

Theoretical-Practical Theology

Volume 2: Faith in the Triune God

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REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Theoretical-Practical Theology, Volume 2: Faith in the Triune God
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Reformation Heritage Books

2965 Leonard St. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
616-977-0889
orders@heritagebooks.org
www.heritagebooks.org

Printed in the United States of America
19 20 21 22 23 24/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Mastricht, Peter van, 1630–1706, author.
Title: Theoretical-practical theology / by Petrus van Mastricht ; translated by Todd M. Rester ; edited by Joel R. Beeke.
Other titles: Theologia theoretico-practica. English
Description: Grand Rapids, Michigan : Reformation Heritage Books, 2018–
Identifiers: LCCN 2018014361 (print) | LCCN 2018028430 (ebook) ISBN 9781601785602 (epub) | ISBN 9781601785596 (v. 1 : hardcover : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Reformed Church—Doctrines—Early works to 1800.
Classification: LCC BX9422.3 (ebook) | LCC BX9422.3 .M2813 2018 (print) | DDC 230/.42—dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018014361>

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2. The Latin repeats the paragraph number XXI; as in the Dutch translation it is corrected here through the end of the chapter, §§XXII–XXVII.

Preface

As editors and translators we are thankful to the Lord for the enormous privilege we have to bring this major work of Latin theology by Petrus van Mastricht to the English-speaking world. To help our readers profit, we offer a few prefatory notes of explanation.

This volume reveals three reasons why the *Theoretical-Practical Theology* stands out in comparison to other systematic theologies. First is its division. This second volume is comprised of book 2, the subject of which is God himself: his existence, his essence (revealed in his names and attributes), and his subsistence (in the three persons), a fairly standard outline for treating the doctrine of God. What makes Mastricht's treatment noteworthy, however, is that this consideration of theology proper is preceded by a substantial chapter on saving faith. Said more accurately, saving faith is the heading under which falls not only book 2 on God, but also all of books 3–8 on the works of God. This reflects Mastricht's division, presented in 1.1.3, of theology into faith (pt. 1, English vols. 2–6) and observance (pts. 2 and 3, vol. 7), and shows the practical goal for which he wrote the whole work: that readers may believe with true faith for the salvation of their souls, and bear faith's good fruit in a life of humble obedience to God. In this division of theology into faith and observance, Mastricht is following a path well trodden by, among others, Reformed theologians such as William Ames, Amandus Polanus von Polansdorf, and Pierre Ramus, to name a few.

Mastricht's contribution at this point is a lengthy consideration of the nature and necessity of saving faith, which joins together his related emphases on effective preaching, doctrinal content, and faithful practice. By comparison, Mastricht's former pastor and professor, Johannes Hoornbeeck, in his *Practical Theology* emphasized seeking first the kingdom of God through care for eternal salvation, the practice of religion, and zeal for the divine Word, in three chapters between his prolegomena and theology proper. He reserved the topic of faith for later, well after his discussion of God, the law and conscience, sin, grace, calling, conversion, and repentance: it was not until book 7, after over seven hundred

pages, that Hoornbeeck introduced the topic of faith. And this is perhaps why Mastricht was so insistent on maintaining that from the very beginning of the study of theology saving faith must be distinguished from presumption while at the same time even weak faith must be sheltered and nurtured. Pastors must tear down the former and build up the latter both in themselves and in others.

Second, Mastricht recognizes that he is somewhat unusual in his ordering of the divine attributes. In 1.2.5 §VIII he affirms standard divisions of the attributes, such as into positive and negative, or communicable and incommunicable, but in §IX explains his preference to arrange them “as though according to their functions,” that is, by the questions they help to answer: first *quid sit*, what God is, then *quantus sit*, how great God is, then *qualis sit*, what qualities God has—a line of inquiry which has a long pedigree in scholastic disputations, and which provides Mastricht a useful and orderly method of proceeding in chapters 6–23.

Third, by his own testimony (1.2.24 §XI) Mastricht differs from his contemporaries in his more thorough treatment of the Trinitarian economy, which is woven into his broader consideration of God’s personal subsistence in chapters 24–27. It is particularly striking how he describes the three persons as members of a *familia*, a “household” (broader than the English “family”), all having within the household economy, according to their distinct modes of subsisting, distinct economic offices, periods, attributes, and worship. He uses this teaching to answer questions in Trinitarian theology found vexing even today, and also to encourage believers to serve the divine persons with distinct devotion according to their distinct economy.

Those who have read volume 1 will find the basic outline of each chapter familiar. After a paragraph of contextual introduction, Mastricht begins with a word-by-word exegesis of a carefully chosen Scripture text. Note here that he often translates the same verse in different ways, even within the same paragraph, departing not infrequently from the rendering he gives in the chapter’s heading text. Whatever the reason for this, it should not make readers doubt the translation, which intentionally reflects Mastricht’s own variations. In the Exegetical Part and elsewhere, we translated the Latin and original language Scripture citations literally, but where possible we also sought conformity to familiar literal English versions. Greek and Hebrew were preserved in the text body where helpful for understanding Mastricht’s discussions of interpretation and etymology, and Hebrew quotations reflect his habit of rarely using vowel points.

Following the Exegetical Part is the Dogmatic Part, where Mastricht usually begins with a proof from other Scripture passages, proceeds to a confirmation from reason or nature, and then makes further explanation, often anticipating objections that will be answered more fully later. Attention should be paid here

and elsewhere to Mastricht's in-text citations of Scripture, which are always chosen with good reason, though the reason is not always immediately obvious. Sometimes his intent will become clear by comparing with other cited passages, or by using the Scripture index to find a fuller treatment of the same passage. We encourage you to look up the citations, for they reveal among other things that Mastricht's words, and even his theological terms, are closely bound to the language of Scripture itself. His New Testament citations usually follow the *textus receptus*, so sometimes they point to portions missing in modern Bibles. At other times, he grapples with textual variants, and translation differences found in, for example, the Septuagint, various editions of the Vulgate, and various translations and annotations of early modern Protestants, such as Tremellius and Junius, Beza, and Grotius. And though we have tried to use quotation marks to distinguish between quotation and paraphrase, for Mastricht that distinction was not strict, even when he wrote in Greek and Hebrew. Furthermore, all Old Testament citations are given in standard English versification, though Mastricht almost always cited according to the Hebrew, which differs mostly in the Psalms. Where textual variances from modern convention are significant, we have mentioned in a footnote what versions he might have used.

In each section of the succeeding Elenctic Part, Mastricht typically gives a short statement of the question, then outlines the response of those in error, giving their name, then the ideological motivation for their error, followed by the specific error itself, before he goes on to present the orthodox, Reformed opinion and to answer objections. Many of the elenctic sections, as Mastricht explained in his 1699 preface,¹ present orthodoxy as the golden mean between two extremes. This part features the most abundant use of technical terms, sometimes presented with a marker (e.g. "as they say"), and occasionally joined with a brief explanation. Mastricht is quick to indicate when the use of a helpful term compels him, reluctantly, to speak in "barbarous" Latin. In this volume we have footnoted fewer Greek terms, both to conserve space and to reduce distraction in reading, recognizing that for Mastricht, Greek was often simply an extension of Latin. In most places, whether a term was in Latin or Greek, we simply used an accepted English equivalent without comment, but where necessary for clarity or scholarship, we indicated the original term in a footnote, in most cases only at its first occurrence in the volume. Where helpful, comparison has also been made to the eighteenth-century Dutch translation.

