his relations with others. His friendliness was readily apparent and yet he was also circumspect. Intimate with his friends, he dealt gently with his opponents. He did not enjoy visitors who merely came to pay compliments. But he made himself fully accessible to his students, whom he loved like a father, and often conversed with them about the truths of Christian doctrine. He showed a special love for international students, whether Reformed or Lutheran, who in return had a special respect for him. No one at the Franeker University ever had his auditorium so full of listeners as did Vitringa over the years. He was

concerned to be useful and always sought the welfare of the university. He was elected to serve as academic rector twice. In the university council he expressed his views forthrightly but modestly. He advocated strenuously for what was just and good. He gladly promoted the honor of others and was neither jealous nor envious of their good fortune but looked on it with joy. He praised the virtues of even his opponents and strove to commend every person's honest efforts in keeping with their merits but without flattery.

This has been an incomplete description of the praiseworthy qualities of the blessed man. One category in a useful biography seems to be missing—an account of his accompanying faults. I honestly testify that I have not been silent when some of them were known to me, but rather I know none. That the remarkable and accomplished man should err a little in his views, feelings, or outward behavior is easy for anyone to believe. He was just a man. And as with all of us, the greatest prudence and wisdom does not always keep us from missteps. Even great souls err and may be oblivious to their own faults. That Vitringa had such faults I do not doubt. By the grace of God, however, his integrity and accomplishments so predominated when you consider his whole life that the failings are entirely lost from view.[3]

3. End of this *Lebenslauf* [Biography]. Following this, with typical German thoroughness, Büsching included "Certain Additions and Corrections to the First Two Sections of the Lebenslauf." It consists of many details irrelevant to our purposes here, but I will include a letter to Vitringa from his relative, Professor Lambertus Bos [1670–1717], who comments on the death of Vitringa's son Horatius in 1704: "You see here, honored cousin, attached to my own [just published] little work, an example of the diligent labors of your most learned young son, now blessed, whose death you received as a most grave blow, whom you properly still grieve so, and we also…. For if God had supplied him with longer life, he would have been your most outstanding crown, the honor of the family, of us and of everyone who saw his gifts, his joy and fruitfulness, his talent in literature, the ornament of his homeland. For in him were indeed excellent character qualities which held promise that he would be a great man, and showed forth a faithful likeness of yourself."

The Spiritual Life

Vitringa's Preface

The spiritual life is something pure, holy, and precious. The subject is worthy of serious attention by all who would promote their sanctification and are desirous of eternal life. For the spiritual life leads to eternal life. We cannot have one without the other. The first is the beginning of the second; the latter is the consummation of the former.

At first the topic seems simple and easy to understand. What is the spiritual life but the exercise of true and living faith through love? The practice of truth, godliness, and every virtue in accordance with the teaching of Jesus Christ? Full obedience to the precepts of the gospel? Or as the apostle Paul puts it, "love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5)? Nothing could be clearer!

It might seem unbelievable if it were not confirmed by experience, but by the fourth century the form and features of the Christian religion (most beautiful when properly displayed) began to degenerate from its early and attractive purity and simplicity. As gangrene winds its way through the body little by little, nothing has been more exposed to the instability of the human mind and the mockeries of ignorant men than the exercise of piety. The strength of superstition and the twisted thinking of man corrupted the simplicity of early Christian practice. By that time all kinds of absurd and harmful practices had become established as ways attaining a more perfect spiritual life.[1]

1. Here Vitringa goes into a lengthy survey of the strengths and weaknesses of movements in favor of the solitary or the monastic life in the late classical and medieval periods. He gives particular attention to the Quietism of Miguel de Molinos (1628–1696), which he rejects in favor of a fundamentally active view of the spiritual life. For further discussion

You can see, dear reader, how the simple discipline left for us by the authors of our faith has been exposed to so many errors sprouting from the human mind. It seems it is difficult to walk the straight road. Man loves detours, forks in his spiritual path. He would rather be unique and outstanding than walk the old paths with other Christians.