In the final Practical Part, most notable is the shift in Mastricht's rhetoric. Careful analysis, didactic instruction, and reasoned defense yield to heartfelt

1. Vol. 1, pp. 43–44.

persuasion, full of questions, exclamations, biblical phrases, rhythmic repetition, figures of speech, and sometimes plays on words. Readers will enjoy and profit from these experiential and practical sections, and will observe how intimately and inextricably bound together are theory and practice in Christian theology. Thus they should be careful not to set Mastricht's rhetorical persuasion against his precise teaching: for example, when in the practical parts he movingly "communicates" the incommunicable attributes of God to believers, calling them to be, in their own way, simple (1.2.6 §§XXVI–XXIX), infinite (1.2.9 §XIV), and omnipotent (1.2.20 §XXXIII), he is not denying the division of the attributes into communicable and incommunicable, which he carefully defended in 1.2.5 §§VIII and XII, but rather, powerfully driving home his oft-repeated teaching that our chief perfection consists in the imitation of God. Similarly, for explanatory clarity and rhetorical power, Mastricht makes frequent use of etymological connections in Latin that do not always carry over into English (e.g. *sanctus*, "holy," but *sanctificatio*, "sanctification"). We have done our best to convey these connections, but some are inevitably lost in translation.

An important help in understanding the four parts is to read them always in parallel. Mastricht is a careful teacher, but he is also eager to save space, so he leaves many explanations for later, or assumes them from before. Often he points readers to appropriate places for clarification, and where he does we replicated his original cross-references, expanding incomplete or obscure citations with a footnote.² But even where there is no such cross-reference, patient readers who encounter challenges will in almost every instance have their questions answered by the end of the chapter. This is especially so in the Elenctic Part, which in meeting the objections of opponents greatly expands the teaching of the Dogmatic Part. Furthermore, the four-part structure occasionally becomes more complicated, when Mastricht subdivides larger topics into various theorems, each having their own Dogmatic, Elenctic, and Practical Part. In this volume this occurs in chapters 3, 6, and 12.

In addition to observing these things in the various parts, readers should note a few features of the translation as a whole. Nearly all the paragraph headings are Mastricht's, but they were originally marginal notes, and did not divide a section (to Mastricht, a *paragraphus*) into multiple paragraphs, as we have done for ease of reading. Mastricht wrote with brevity, and sometimes used *etc.* in

2. Our editorial citations of the *TPT* follow this form: part.book.chapter §section, e.g. 1.2.7 §VI. The part, book, and chapter numbers are indicated at the top of the odd pages of each chapter. When Mastricht gives citations with only book and chapter, he is speaking of part 1. See vol. 1, p. 47 for his outline of the whole work.

place of logical conclusions considered obvious. We have usually filled these in without comment. Moreover, his original printing occasionally used capitalization for emphasis. We have used italics instead. Note also that to preserve the unity of the text and to help our English readers, in most cases we have translated the titles of books Mastricht cites by their Latin or Greek name, a good number of which have no English translation. We follow each of these citations with our own footnote reference, pointing to an edition of the original work and, if available, an English version or at least a critical edition.

Our translation policy has been to adhere closely to the original text. Besides the few things mentioned above, we have done very little to clarify, expand, or update Mastricht's original. Indeed, it hardly needed any such work: as we hope this translation conveys, Mastricht's own prose is accessible, engaging, and at times quite beautiful. We hope that it will not only powerfully teach and exhort our English readers, but also encourage some of them to return to the Latin original, in order to drink more deeply from the fountains of classic Reformed orthodoxy. Our prayer is that through the reading of authors like Mastricht, and the wise application of their teaching to the needs of today's church, we will see in our day a renaissance of true theology, and especially of theology's great goal, that of living for God through Christ.

—Joel R. Beeke
Todd M. Rester
Michael T. Spangler

Abbreviations

<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>BWDN</i>	<i>Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden</i>
<i>BDBI</i>	<i>Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani</i>
<i>LCL</i>	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>NNBW</i>	<i>Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek</i>
<i>NPNF1</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I</i>
<i>NPNF2</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>PRRD</i>	<i>Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>
<i>TPT</i>	<i>Theoretico-Practica Theologia</i>

Book Two

Faith in the Triune God

CHAPTER SIX

The Spirituality and Simplicity of God

God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.
—John 4:24

The first attribute of God is his spirituality.

I. Now the divine attributes should each follow individually. First come those that represent what God is, or that make up his description, such as spirituality and aseity, with the analogous and consequent attributes of simplicity and immutability. For in our view, God is Spirit from himself. Now, because we just treated his aseity and independence in chapter 3 of this book, in this chapter we will add spirituality and simplicity. The Savior will lay this chapter's foundation in John 4:24.

The Exegetical Part

The text is opened and explained.

II. The Savior's words contain a response regarding the nature of God and its efficacy¹ for the practice of piety. Accordingly, in this response we find:

A. A certain description of God, in which is contained:

1. The thing described, or the subject of the axiom (with its designating article): ὁ θεός, God, whom we have treated up to this point, and will treat in what follows.
2. The description, in the word πνεῦμα, "Spirit." (The copulative "is," left out by Hebraic ellipsis, is implied.) God is called Spirit, but improperly so, if you consider the word itself. Indeed this word, derived as it is from the word for respiration in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, properly applies in corporeal things to a breath. It applies to God, though improperly, because people commonly consider a spirit to be the subtlest among

1. ἐνεργεία; Dutch: *krachtdadigheid*

visible things. But if you consider what the word is meant to signify, then God is most properly called Spirit, because he is eminently subtle, immaterial, and simple, as we will show in what follows.

- B. A practical consequence, from the utility of this description, for worshipers and for divine worship: “and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth,” and so forth, which words describe three things:
1. The worshipers whom the description serves: *προσκυνοῦντας*, those who prostrate themselves before God, adoring and worshipping him externally in their profession and ceremonies. The Greek denotes the same thing as the Hebrew *השתחוה*. Both mean worship: sometimes civil (Gen. 23:7; Matt. 18:26), more often religious (John 4:23; Ps. 96:9; Matt. 4:10), but external, or at least conjoined with external bodily actions. Thus *προσκυνοῦντας* means those who profess the worship of God and perform it.
 2. The worship and its two qualities that follow from the nature of God. Worship must be done:
 - a. In spirit, that is, proceeding from the worshiper’s spirit or inward parts (Ps. 51:6; Matt. 22:37; Rom. 1:9), not by profession only or in external actions. Worship must be spiritual, even when it is external (John 4:22–23).
 - b. In truth, that is: (1) not falsely through hypocrisy, but in sincerity of heart (1 Cor. 5:8); (2) not typically, through shadows, through ceremonies, confined to times and places, but by spiritual grace (John 1:17).
 3. The relative obligation of the worshipers to this kind of worship, in the word *δεῖ*: “they must,” or “it is necessary.” This necessity is certain because, on the one hand, God is Spirit and therefore delights in spirit and in spiritual things, and on the other, because he has rejected the ceremonial shadows and requires, especially now under the New Testament, the spiritual worship that the ceremonies prefigured.

FIRST THEOREM—The Spirituality of God

The Dogmatic Part

That God is Spirit: Proved by testimonies

III. Thus according to this text, God is Spirit. Both testaments present him as such: the Old (Num. 24:2; Judg. 3:10; Ezek. 11:24) as well as the New (2 Cor.

3:17; Acts 5:9), although the Acts passage could also be understood to be speaking of the Holy Spirit hypostatically. Therefore Origen says in his first homily on Genesis, “Thinking that God is corporeal and of human form is manifestly impious,”² and Augustine in *The City of God* (bk. 8, ch. 5), “If our soul is not a body, how is God, the Creator of the soul, a body?”³

And by reasons

IV. Nor can God be anything but Spirit because: (1) he is the absolutely first being, who spurns the idea of corporeal parts, whether they preexisted his fullness or now coexist with him. (2) He is independent (Rom. 11:36), whereas a body depends upon its members. (3) He is simple, and most simple, as we will soon prove openly, and thus he does not allow us to think that he is a conglomerate of body parts. (4) He is infinite, which could not be true of a being made of finite parts. (5) He is immutable and incorruptible (James 1:17), which cannot be admitted regarding bodies and composites which can be dissolved. Finally, (6) he is most perfect (Matt. 5:48), and by the confession of all, a spirit is in many ways more perfect than a body.

In what sense God is Spirit

V. But God is not Spirit in a metaphorical sense, in which even corporeal realities—wind, animal spirits, gases—come under this term, because they approximate immaterial substances. Nor is he Spirit in an analogical sense, wherein angels and our own souls are called by the name “spirit,” because of all things they most closely approximate the immateriality and the simplicity of God. Rather, God is Spirit in an especially proper and univocal sense, because he is far removed from all composition. Thus God is called Spirit: not the third Person only, speaking hypostatically by appropriation, because he subsists through a certain ineffable spiration of the Father and the Son; but rather, each Person is called Spirit essentially,⁴ because all have the same immaterial essence.

2. Origen, *PL* 12:156 and *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine, *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, vol. 71 (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 63.

3. Augustine, *PL* 41:230; *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series I (*NPNF1*), ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1887–1900; reprint Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 2:148. Augustine has similar remarks against the Manichean claim that Christians held an anthropomorphic view of God, cf. *Aurelii Augustini... De Genesis contra Manichaeos libri duo* 1.17.27 in *PL* 34:186.

4. οὐσιωδῶς

What spirits require

VI. Moreover, the spirits of any being, and especially of the uncreated God, require that the spiritual nature be: (1) substance, not accident; (2) incorporeal and immaterial (Luke 24:39); (3) living, something that operates by itself, and thus we read of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2) and the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45); (4) intelligent (1 Cor. 2:11); and (5) volitional, ordering all things just as it wills (1 Cor. 12:11). We will treat each one of these individually in the series of divine attributes.

What qualities follow

VII. Following logically from the nature of spirits are their qualities: (1) insensibility, through which the spiritual essence is entirely inaccessible to our senses, which of course require a corporeal object. Specifically, insensibility implies (a) invisibility (Ex. 33:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; John 1:18; Heb. 11:27), because a spirit (since whatever is immaterial lacks spatial extension) neither has a shape, nor can it show off its features in a way that would touch our eyes. Moreover, that God is infinite also proves that he is invisible. Although we read in many places that from time to time he appeared in a vision⁵ (Gen. 18:2; Judg. 13:22; 1 Kings 22:19), where, by a certain extraordinary symbol displayed to human eyes, God manifested his presence, nonetheless, he always was seen in this way: his invisible attributes were, as we read, perceived in created things (Rom. 1:20), the same way in which we see the Father in the Son (John 14:9; Ex. 3:2; cf. Heb. 11:27). Likewise, God appears to the mind (Matt. 18:10), and thus also in our minds will we see God, as it says, face to face (1 Cor. 13:12), surely no longer through a mirror and through an enigma (that is, obscurely), but clearly, like what we see right before our eyes. This sort of seeing is hinted at in Matthew 5:8, Hebrews 12:14, and Job 19:27. (b) Impalpability (Luke 24:39; cf. John 4:24). Although God is said to be able to be touched (Acts 17:27), the description is metaphorical, just as when he is said to be able to be tasted and seen (Ps. 34:8). This tasting and seeing is done, of course, by our mind and not by our body. (c) Indepictibility (Isa. 40:18), since a spirit does not present a figure, outlines, boundaries, or colors which a painter's art could portray (Deut. 4:15; Acts 17:29). Following also from God's spiritual nature are (2) his omnimodal simplicity and (3) his immutability, about which we will speak openly, each in its own theorem.

5. ἐν ὄραματι

The Elenctic Part

It is asked: 1. Is God, properly speaking, a spirit? The divergence of opinions VIII. It is asked, first, whether God is, properly and exactly speaking, a spirit? The Anthropomorphites, so that they might more conveniently explain the creation of man in the image of God, asserted that he was not a spirit, but a crass body, like the human body. (Concerning these things, see the following section.) Several of the Fathers, including Tertullian in *Against Praxeas*, indeed attribute a body to God, but a subtle body, although others excuse him, saying he did not want to signify anything except that God is not an accident but a substance.⁶ Vorstius and the Socinians together attribute a body to God, but in this sense, that they acknowledge the body itself to be Spirit. (We will soon speak rather copiously of these matters.) The Cartesian theologians, because the word “spirit” cannot be sufficiently Cartesianized and because they prefer a word which agrees in meaning more closely with “thought,” say that God is Spirit improperly; more properly, he is mind.

The orthodox opinion and its arguments

The Reformed certainly acknowledge that the word “spirit” is derived in Latin from respiration, just as רִיחַ, in Hebrew, is derived from רָחַץ, and the corresponding Greek word from πνεύειν, which means, “to respire,” and that therefore the word “spirit” applies in the first place to creatures. Nevertheless, they teach that the thing signified by the received use of the word means “immaterial substance” or “simplex,” and applies to God not improperly but most properly, and indeed in the first place, because (1) he is clearly called Spirit in the text, nor does any necessity compel us to stray from the proper sense to an improper one. (2) The thing expressed by the use of the word “spirit,” namely, immateriality and simplicity, applies (as even our adversaries admit) most properly to him, as we have said. (3) If he is not properly a spirit then he is properly a body. Yet this is so only if that body is substance, not accident, since the distinction of substance into spirit and body is immediate, insomuch as every substance is either immaterial or material. (4) If God is not properly a spirit, then the argument of the orthodox for divine simplicity derived from his spirituality will prove empty. Moreover, (5) the Holy Spirit will be either something corporeal, or he will no longer be a spirit, properly speaking, for a spirit, in the opinion of our opponents, is properly something corporeal.

6. Cf. Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeas* in PL 2:161–62; *Against Praxeas* in ANF 3:601–2.

Objections

And the objections they bring have no weight. They say, (1) "Spirit" comes from respiration, but it is not proper to speak of God as being exhaled. I respond: (a) There must be a distinction between the word itself, which comes from respiration, and the thing it signifies, which does not come from respiration. (b) Not every spirit comes from respiration; for example, animal spirits and natural spirits. Nor did our souls or the angels come from respiration; therefore, neither should these properly be called spirits. What then should we properly call a spirit? Nothing, except perhaps the wind and the breath we breathe? But (as everyone knows) we would call these things "spirits" only very improperly. What then is a spirit, properly speaking? If (2) they should say that all spirits properly speaking are something material, such as wind, breath, animal spirits, or gases, I respond: (a) What would you say about our souls, and likewise about the angels? Are they not properly called spirits? (b) All those material things are not spirits except by some sort of analogical participation, and then only improperly speaking, insofar as by their own subtleness they most closely approximate our souls and the angels, and our souls and the angels most closely approximate God, while he alone remains Spirit properly speaking. If they should say that (3) God is thought, for which the word "mind" is more appropriate than "spirit," then I respond: (a) The Cartesians go even further, claiming that every spirit, whether human, angelic, or divine, is thought, as the renowned Wittich says.⁷ (b) We deny that God is thought, because in the Scriptures, nowhere is he called either thought or mind. If they should say that (4) the word "spirit" in the Scriptures is attributed to both wind and breath, I respond, (a) Does it therefore not apply properly to God? Even the word "gods" is applied to others: for example, to angels (Ps. 8:5; cf. Heb. 2:7), to magistrates (Ps. 82:6), and to false gods (1 Cor. 8:5). On this account is God not properly called God? (b) Why not rather turn their argument on its head: God is spirit properly speaking (John 4:24); therefore wind, blowing, animal spirits, gases, are not spirits unless we are speaking improperly by analogy. What argument then could they bring to refute me? If the reader is hungry for more rebuttals like these, he can consult my *Gangrene of the Cartesian Innovations* (sect. 2, ch. 7).⁸

2. *Is God a body, complete with human parts?* The divergence of opinions IX. It is asked, second, whether God is a body, complete with human parts. Long ago the pagans, because they considered their great men to be gods, believed that

7. Wittich, *Theologia pacifica*, §195, pp. 156–57.

8. "The Spirituality of God," *Gangraena*, 236–42.

their gods were corporeal, endowed with human parts, as we will mention in the following controversy. The Anthropomorphites (also called Audians, from a certain Audius), who disturbed the church in the fourth century, around the year 370, and also in the tenth century, whose opinion Tertullian at one point approached when he claimed our soul had a fixed shape,⁹ these Anthropomorphites, in order more conveniently (or so they thought) to explain what the image of God in man was, believed that God was endowed with human parts, according to which he fashioned the human form.