May heaven grant that this little book might be free from such defects and communicate a more accurate and pure depiction of the spiritual life. I have certainly labored to conform it to the teachings of the authors of Scripture and to rational experience, the two most dependable principles to follow on such a question. For true godliness has been the same in every age of the world since its beginning. There is only one way: the ancient way, the straight way, the way of faith, hope, holiness, love, righteousness, and justice in which the patriarchs, prophets, and saints of old walked. By precept and example, they commended this way to their posterity as the true way of life. Jesus Christ Himself as well as His apostles set out this way of life most clearly; they showed what strengthened it and what its limits were. And Christ gave to all His people the most perfect example of every virtue.[2]

In this work I want to go deeper than a survey of vices and their corresponding Christian virtues. I want to examine the work of the grace of God in the hearts of men: its beginning, progress, and perfections, along with the vicissitudes, affections, and distinguishing characteristics of the state of grace. Hopefully we will learn the difference between true virtues (exercised by faith in a state of grace) and counterfeit virtues (exercised in a state of nature out of a fear of divine judgment and from carnal affections). Many people are ignorantly content with an outward profession of Christianity but pay little attention to the condition and internal movements of their soul. The

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of this material, see my "Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722), Exemplary Exegete and Theologian of the Spiritual Life," *Hapshin Theological Review* 6 (2018): 69–90.

2. At this point in his preface Vitringa expresses his appreciation for the writings of the church fathers on this topic (particularly Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, John of Damascus, and especially Augustine's *On Morals*) and how he wanted to go deeper than just a survey of vices and virtues. He notes, "Among the ancient Latin writers, I am acquainted with no one who has better explained the nature of the spiritual life than Augustine: the way it is generated, its affections, and the tender feelings with which a soul in the state of grace clings to God and never loses Him from view."

strength of Christianity consists in an interior commerce of the soul with God in Christ and a continual consideration for him in all the actions of life. But many are ignorant of these things since the pastors of souls have not always taken the necessary care to explain them.

I will not drag this out except to say that most of what is in this little book I wrote for my students. I expanded it in various places and now timidly send it to the press. Even if I have rightly understood these things and been able to write without serious errors, I know that the real test is not to write about what makes a good man but to put it into practice. As Augustine says, it is easy to affect an appearance of virtue but difficult to be virtuous. The important thing is not to call yourself or to seem a Christian, but to be one. How difficult a thing it is to submit to Christ Jesus all the affections of your soul! To wish for nothing other than what God wishes and to reject all that is displeasing to God! You who are a new Christian, if you are unaware of this, how many things experience will teach you! When it pleases the heavenly Father to lead you through the valley of shadows, the way of temptation, of affliction, and of the cross, then you will experience what kind of a man you are: how shaky your steps are, how little progress you have made in the school of Christ, how painful it is for a beginner like you to follow after your Lord and to carry His cross. In a word, you will learn how difficult it is to keep in good spiritual condition through the ups and downs of life and amid today's corrupt customs and not to do anything unworthy or shameful. The way of life is a narrow way. It demands a life of strict and exacting discipline and does not allow you freedom to wander to the right or to the left. The spirit is free in the Lord, but the flesh has no liberty. Watch yourself then, Christian, and be careful not to come off as more holy than you are.

As I write, my own imperfections rise up before me, and I feel them deeply and penetratingly. Who can effectively hide from his own faults and weaknesses without willingly blinding and deceiving himself? There is no other remedy than to resort quickly and confidently to the grace of God. With all humility and diligence, we forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead (Phil. 3:13). Though we may stumble repeatedly, the just Judge will receive us, since He is

touched with sympathy for our weaknesses. And we will be able to find mercy with the Lord on that great and brilliant day. Amen—so be it!

Farewell, reader. Look on the fruit of my labor with favor. May God use this work for your benefit and for the benefit of His church. And may you grow more and more in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus in the hope of eternal life.