The orthodox opinion with its arguments

The Reformed do indeed acknowledge that the Scriptures frequently attribute to God human members—eyes, ears, hands, feet, heart—but that this does not occur except by a human way of speaking,¹⁰ and that it must be understood in a way worthy of God,¹¹ insofar as it is not these fleshly members, with their imperfections, that truly belong to God, but instead the perfections of these members, with every imperfection removed. Thus “eyes” does not denote anything in God except his knowledge, “hands” his power, “feet” his presence, “heart” his love. This is so without a doubt because (1) Scripture denies that God has a body (Rom. 1:23). (2) It presents God to us as invisible (Rom. 1:20), as Spirit (John 4:24) to whom belong no flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). (3) If God were made up of parts, he would be a composite thing, and thus would require someone to compose him who existed before him. For this reason, (4) he would be divisible and corruptible, which contradicts the apostle (Rom. 1:23). Moreover, (5) neither would God be infinite, because an infinite whole cannot come together from many finite members. Nor in addition (6) would he be most simple. Thus, (7) God would be, by all accounts, imperfect.

Objections

If they should allege for their case: (1) that in the Scriptures God is described with body parts, we respond that this is said in a human way¹² and must be understood in a way worthy of God. (2) If they allege that we read often in

9. Audius in fourth century Syria read Genesis 1:26–27 to mean that God’s form was the basis for human creation. E.g. Heresy 70, “On the schism of the Audians” in Epiphanius, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III. De Fide*, trans. F. Williams (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 412; cf. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* in *PL* 2:161–62; *ANF* 3:601–2; idem, *Adversus Marcionem*, 2.16 in *PL* 3:302–4; *Against Marcion*, 2.16 in *ANF* 3:309–10.

10. ἀνθρωποπάθειαν

11. θεοπρεπῶς

12. hoc fieri ἀνθρωποπαθῶς

the Old Testament that God appeared to men, I respond, He appeared either without any human form, manifesting his extraordinary presence only by some extraordinary sign, or, if he was present in some form, it was not his own but one that he had assumed. He appeared not in his own form but in a vision, the way Jesus appeared to Stephen, standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56), and to Paul (Acts 9:10, 12), the same way that Peter saw a vessel descending from heaven filled with animals (Acts 10:11–12; 11:5–6).

3. *Does a subtle body belong to God?* The divergence of opinions

X. It is asked, third, if body parts do not belong to God, whether a body does, or at least a subtle one. Just recently, we heard the opinion of certain Fathers, represented by Tertullian. Vorstius, so that he might covertly undermine the personal union of the two natures in Christ (which he did not dare deny openly), taught that God was a subtle body, whose power was indeed everywhere, but whose essence was in heaven only, from which it very closely follows that the Christ who lived on earth was not united with the divine nature. The Reformed affirm with our Savior that God is Spirit, that is, immaterial substance, and thus utterly removed from having any body or matter, for the reasons which we gave in §§III–IV, and in the preceding section, reasons which, if you change a few details, with equal force foil the Socinians and the Anthropomorphites. Nor, moreover, are any other arguments available to the Socinians than the ones available to the Anthropomorphites.

4. *Can and ought God to be represented by images?* The diversity of opinions

XI. It is asked, fourth, whether God, who is Spirit, can and ought to be represented by statues and images. The pagans, since they considered their gods to be corporeal, as we have said, answer in the affirmative. The papists and Lutherans acknowledge that God is Spirit, and yet, from a love of images, teach that God can and ought to be portrayed, yet with this difference, that the papists teach not only that we should have images of God, but also that we should adore them with *latria*, which the Lutherans do not tolerate.

The arguments of the Reformed

The Reformed, because God is Spirit, admit neither opinion. For (1) a spirit, since it is immaterial and thus lacks a shape, cannot be portrayed, and also ought not to be (Isa. 40:18; Deut. 4:15), unless you wish to think God would require a task that no one can do. Accordingly, (2) God throughout the Bible resists with great zeal imaginations of this sort, for example, in the second commandment, in Acts 17:29, and elsewhere, since, that is, (3) “they change the glory of

the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man” (Rom. 1:23). Since (4) such images generate concepts that are vain, crass, and unworthy of God. Therefore, heathen philosophers are said to have become vain in such thoughts of theirs, having become fools (Rom. 1:21–22).

Objections

The papists and Lutherans do not have anything to argue for their images, except what we recently rejected in §IX, namely, that God quite often appeared in the Old Testament under certain forms, even human ones. The reply is easy: He never appeared for the purpose that he might be portrayed; indeed, that is what, throughout Scripture, he has forbidden as strictly as possible, just as we have said. But because this controversy concerns the second commandment, for now we will put other arguments to the side.

5. *Is it permitted, while praying, to put God before us under the form of a man?*

What the Lutherans think

XII. It is asked, fifth, whether it is permitted, while praying in divine worship, to put God before us under the form of an old man. Because the Lutherans, as we mentioned recently, have allowed the use of images in public worship, which cannot but breed such crass concepts in onlookers’ minds, they cannot criticize these concepts with any appearance of fairness. They believe that these sorts of concepts about God under the appearance of an old man occasion them no sin, provided that they do not believe that God’s essence actually has such a shape. (See Friedrich Balduin, bk. 2, ch. 2, case 1 in his *Cases of Conscience*,¹³ Andreas Prückner in his *Thousand Cases of Conscience*, and others.)¹⁴

What the Reformed say, and by what arguments

The Reformed, however openly they embrace the fact that it is lawful to have a concept of God, and even more, that it is most necessary—unless we want to be atheists!—nevertheless say that a concept of God under the form of a man, or of any corporeal entity at all, is altogether unlawful, because: (1) the Savior in John 4:24 commands us to have a concept of God that agrees with the nature of God, that defines God as Spirit, and that therefore leads to the result that God

13. Friedrich Balduin, *Tractatus... de casibus conscientiae* (Frankfurt: Caspar Wachtler, 1654), bk. 2, ch. 2, casus 1, pp. 75–77.

14. *Mille casibus consc.*: Prückner’s work is entitled *Manuale mille quaestionum illustrium theologicarum, praecipue practicarum* (Nürnberg: Wolfgang Maurits Endter, 1679). This is probably a reference to Philipp Müller’s abridgment, *Notae ad B. Dn. M. Andreae Prückneri mille quaestiones de casibus conscientiae* (Nürnberg: Wolfgang Maurits Endter, 1696).

is worshiped and adored in spirit, that is, spiritually, without any such forms, and in truth, meaning in thoughts that are true and that agree with the concept. (2) Such kinds of concepts about God are false. Since they do not agree with the God who is conceived, they are therefore unlawful. (3) These concepts of theirs are vain: "They became futile in their thinking" (Rom. 1:21). (4) They obscure the glory of the incorruptible God and, as it were, change it "into the likeness of the image of corruptible man" (Rom. 1:23). (5) Through these concepts, the heart is darkened and the mind rendered senseless: "Their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21). This darkening happens to the extent that they carry around in their mind concepts that are crass and unworthy of God. (6) Whoever worships God under such forms does not worship God, but an idol.