Written at Franeker in Frisia [Northern Netherlands]
July 13, 1716

PART 1

The Nature of the Spiritual Life

CHAPTER 1

The Spiritual Life and Its Characteristics

The Scriptures portray the spiritual life as the state [*status*] of a man in Christ who has been liberated from slavery to ignorance, corruption, lust, and the vanity of the age, and brought into communion with God. This takes place through the principle of true faith and love for God that the grace of the Holy Spirit has put in him through regeneration and sanctification. He now finds himself having a good conscience and putting into practice all kinds of virtues and good works in accordance with the precepts of the divine law, to the glory of God in Christ our Redeemer. And this in turn results in his neighbor's edification and his own consolation and everlasting welfare. Both the Old and New Testaments refer to this state as a state of "life"[1]: "Make me understand the righteousness of Your eternal testimonies that I may live" (Ps. 119:144); "Abandon foolishness and you will live" (Prov. 9:6); "Truly I say to you that the time is coming and is already here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live" (John 5:25); "We are buried together with Him in death so that, as Christ was raised from the dead to the glory of the Father, thus we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4); "For through the law I have died to the law so that I might live to God; I have been crucified together with Christ, but I live. Yet it is no longer I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:19–20).

1. Vitringa's Scripture quotations in Latin are largely his own translations, which have been followed in this version.

The spiritual life is a state of action, a state of continual and conscious activity. To live is to exist by the force of an internal principle and to be in action with consciousness. All life is like this. Living is a series of acts that emerge from a principle. There is an immaterial force, a cause or principle that produces life. The activity that characterizes the spiritual life of a man in Christ can be clearly distinguished from other forms of life.

There are, of course, other distinct types of life: natural life, social life, life under the carnal economy (i.e., in Old Testament times), and the perverse life of sin and wrongdoing. Natural life is the state in which a person acts—for his own preservation—out of the principle imbued into all living beings. The natural functions of eating, drinking, protecting oneself against the weather, and all kinds of bodily activities belong to this type of life. Social life consists in the activities one carries out as a member of civil society. A third type of activity was lived out by the people who were part of the external Old Testament church of God. This was a "carnal economy" involving certain religious ceremonies instituted by Moses. Paul calls this "living Jewishly" in Galatians 2:14. He has this type of life in mind in Colossians 2:20: "Therefore if you have died with Christ, you are free from the elemental principles of the world. Why then do you follow its ordinances as if you were living in the world?"

Sin, of course, affects the three types of life I have mentioned (natural, civil, and Mosaic), but it can be viewed as a fourth type of human activity. This life is typified by vice-riddled lusts. In his corrupt nature, man has become a slave of sin, separated from communion with God and deprived of His love. The sinner is either ignorant or negligent of God and gives himself over to the vilest actions (forbidden by God and reason) to satiate his lusts. It may be that he abandons himself to self-indulgence, carnal longings, or injustice; to greed, hatred, strife; or to a long list of offenses against God and man. Because of his deplorable ignorance and blindness, he may even imagine his own vices please God and are truly religious acts.

Such is the life of sin and lust, the fleshly life of which the apostle speaks in Ephesians 2:1–2: "And you He has made alive when you were dead in offenses and sins in which you previously walked in keeping

with the course of this age" and also 1 Peter 4:2–3: "So that for the rest of our time in the flesh we should live no longer in accordance with human lusts." He then explains this carnal life more clearly: "For it is enough that we have lived in past time doing what the Gentiles delight in: living in sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, gluttony, wild reveling and the shameful worship of idols." And so it follows that every other kind of activity (whether belonging to natural life, civil life, or the carnal economy of the Jews), if it does not spring from the principle of faith and of love for God but comes from the principle of lust, must be considered as a part of the life of sin.

Only this fourth category of life, the life of sin, is opposed to the spiritual life. The spiritual life is compatible with but nobler than the first three categories of life, however. Both natural and civil activity stem from natural motivations and the principle of self-preservation. The principle behind the spiritual life is the love of God in Christ—that is, the desire to be in communion with God. This is a sublime and spiritual affection. The goal of spiritual activities is not the preservation of our natural life or social status but our spiritual state (i.e., our communion with God), and it involves the pursuit of heavenly glory and the happiness that the gospel promises. The person who lives this holistically spiritual life is properly called a "spiritual man" (1 Cor. 2:13; Gal. 6:1).