The objections of the Lutherans

Yet Balduin objects: (1) that since whenever we have a concept of God, and we therefore conceive a certain image of God, it is better to conceive of God under the image of a man rather than an image of anything else. I respond, Balduin presupposes that having a concept and conceiving an image are synonymous, when in fact they are worlds apart. For under what likeness or image will you conceive of a spirit as it exists in itself? But (2) God appeared in human form. I respond, We already answered this. God appeared (Gen. 18:2, Josh. 5:13, Dan. 7:9, and Isa. 6:1) so that those who saw might conceive of his extraordinary presence, and that whatever glory appeared they might ascribe to God. By no means did God appear so that they might thus conceive of an image inside themselves or might form one outside themselves, since he frequently prohibited this as strictly as possible.

The Practical Part

The first practice teaches us how, while praying and otherwise, we must think about God.

XIII. For the first practice, let us consider a rather important case of conscience that arises from what has been discussed: what sort of concept of God ought we to have in our prayers or in divine worship? It is presupposed that it is necessary that we should have some concept of God (Ps. 16:8), otherwise we would call upon nothing. Likewise, from the preceding paragraph, we presuppose that the concept of an old man, or of some sort of corporeal essence, here is invalid, because by this rationale we would invoke an idol instead of the true God. What kind of concept, then, is fitting here? And how must we think about God? I respond: (1) almost in the same way that we think about our own soul, which

we cannot think about under a corporeal form endowed with human members. (2) In the way that we think about a spirit (John 4:24) or about an immaterial substance which does not have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). He must be thought of just as we would think of: (3) an omnipresent being that fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:23–24), in whom we live, move, and have our being, and who is not far from us (Acts. 17:27–28); (4) an invisible being whom no one has seen and no one can see (1 Tim. 6:16); (5) an omnipotent being, superlatively good and kind, who therefore is most perfectly sufficient for infinite blessedness for himself, and for his own, and for all (Gen. 17:1), because he can abundantly satisfy all your desires (Ps. 37:4–5). And finally, (6) one must think about his most glorious attributes rather than his imperceptible essence, which is the way God presents himself to us for thinking about him (Ex. 34:6). And in this way we will see his posterior parts, so to speak, while his face, or his essence, cannot be seen or thought (Ex. 33:19–20).

The second practice rebukes hypocrites.

XIV. Then second, the spirituality of God marks out all those who worship God, who is Spirit, without their spirit, who draw near to God with their lips, though they are as far as possible from him in their spirit (Matt. 15:8; Isa. 29:13), who approach holy things with their feet but without their spirit, who pray to God with their tongues but not in spirit and in understanding (1 Cor. 14:14–15), who distribute alms and other good things with their hands but without their spirit, who are content to offer to God their exterior things, having preserved their interior things for themselves, for the world, and for pleasures, though God examines the heart or the spirit (Prov. 26:23), and indeed the whole heart (Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 30:6; Luke 10:27). Their worship stops short at mere bodily exercises, which are almost useless (1 Tim. 4:8). The Savior calls such persons hypocrites (Matt. 15:7), and their worship, however attractive it may be, is devoid of spirit and soul, and thus dead (which is said of faith in James 2:20, 26): it reeks before God just like a putrid cadaver. And for this reason he also drives these sorts of hypocrites away from his eyes, together with this worship of theirs (Isa. 1:13), and pronounces woes on them (Matt. 23:25–26)—indeed, he counts them as dung, which he shows by flinging it back into their face (Mal. 2:3; Amos 3:13–14).

The third practice commands us to examine our worship.

XV. So then, the third practice persuades us that we should carefully examine our worship, whether it, consistent with the divine nature, is in spirit and in truth. We will conduct such examination according to these criteria: (1) if in our

external worship, the spirit always joins the body, such that we glorify God in our spirit and in our body (1 Cor. 6:20), and not with the body only, or the lips, while the heart is absent, as we have warned. (2) If the spirit that joins the body in external worship is spiritual and not carnal, for that which is from the flesh is flesh, and that which is from the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6). And those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, and those who live according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5). (3) If the end of our external worship is not carnal—the preservation or increase of our reputation (Matt. 6:1), the provisions of this life (John 6:26), or the merit (as they say) of the work performed (1 Tim. 4:7–8)—but spiritual: to glorify God, to edify our soul, to promote our salvation; that is, to serve God in spirit (Rom. 1:9), and to work out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12). (4) If in worship, all the faculties of the soul exert themselves: the intellect, in focus and understanding, for this, according to the apostle, is what it means to pray in the spirit (1 Cor. 14:15); the will, in love (2 Cor. 5:14; Ps. 27:4), in desire (Ps. 84:1–2), in delight and in joy (Ps. 84:1–2; 43:4), in sadness on account of its torpor and weariness (Ps. 43:5). (5) If we are Christians and religious not only in public but also in secret, that is, in the spirit and not in the letter (Rom. 2:28–29). (6) If in simplicity of heart we have done whatever we do sincerely, as to the Lord, and not to men (Col. 3:22–23). Finally, (7) if we are intent on spiritual exercises, the denial of ourselves, the mortification of our passions, the imitation of Christ, on faith, hope, and love, more frequently and more fervently than on the external and corporeal things, indeed, if we are intent on external things for no other reason than to augment those internal things (1 Tim. 4:7–8).

The fourth practice commands that we devote our spirit to God. Why?

XVI. Fourth, the fact that God is Spirit teaches us that we should devote our spirit to God, since he is the one: (1) who rejoices and delights in spirit, “for the Father seeks such persons” (John 4:23), just as like seeks like (Rom. 8:5); (2) who is the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9) because he creates the spirit of man within him (Zech. 12:1); (3) who stamped and sealed our spirit as his own property so that, because it bears the image of God as a stamp of his ownership, we might offer it back to God, its possessor (Matt. 22:20–21); (4) who bears many unique relations to our spirit, since he is not only the Creator of our spirit, as we have seen, but also its Redeemer (Ps. 31:6); its governor and Lord (Prov. 21:1); and its examiner (Jer. 17:10).

How?

But in what manner, then, will we devote our spirit to God? I respond: (1) By denying it, by disowning it, whereby we strip ourselves, so to speak, of that which belongs to our spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), which we do when we so refuse to follow its faculties—the intellect with its thought and wisdom, the will with its inclination and appetite (Matt. 26:39), and all the affections with their passions—as if they were not our spirit or our right. (2) By handing it over, by surrendering it, by consecrating it, when we deny our spirit to ourselves and devote it instead to God—“you do not have a right to yourself,” and therefore, “glorify God with your body and spirit, which are his” (1 Cor. 6:19–20); when we hand over our spirit to him (Prov. 23:16; 2 Cor. 8:5) so that it may live, not for itself (Rom. 14:7–8; Gal. 2:19–20), but for his glory (1 Cor. 10:31), according to his will (1 Peter 4:2, 6), and with him working in us (Phil. 2:13). (3) By purging the spirit from all impurity (2 Cor. 7:1; Jer. 4:14), that is, that it may be fit to be received by God (Isa. 1:15–16), regarding which we just recently said many things expressly. (4) By adorning our spirit with every virtue (1 Peter 3:3–5), namely, that it might be more readily received and possessed by God (cf. Matt. 12:44). (5) By entrusting it into the hands of God, who redeems it (Ps. 31:5), who washes and cleanses it in the blood of the Son (Ps. 51:9–10), who renews it by the work of his own Spirit (Ezek. 36:26–27), and who at last receives it in the hour of our death (Luke 23:46).

The fifth practice concerns the cleansing of our spirit.

From what kind of uncleanness?

XVII. Specifically, fifth, because God is Spirit, we should more and more cleanse our spirit, which has been stamped in his image and consecrated to him, from all impurity (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 5:23; Jer. 4:14). From what sort of impurity? I respond, That which (1) the Savior notes in Matthew 15:19–20, which (2) the apostle notes when he surveys the works of the flesh, that is, of the carnal spirit (Gal. 5:19–20): not only adulteries and impurities, but also idolatries, wrath, contentions, and so forth. The chief of them are (3) spiritual ignorance and blindness, pride, unbelief, and hypocrisy. They are, moreover, (4) all lusts, which James calls “lusts of the spirit” (James 4:5), which war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11).