The spiritual life is fundamentally different from (though not incompatible with) the activities of a Jew under the old economy. It was possible for a person to fulfill all the exterior duties and ceremonies of the law of Moses so that he was considered a good citizen in the Jewish church and republic but still not live in God and from God. It was possible for a person to "live Jewishly" but have no share in communion with Him and miss out on His love. Old Testament "Jewish life" involved merely external activities. And, of course, a person can indeed live spiritually without keeping the rites God imposed on the Jews under the old economy. These regulations were a matter of externals and "the law of a carnal commandment" (Heb. 7:16). Such exercises, when separated from faith and hope in the promises, are called activities of the flesh in 2 Corinthians 5:16: "We regard no one according to the flesh." That is, greatness is not a matter of whether or not one practices the external religion of Moses. Even though we once regarded Christ

"according to the flesh"—that is, according to the life that He lived as a Jew before His resurrection from the dead—"we regard Him thus no longer." In this way the apostle makes a distinction between the Jew under the old economy, whom he calls the one "born according to the flesh" (Gal. 4:29), and the spiritual man under the new economy.

It is important for us to note again that though the spiritual life is of a different quality than natural, civil, or Mosaic activity, it accords well with these types of life. When "animal," "social," or "carnal economy" activities are subordinated to the spiritual life, they are perfected and sanctified by it. The principle of faith and of love for God rectifies and emends all their actions, directing them to a more noble end than they would naturally tend. The type of life that is entirely opposed to the spiritual life is living "according to the flesh" (Rom. 8:5), acting according to the will and lusts of the sinful nature (Eph. 2:3). This type of activity stems from an ignorance of God (especially in the case of idolatry and superstition) or from the desire of the corrupt nature to obtain that supposed highest good (apart from God and communion with Him) that a man makes the object of his lust. He may abandon himself to greed, ambition, sumptuous living, or sensual pleasures. He may follow after the pomp of the world and the vainglory of the age. He may give himself over to injustice, hatred, envy, and similar vices that produce the most twisted and criminal disorders. All these vile affections belong to the "fleshly lusts" (1 Peter 2:11). The life of sin is not natural, but fleshly; it is not civil, but bestial. In such a state man degrades the excellence of his nature and often makes himself inferior to the beasts. Such a life cannot be reconciled with the spiritual life in any way.

The following are the defining characteristics that constitute the spiritual life: (a) It is the life of a "man in Christ" (as the apostle puts it in 2 Cor. 12:2). Being regenerated by the grace of God and endowed with the Holy Spirit, such a person is united in the closest connection to God by faith and hope. "Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). "If anyone is in Christ Jesus…" (2 Cor. 5:17). (b) It is the life of a man in Christ liberated from slavery to sin, lust, and the vanity of the age. The apostles speak this way in Romans 6:11: "You also must consider yourselves to be dead with regard to sin but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord" (cf. Eph. 2:3; 1 Peter 4:2–4). (c) The spiritual life flows from the

ceaseless principle of true life and love that comes from God, as Jesus says: "The water which I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). This principle is infused by the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit (see Ezek. 36:26; John 3:5).

(d) The rule of this life is not natural instinct, civil law, or bare rationality but the light of the Holy Spirit Himself. It is the holy and spiritual law of God connected in both Old Testament and New Testament times to the word of grace. It is particularly the spiritual law of the kingdom of heaven announced by Christ our Lord. Therefore, to live spiritually means, as the saints often express it, to practice the law of God and His precepts. The sacred poet speaks elegantly in Psalm 119:17, "Do good things for your servant that I may live and keep Your Word," as does the apostle in John 15:10: "If you keep My precepts, you will abide in My love." To be sure, the type, rule, norm, and model of this state of activity is the very life of God Himself (of which I will soon speak); it is the life of Christ Jesus raised from the dead; it is life under the new economy; it is the life of the good angels in their state [*status*] of holiness, serving God with freedom and joy; it is the life of all the saints inasmuch as they are imitators of God and of Christ (Eph. 5:1). The spiritual life manifests itself in an eager pursuit of all the virtues and every possible good work that we know to be the will of God (Phil. 4:8).