On account of what reasons?

But for what reasons, then, will we do this? I respond: (1) Because God is a spirit who, just as he delights in spiritual duties, is in the same way most of all offended by spiritual impurities. (2) Because those impurities are diametrically

opposed to the perfection of the law, which is spiritual (Rom. 7:14). (3) Because sin is strongest in the spirit, inasmuch as the spirit is its source (Matt. 15:19). (4) Because by spiritual filthiness we are made just like devils, who are nearly nothing but spiritual wickedness.

By what means?

Finally, by what helps will we cleanse our spirit? I respond: (1) We should daily circumcise our hearts (Jer. 4:4). (2) We should wash and sprinkle ourselves, through faith, in the blood of Christ (Jer. 4:14; Heb. 9:14; Acts 15:9). (3) We should carefully guard each motion, thought, desire, and delight of our heart, so that they may not be contaminated from without by its objects, and these contaminate our spirit (Prov. 4:23). To this end, (4) we should have the Word of God as our norm within our heart (Prov. 4:20–21). (5) We should continually weary God with our prayers, that he create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit in our inner parts (Ps. 51:10), that according to the covenant of grace, he put his law within us, that he write it on our heart (Jer. 31:33), and likewise that he put a new spirit within us (Ezek. 36:26–27).

The sixth practice, spiritual worship. What is it?

XVIII. Given these things, the fact that God is Spirit demands, sixth, that we worship him in spirit and in truth, as the text also concludes. That is, we are to worship (1) not only in body, but also in spirit; not corporeally only, but also even more, spiritually. This is proven by analogy in §§XIV–XV. (2) Not only in public worship with others but also in private worship with God and our soul alone (Matt. 6:6), in pious conversations with ourselves, meditations by which we pour out, as it were, our spirit onto God's bosom (Ps. 42:4), particularly (3) in matters of the gospel, of godliness, charity, petitions, and intercessions, after the example of Paul: "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel, that ceaselessly I make mention of you in my prayers" (Rom. 1:9). And we should do this frequently, indeed incessantly, and with an attention so careful that it is as if we approached all our holy tasks bound in the spirit (Acts 20:22). Finally, we should also approach them sincerely, so that we can call forth God as our witness.

For what reasons must this be observed?

Spiritual worship of this sort (1) agrees with the spiritual nature of God (John 4:24); (2) is sought and desired, in fact even demanded by God (John 4:23; Prov. 11:20; 1 Chron. 29:17), to such a degree that (3) the spiritual is the whole of all our worship (1 Sam. 12:24; 1 Kings 2:4; Matt. 22:37), and without the

spirit there is no worship whatsoever (Matt. 15:8), or rather, there is evil, hypocritical worship (Matt. 15:7), worship that is abominable, like a corpse without a spirit (James 2:17, 26), however it be otherwise attractive, as is evident in Ahab (1 Kings 21:27) and in Jehu (2 Kings 10:29–31). Moreover, (4) the greatest defects and failures in external worship are redeemed and offset by the presence and truth of the spirit (2 Chron. 30:18–19). Finally, (5) so great in God's eyes is the presence of the spirit, and truth and sincerity, that he defines evangelical perfection by it, and declares those who have it perfect (Job 2:3) and righteous (Ps. 32:11; 97:11; 2 Kings 20:3).

The seventh practice, spiritual prayers

XIX. We would add, seventh, that particularly in prayer, we should be occupied in spirit and truth, which is clearly demanded in the text. That is, we should pray not only with the voice or lips, nor only in the external actions (Isa. 1:15), not restricted to customary formulas of praying, but with a present mind, with understanding and attention (1 Cor. 14:15), and thus also with faith, hope, and love, with suitable preparation of the mind before praying, and finally, with vigorous desire and expectation, after prayer, of obtaining what we sought. We would add this, as I said, if fear of prolixity did not restrain us, and it did not already belong to its own chapter, on prayer.¹⁵

SECOND THEOREM—The Simplicity of God

The Dogmatic Part

Following the spirituality of God is his simplicity. Scripture teaches it.

XX. The consequent of spirituality is simplicity: not a shared and restricted simplicity, which applies to created spirits because they are spirits only analogically, but rather, an original and omnimodal simplicity, because God is Spirit from himself, and is called Spirit univocally. Scripture teaches this simplicity whenever it represents God, not only in composite and concrete terms, but in simple and abstract terms, when it calls him love (1 John 4:8, 16), life (1 John 5:20), light, in which there is no darkness (1 John 1:5), that is, a deity in which there is nothing heterogeneous, a deity that is nothing but pure deity.

Reason confirms it.

XXI. And this is true because he is: (1) the absolutely first being. Accordingly, if he were, by composition, one thing and another thing, there would be more than one first being, and of these beings, none would be absolutely first, because it would not be prior to all the other parts that coexist with it. In addition, if he were composite, he would require someone to compose him who was prior to the first being. (2) Independent, which would not be so, if his whole depended upon component parts, if the union of his parts depended upon someone to unite them and to preserve their union. (3) Immutable, for when there is a unification of parts by composition, then there can also occur a dissolution of those parts, and thus an alteration. (4) Infinite, for composing parts, since they cannot but be finite, cannot come together to produce something infinite. (5) Eternal, for that which has been composed has, from the one who composes it, a beginning through its construction, and can have an end through the dissolution of its parts. (6) Most perfect, not only because it is, in the consensus of all, more perfect to be goodness itself (for example) than merely good, wisdom itself than merely wise, but also because a part contains various imperfections, since it does not possess the perfection of the whole, and because a part requires someone to have made it a part of the whole. Finally, (7) if there is composition in God, then he is not the light in which there is no darkness, not pure deity: for parts, as they are doubtless diverse, could not constitute such pure deity. Therefore Justin rightly says in *Questions and Answers to the Orthodox*, question 144, “God does not exist in the likeness of the creature, such that what he is and has should be understood in terms of composition, as with created nature. And even in regard to the fact that God does possess a nature, he should still be understood in the same way: what he is and what he has, he possesses beyond all composition.”¹⁶

The simplicity of God excludes composition of five types.

XXII. By his simplicity, God is entirely free from all composition, in which one thing and another thing come together. Specifically, he is free from composition: (1) of quantitative, corporeal parts, for he is a spirit (from the preceding theorem), whereas parts belong to a body; (2) of essential parts, matter and form, which likewise do not occur except in a body; (3) of substance and accident, because all accidents are considered more imperfect than their substance, which is not fitting for the most perfect being, and because accidents are thought to perfect their substances, and that would thus make his substance liable to change

16. Pseudo-Justin Martyr, *Quaestiones et responsiones ad Orthodoxos* in *Corpus apologetarum Christianorum saeculi secundi*, ed. J. C. T. Otto, 3 vols. (Jena: 1876–1881), vol. 3.

and corruption; (4) of essence and existence, because his existence is nothing but the act of his essence, and not something different, which would imply composition; (5) of genus and difference, for the being who is above being¹⁷ fits into no category with anything else, but stands apart in all respects from all things, and arranges all things into classes of genus and species, and accordingly there is also nothing in him that can be restricted by difference. In addition, because of his simplicity, not only is God free from all composition within himself, but also, he enters into no ordinary composition outside himself, for in such composition it is presupposed that each composing part is more imperfect than the whole. At the same time, we do not deny the fact of extraordinary composition in Christ's hypostatic union, because such does not connote an imperfection of this sort, since in this type of composition, the assuming nature possesses by way of eminence whatever there is of perfection in the nature assumed. For which reason, God with the creature does not speak of a greater perfection than do the two separately.

The Elenctic Part

It is asked: 1. Is God a most simple being?

XXIII. It is asked, first, whether is God a most simple being. The heathen, since they held their gods to be human, that is, illustrious men; the Anthropomorphites, because they taught that man was formed according to the image of the divine members; certain Fathers, among whom is Tertullian, perhaps because they considered substance and body as synonyms, so that God would not become an accident; the Socinians, so that they might have a finite God, existing only in the heavens, who accordingly could not be united with the human nature of Christ, since it existed only on the earth, and in addition so that they might hold that God is set against his own essence by those things which, in the business of predestination, suit the fancy of the human will, which changes every hour, though God's essence is not changed—all these deny that God is a most simple being. The Reformed, on the contrary, teach that God is in all ways most simple, from the Scriptures and reasons which we indicated in §§XX–XXI.

The chief points which our adversaries give are: (1) that human members are attributed to God, to which we have already given a satisfactory answer.¹⁸ (2) That external actions differ from the agent himself. I respond, Indeed the thing produced extrinsically by an action does differ, though not the power and producing action. Nor does the relation with what is produced, which from

17. οὐσία ὑπερούσιος

18. §IX

the production belongs to the producer, make that producer a composite. For that relation is not a being of any sort, nor does it imply composition in God (for things are related to something, not in something).¹⁹ (3) That even internal actions (e.g. the decrees) undoubtedly differ from the agent, the one who decrees. I respond, Indeed they do differ from the thing decreed, but not from the act of decreeing, and that the relation that exists between these two things is not, in regard to either, a relation that can make him composite. (4) That his attributes differ from his essence, for example, his mercy from his avenging justice. I respond, They do not differ except in their objects and effects, and through the relation which exists between the attribute and its object. (5) That there are three persons in his one essence. I respond: (a) His essence does not differ from his personality except in our reason or conception, which can think of one thing only while it is not thinking of another thing. For God's personality is nothing other than the subsistence of his essence, and his subsistence is nothing other than the actual existence of his substance, which without doubt does not differ from the God who himself exists. And (b) the persons in the abstract differ among themselves, not as three subsistences, but as three modes of one subsistence, which, because they are not beings, do not compose, but only distinguish and limit, as we will teach more distinctly in its own place.²⁰ (6) That two natures are united in one person. I respond, From this there arises no composition in God, although there does arise an extraordinary composition in the God-man, of which we have spoken.²¹

2. Is the omnimodal simplicity of God taught in the Scripture?

XXIV. It is asked, second, whether Scripture teaches the omnimodal simplicity of God. The Anthropomorphites or Audians, Vorstius in his *Theological Treatise on God* and his *Notes on Disputation 3, on the Nature of God*,²² and Socinus in his *Defense of the Criticisms against the Assertions of the College of Poznań* and his *Racovian Catechism* (ch. 1),²³ entirely expunge the simplicity of God from the number of the divine attributes, by their hypotheses which we noted while attending to the preceding controversy. The Remonstrant Apologists, in their

19. *relata enim sunt pròς τί, non ἐν τινί*

20. 1.2.24 §IX

21. §XXXII, above

22. Conrad Vorstius (1569–1622), *Tractatus theologicus de Deo sive de natura et attributis Dei* (Steinfurt: Theophilus Caesar, 1610), 194–210.

23. Faustus Socinus (1539–1604), *Defensio animadversionum Fausti Socini Senensis in assertiones theologicas collegii Posnaniensis de trino et uno Deo* in idem, *Assertiones theologicae de trino et uno Deo, adversus novos samosatenicos* (Raków: Sebastian Sternacius, 1618), 94–462.

Apology, do not indeed deny the simplicity of God, for in that way they would cross into the camp of the Socinians, who have been banned from our shores by our civil laws.²⁴ But lest they be forced to ban the Socinians from their own communion, they sum up the issue of the simplicity of God with these three axioms: (1) there is not one iota concerning the simplicity of God in Scripture; (2) the whole doctrine of it is metaphysical, whether you consider the term or its content; (3) it is not necessary to believe the simplicity of God. Among the Reformed, there was always, all the way to the time of Socinus, a great consensus concerning divine simplicity. At this point, our only task is to demonstrate that Scripture teaches the simplicity of God, and thus, that it is no mere philosophical dogma, but one necessary to believe.

The orthodox arguments

The Reformed endeavor to maintain this by these arguments: (1) Scripture teaches that God is Spirit (John 4:24), and to all people, “spirit” speaks of a being that is immaterial, and accordingly, simple. If they insist that both angels and our souls are called spirits in the Scriptures, but they are not therefore omnimodally simple, an easy response comes to mind: The angels and our souls are spirits only by analogy, in a diminished sense, because they, of all creatures, most closely approximate the spirituality of God, since God is properly and most perfectly Spirit. (2) Scripture teaches that God is the absolutely first being (Rev. 1:8; 22:13; Isa. 41:4; 44:6; Rom. 11:35–36), who accordingly does not admit a prior being who would have composed God’s various parts. (3) Scripture teaches that he is immutable (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17; Ps. 102:26–27; Heb. 1:11–12). But what has been composed also can be broken up, and thus changed. (4) Scripture teaches that God is incorruptible (Rom. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:17). If, however, God were composite, he could be corrupted. Since he cannot be changed into something better, because nothing exists better than God, nor into something equally good, because this cannot exist either, then nothing remains except that he must be changed into something worse, and thus be corrupted. (5) Scripture teaches that God is infinite, as the one who fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:23–24), who is higher than the heavens (Job 11:8), whom the heaven of heavens does not contain (1 Kings 8:27). But what is composite is finite, since the parts that compose it are always finite, being of course less than the whole, and since, then, from finite parts, an infinite whole cannot come together. (6) Scripture teaches that God is most perfect (Job 11:8; Matt. 5:48). But a being that is simple as well

24. Simon Episcopius (1583–1643), *Apologia pro confessione sive declaratione sententia eorum* (1629).

as most simple, is more perfect than a composite, and what has been composed consists in imperfect parts. These things should be sufficient, especially if they be considered together with §§XX–XXI.

Objections

Yet they allege in vain to the contrary: (1) that not even one iota about simplicity exists in the Scriptures. I respond: (a) We have already proven the contrary; (b) the term does not exist expressly, yet it does exist in its force and meaning.²⁵ Moreover, it is hardly solid to conclude, because the term does not exist expressly in this way, that it absolutely and entirely does not exist. For in this way, (c) neither the Trinity, nor the personal union, nor satisfaction, nor other mysteries, are taught in the Scriptures, since they happen not to appear there in as many syllables. (2) That the omnimodal simplicity of God denies that the free actions and volitions of God are truly distinct from his essence, which is not consistent with Scripture (Ezek. 18:24; 33:11). I respond, This fundamental assumption is false.²⁶ The freedom of the divine volitions stands no less safe and sound because, with no interference from God's simplicity, he acts according to counsel, from choice,²⁷ in which freedom consists. (3) That the attributes in God's essence imply composition. I respond, They do not imply composition because they do not differ from his essence, except in our manner of conceiving them. Nor do they differ among themselves except in our reason, which finds the foundation of distinguishing them in the variety of their operations and in the relations that arise from them. (4) That the three persons in one essence argues for composition in God. I respond, They do not argue for composition, because persons do not differ from essence in God, but rather in us and in our conception. Nor also do the persons differ between themselves except through their modes of subsisting, which, because they are not things or beings, but only modes of beings, do not compose, but only distinguish.

The Practical Part

1. The omnimodal simplicity of God discloses to us the foundation of every perfection in God and of every imperfection in the creatures.