(e) The spiritual life is connected to the joy of a good conscience. "You have put more joy in my heart than when their grain and wine increased" (Ps. 4:7) and "Your joy no one will take from you" (John 16:22). Paul calls this the "joy of faith" (Phil. 1:25). I regard this joy and peace of conscience to be an essential characteristic of this life. It comes from a greater or lesser sense of God's favor in accordance with the varying conditions that believers go through. (f) The goal and focus of a person living spiritually is the glory of God in Christ and the edification of one's neighbor: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and your Father in heaven might be glorified" (Matt. 5:16); "Whatever you do in word or deed, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus [a Hebraic expression meaning "to His glory"], giving thanks to our God and Father through Him" (Col. 3:17); "Therefore encourage and build up one another" (1 Thess. 5:11).

(g) Finally, the spiritual life is a condition of everlasting activity. This life will never end but will lead into a future state of glory. The

spiritual life that we live on earth will be absorbed into the heavenly life that awaits us: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36); "He who keeps My word will never see death unto eternity" (John 8:51)—that is, he will be preserved from eternal ruin.

The life whose characteristics we have been describing is beautifully typified by the apostle as the "life of God" (Eph. 4:18), an admirable title distinguishing it as the most noble type of life. It deserves to be called such (a) because it is a particular gift of the grace of God that produces this life in a person; (b) because it perfectly unites a person with God, and especially since a person cannot live this life except in communion with God; (c) because in this life God, by the operations of His Holy Spirit, directly influences a person and joins him intimately to Himself; and (d) because it is a spiritual life, formed after the type and example of the spiritual life of God Himself. In such a life one sees to a certain extent an image, an imitation, and certain marks of that most perfect life that God lives, which is why those who live this life are considered "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

We can consider the spiritual life either as *common* to all ages of the church or with a *special* focus on our present economy of the new covenant. The patriarchs were in communion with God, lived by faith (a gift of divine grace), and exercised themselves in the practice of every virtue for the glory of God (see Hebrews 11; Gen. 5:24; 17:1; Mic. 6:8). This is the common experience of all the saints. But under our present New Testament arrangement, there is a higher degree of spirituality than was the case under the old economy, as the church is sanctified by the more abundant and more efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit in virtue of the obedience of Christ Jesus, and the church has the joy of liberation from all the burdensome carnal exercises practiced under the old economy (cf. Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:26; John 3:5). The life of Christ Jesus raised from the dead is the model for New Testament spiritual life (Rom. 6:4). Since Christ has been raised from the dead, He has been liberated from the yoke of the Mosaic law and is said to "live unto God" (Rom. 6:10). He is in a state of the perfect, joyful freedom in communion with the divine glory that also characterizes the life of believers, as we will examine in detail.

CHAPTER 2

The Origins of the Spiritual Life

So far we have been describing the characteristics of the spiritual life. To live means to be full of activity, and that activity stems from a foundational principle [*principium*]. Our next task is to consider the beginning and origin of this life so that we might even better understand its nature. The spiritual life is the fruit stemming from certain good capacities and dispositions [*habitus*] infused into a man in Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit and diffused throughout all his faculties, among which faith in Christ Jesus is the foremost and the one that directs all the others.[1]

These capacities and dispositions [*habitus*] that are the sources of spiritual life I would list as follows: illumination of the soul (i.e., the ability of a mind to grasp and digest spiritual things), rectitude of judgment (i.e., integrity and wisdom), faith in Christ Jesus, hope and full confidence in divine grace, love and reverence for God, goodwill toward one's neighbor, and finally, purity and moderation of the affections (i.e., temperance). These pure and reasonable capacities and dispositions are the source of the spiritual life. All the particular actions of the spiritual life bubble over from this fountain and foundational principle [*principium*]. The following texts support such an understanding: Ephesians 1:17–18; 1 Corinthians 2:14–15; Colossians 1:9; and the words of Peter

1. Vitringa generally uses the term *habitus* to refer to a spiritual capacity or a spiritual disposition of soul (whether of the mind or of the will). Since the term is occasionally misunderstood today, I have noted his use of it at certain junctures below. See Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms, Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 134.

set it forth particularly well: "You yourselves, brothers, make every effort to add to your faith virtue, etc." (2 Peter 1:5–7).