XXV. Thus now for practice. Because the spirituality of God generally coincides with his simplicity, and the Savior deduces some sort of simplicity from spirituality (Luke 24:39), so also theologians, by God's omnimodal spirituality,

25. διανοία

26. hoc primum ψεῦδος

27. ἐκ προαιρέσει

want his simplicity to be understood. It remains that there are several practical uses, which we just recently dealt with under divine spirituality, that can be taken up, with the necessary changes made, in regard to divine simplicity. But to those, we will briefly add the following. First, then, the omnimodal simplicity of God reveals the foundation of both the perfection of God and the imperfection of creatures; indeed, of the divine perfection, because, by his omnimodal simplicity, he is pure and sheer deity, in which nothing is or can be that is less perfect than infinite deity itself. Each and every one of his attributes—wisdom, goodness, grace, truth, holiness, righteousness, power, and so forth—are the very deity itself. For which reason, not only in the concrete, as they say, but also in the abstract, are these attributes declared of God, such that he may be called not only wise, good, gracious, and so forth, but rather, wisdom, goodness, holiness, and life itself. And this is so not according to amplification, as in human rhetoric, nor in the manner of courtiers or dinner guests, when, for example, we salute a wise man as wisdom itself, for we can never declare too much good about the highest and infinite good. Because of all these things, he is called the light in which there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5), that is, there is such an identity in his essence and attributes that in him there is found no darkness, no heterogeneity, no imperfections. The foundation and root of all these things is in the omnimodal simplicity of God. And it is taught to us in the Scriptures for this purpose, that (1) we may glorify God because of it, as it is the root of his every perfection. It is known that in the Scriptures the majesty and glory of God is designated by light, and thus he is said to dwell in light inaccessible (1 Tim. 6:16) and to clothe himself in light (Ps. 104:2). So then the Philosophers are condemned because, though they knew his deity, they did not therefore glorify him as God (Rom. 1:20–21). That (2) from his simplicity, we may depend wholly on God in whatever circumstance, however adverse, because he is (a) our light (Ps. 27:1); (b) love itself (1 John 4:8, 16), by which he cannot but love his own and confer all saving blessings upon them (Rom. 8:32). In addition, he is (c) our salvation, for he is able and willing to free his own from every evil (Ps. 27:1). Indeed, he is (d) eternal life (1 John 5:20), for he is able to be the fount and source of all life (Ps. 36:10). That (3) from all those things, we may glorify God as most simple goodness, by which he is called the only one who is good (Matt. 19:17), and that we would do so by faith, repentance, a zeal for pleasing him, and especially by covenanting with him, for how blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah (Ps. 33:12)! So far we have seen that the omnimodal simplicity of God has revealed the foundation of every perfection in God. It likewise reveals the foundation of every imperfection in the creatures, because all, to the last one, are composite, and in them, or at least in most all of them, we see a

perpetual mixture of good and evil, by which, if perhaps they can offer some profit as good creatures, they can likewise injure as evil creatures; if they can gladden, they can likewise embitter, and if they were entirely good, they are nevertheless, on account of composition, only mutably good. And this is what should direct us never to attribute too much to any sort of creatures, or at least not to depend upon them as upon God, who is most simple, most pure perfection and goodness.

2. It teaches us to lean in simple rest upon God alone.

XXVI. And even more, second, because God is most simple, and he thus gives simply (ἀπλῶς, James 1:5), that is, he gives himself, all that he is, and all his attributes, which, by simplicity, are inseparable—his wisdom, power, goodness, and grace—devoting them to us, let us also then with a simple and whole heart, rest in God alone, and because of his integrity and uprightness (which coincides with his simplicity), let us promise him all that is ours (Ps. 25:21). For this confidence, the divine simplicity supplies to us various grounds, since it is: (1) a pure goodness that profits us, in which there is no malice to harm us; (2) a universal goodness, which allows no exception (Ps. 34:9–10); (3) an unlimited and illimitable goodness, which cannot be restrained or impeded by any creature, no matter how powerful, which thus can be all things for us, and can supply all things to us, indeed, beyond what we ask or think in our mind (Eph. 3:20). Thus there is no reason that we should not say with David, “He is my portion” (Ps. 16:5), and with Asaph, “Whom have I in heaven? With you, I do not desire anything on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps. 73:25–26). To neglect this duty, what is that except by that very action to deny the simplicity by which God is the light in which there is no darkness? What is it except to set ourselves far from God (Ps. 73:27)?

3. It reminds us that we should attend to divine worship with a simple heart.

XXVII. Again, third, since God is simple, we should, in all our worship, devote ourselves with a simple heart (Matt. 10:16; Eph. 6:5), with simplicity of heart, as to Christ, with the simplicity and sincerity of God (2 Cor. 1:12), not with a double heart, which is attributed to hypocrites (Ps. 12:2), a heart which looks to itself, the world, temporal things, at the same time as it looks to God, but instead, with one simple heart, which is carried in one straight line to the one God.

What is this?

And indeed in this, three distinct things are included: (1) that the inward heart should be pure, that is, free from every admixture of corruption (Ps. 12:2–3), and likewise of every sinister intention, on account of which the Savior speaks of the simple eye (Matt. 6:22–23). Next, (2) that the heart, being pure and simple, should aim at one goal, the glory of God (Phil. 1:20–21), and subordinate to that, the salvation of its own soul, as well as the edification of its neighbor. (3) That the pure and simple heart should strive for its simple goal with a constant and (as much as possible) uniform endeavor. By lacking this, a person is called double-minded, unstable in all his ways (James 1:8).

Why must it be sought?

That we may more intently strive for a simple heart like this, we must consider the following: (1) we ourselves, in this effort, are striving to the imitation and likeness of the primary perfection of God, of that perfection which is the foundation of every perfection, the likeness of which is the chief perfection of the rational creature. This is what we call sincerity, which in Greek is ἀπλότης, and in Hebrew is פִּי, “perfection.” (2) Those who are pure in heart are called blessed by our Savior (Matt. 5:8; Ps. 73:1), just as on the contrary, (3) those who are double in heart are called monstrous, abominable, and cursed (Ps. 12:2–3; cf. 1 Kings 18:21; Hos. 10:2). Furthermore, (4) the foundation of all constancy is in simplicity, just as in duplicity is the foundation of all instability (James 1:8). And finally, that our heart may become simple: (1) it must be cleansed from every mixture of that which is foreign, of depraved desires (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 John 3:3), cleansed by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7) in sincere repentance (Jer. 4:14, 4). (2) We must fight against carnal desires, so that they do not contaminate our hearts (Gal. 5:17). (3) We must pray to God that he, according to the formula of the covenant of grace, would give us one heart (Ezek. 11:19) and create in us a clean heart (Ps. 51:10).

4. *It urges sincerity in our manner of life.*

XXVIII. And not in divine worship only must we work to achieve simplicity of heart, but also, fourth, in human life, according to the example of the apostle (2 Cor. 1:12), who lived with his Corinthian brothers in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in carnal wisdom, and who likewise also requires the same: “with simplicity of heart, fearing God” (Col. 3:22). What then does this mean? “To work heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Col. 3:23). For in this simplicity is our security (Ps. 25:21), both our tranquility and our boasting, whereas a deceitful life is an abomination to God (Ps. 5:6; Prov. 11:20).

5. *It moves us to the study of contentment.*

XXIX. Fifth, the divine simplicity teaches us to acquiesce to our lot, however simple it may be. For the more simple anything is, the more constant it is, and durable, whereas the more composite, likewise the more dissoluble and corruptible. Thus, God is most immutable because he is most simple, while on the contrary the angels, because they exist with qualities that are distinct from their essence, were able to be corrupted by sin, and material things are the more corruptible the more composite they are, just as we see if we compare stable chemical elements with substances that are mixed. When it comes to our lot, the exact same is true: the more simple, the more solid, and the more variegated from composition by wealth, honors, friends, the more mutable, and the more you are distracted by so many objects, the more you are liable to cares and anxieties (Luke 10:41), for the more you possess, the more you can lose. It is thus on this account that we should, in godly self-sufficiency,²⁸ accustom our soul to simplicity, and should substitute, for the variety of things, the one God who is most sufficient in every way for all things (Gen. 17:1), who is accordingly for us the one thing necessary (Luke 10:42). So then let us possess him as our lot, with a simple acquiescence, and other things as corollaries (Matt. 6:33), looking to the apostle, who urges this contentment (1 Tim. 6:6) and lights our way in it with his own example (Phil. 4:11–12).

28. αὐταρκεία