Life is something unified and indivisible, and it is reasonable to see a single source behind the various activities of life. Similarly, the divine Word teaches that among the principles which motivate the spiritual life, there is one original source, one outstanding fountain to which the others can be traced back. It sums up the entire life of a believer and is referred to in various ways: "the knowledge of God," "the fear of the LORD," "having the eyes of the understanding illumined," "faith," or in other places "the love of God." Though all these notions seem disjointed, they actually cohere and cannot be separated from each other. These all point toward the same thing and form a single complex object—"the root of the matter," to use the phraseology of Job 19:28.

The source of spiritual life is a sincere love for God that is graciously produced in a person's soul by the Holy Spirit by granting them faith in the word of grace—that is, the message of the gospel with its promises. But this one principle of faith presupposes other graces, such as an illumination of the mind, a love for God, a respect for Him as Father, and obedience to Him as Lord. None of these things appears in a person except by divine grace. So although this single source of the spiritual life is simple and indivisible, it can be discussed under different names, which we will now endeavor to do.

For example, the love of God is spoken of as a source of the spiritual life: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart" (Deut. 6:5); "And the LORD will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants that you may love Him with your entire heart" (Deut. 30:6); "He who loves Me will keep My word" (John 14:23); "Love for God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5); "The goal of the commandment is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). Though the concept is sprinkled in texts throughout the Word of God, the apostle John in his first epistle presses home splendidly the idea that love for God is at the heart of the spiritual life.

Reason and experience affirm the same thing. Whenever a person reflects on his inner motivations, he feels that all his actions and even his affections are motivated by a particular desire that directs and

dominates all other feelings. Is this desire and motivating influence anything other than love, the desire that each one has for whatever he considers to be good? So it is with love for God in the case of a Christian. If all our activities and affections must be regulated by the law of God, we must have within us a source principle in keeping with such affections and activities. This must be love for God. If every action of the spiritual life has glorifying God as its highest goal, how can this goal be reached except in a mind where there is a sincere affection for God and an ardent desire to glorify Him? It is precisely this desire that we call love for God.

Love for God is an affection of the soul in which a person, despite being in an estate of misery and sin, feels that his summum bonum, his highest good, is to be in communion with God and that this communion is offered to him by Christ Jesus. This delight in God causes him to seek communion with Him with all his might and his deepest longings. Furthermore, he seeks Him in the way prescribed by the word of grace. And consequently, as long as he is in this world, he directs all his efforts to the glory of God in Christ. And it becomes obvious to all that what he esteems as his highest good is communion with God in Christ, preferring it above all other temporal, carnal, and perishable good things.

The source of the spiritual life is precisely this love for God. Where it reigns in a human heart, it absorbs and subordinates to itself all feelings and desires. It becomes that most noble, most excellent affection that Moses describes as loving with all the understanding of the heart. It is the firm conviction and wholehearted choice that prefers God and communion with Him by grace to be infinitely superior to all other goods. Joshua calls this loving God with all the soul (Josh. 22:5). Our soul is oriented around a single integrating affection, and we submit to God all our desires for earthly things, even the things that contribute to the preservation of our bodies. This is to love God "with all our utmost"—that is, with the entire devoted intentions of all our faculties.

Additionally, this love that I have described as the true source of the spiritual life is not born in sinful man except from true faith (faith, of course, has as its object the word and promise of grace). This is why faith is commended everywhere in the Word of God as the source of

the spiritual life. Faith itself may be designated as "the love of God." The apostle joins these two together in 1 Timothy 1:5, where the basic principle of the spiritual life is said to be the pure love of God from an unfeigned faith. The apostle implies the same thing: "Whatever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23); "It is impossible without faith that anyone should please God" (Heb. 11:6); "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). Compare these with Old Testament texts such as "The just will live by his faith" (Hab. 2:3–4); "If you will not believe, you will not be established" (Isa. 7:9); and "The one who believes will not make haste" (Isa. 28:16). In these texts, faith is that thing by which a person acknowledges with a humble and grateful mind that he owes his entire salvation to divine grace.

When we speak of faith as the source of the spiritual life, we do not have in mind a naked faith or a mere historical assent to the doctrine of the gospel, something that takes place strictly in the mind and never becomes an affection. Such "faith" James calls dead (James 2:20) since it never produces the fruit of good works. What we understand as faith is that living act of a man who, persuaded of the greatness of his misery, bondage, and the liberating grace that is offered to him in Christ, seeks that liberation most earnestly. He receives Christ Jesus, having a most pure affection of love for God in Christ and a burning desire to be in communion with Him. He claims Christ for himself as a gift from God. When a person by grace responds in this way, he is joined tightly to Christ Jesus, and by this union he becomes a participant in the spiritual, heavenly, and divine life of which we are speaking. When this faith is in a person's heart, it does not allow him to be lazy, unemployed, or stagnant; such faith is always "working through love" (Gal. 5:6). It is a flowing spring from which every kind of good thought, word, and action bubble forth. This faith is the very life of the mind and soul. It distinguishes the living person from the dead, the carnal person from the spiritual. Where there is such faith, there is life. The love of God is birthed from this faith, is founded on this faith, or rather, this faith is itself par excellence the love of God and of the truth.

The love of God has two aspects, both of which spring from faith. First is that desiring love by which a person comes into communion with God in Christ. Second is that dutiful love by which a believer,

having become a recipient of the grace of God, devotes himself entirely to His service in order to testify to his gratitude. The first kind of love is nothing other than faith itself, and the second is the consequence of the first. Until a sinner is convinced of divine grace, he flees from God as a terrible and fearful being. But once he perceives the good news of consolation, the word of grace promised in Christ Jesus, then he begins to feel the movement of life in himself. He is enfolded in the love of God by the Holy Spirit. He ardently desires communion with Him. And when he has obtained this communion, then, totally absorbed by the flames of divine love, he clothes his soul in a holy and spiritual affection so that he might gladly give himself, all he has, and all his faculties over to God his liberator, to whose glory he gladly consecrates all the moments and actions of his life. It is this affection, which is a desire born from faith, that we call the love of God.

It is not difficult to understand why the love of God, this source principle of spiritual life, is sometimes called by Paul an illumination of the eyes of the mind (Eph. 1:18). Since faith is an act of the mind, it presupposes a corresponding condition in the intellect that precedes the reasonable exercise of such an act. In other words, no one can truly believe in Christ Jesus unless his intellect has been prepared and illumined by the Spirit of God so that he can clearly understand the truth set forth in the gospel and perceive the case for the covenant of grace in its essential details. The Scriptures call this work of the Spirit "revelation" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10; Matt. 11:25) or "illumination" (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4).

Revelation is that clear and efficacious illumination of the understanding of the mind that banishes the prejudices and carnal affections that are obstacles to true faith. It convinces the mind of the truth of the gospel and leads it to embrace this truth with all its strength by faith. And such is the order and connectedness of these affections produced by grace that the illumination of the mind precedes faith, and faith in turn engenders love for God. But these affections are at root a single, unified, and multifaceted capacity [*complexus habitus*], which is the source of the spiritual life.

This illumination of the understanding (as with the faith that springs up after it) and all the resulting affections and actions of the soul are utterly dependent on divine grace. Christ by His Spirit makes a man's

soul alive, stirs it into action, and establishes it as His residence. This is why the grace of God, Christ Jesus, and His Spirit are often recognized as the source and foundational principles [*principia*] of the spiritual life: "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10); Jesus speaks of "The water which I will give him," i.e., His grace (John 4:14); "Walk in accordance with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16), that is, according to the faith administered by the Holy Spirit; "Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Lastly, reverence, or "the fear of God," is another scriptural expression for the source of spiritual life. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10). Wisdom and prudence give birth to the activities and operations typical of the spiritual life. The fear of God is composed of three things: loving God in Christ as Father, revering Him as Lord, and fearing Him as Judge (1 Peter 1:17). This reverence for Jehovah is a tender and filial affection of the soul and keeps a person from doing anything to offend Him. It too is born from faith, as is love toward God. In fact, it is another name for love because one cannot have love for God without reverence for Him (Deut. 6:5; 10:12).