



# THE WONDERFUL WORKS OF GOD

*Instruction in the Christian Religion  
according to the Reformed Confession*

## Discussion Guide

by Charles Williams

## *The Wonderful Works of God*

### Discussion Guide

#### **I. Man's Highest Good (pp.1-7)**

§ 1 (pp.1-3): What is man's highest good? What distinguishes man from the rest of creation with respect to God, and the enjoyment of him? Why is creation unable to satisfy man's deepest longings?

§ 2 (pp.3-6): What great goods can pursuing *science*, the *arts*, and *humanitarianism* obtain? What limitations do each of these contain? // What distinguishes a knowledge of science, philosophy, and the humanities from the wisdom of God? Must the two be at odds with one another? In what ways do we find them at odds with one another in the heart of man? // What happens when we make these great goods (philosophy, art, humanitarianism) our ultimate good? // Where is man's starting point for wisdom (Prov. 1:7)? How ought the knowledge and wisdom of God order our knowledge of science, art, and philanthropy?

§ 3 (pp.6-7): What great paradox did Augustine conclude resides in the heart of man with respect to the pursuit of God as man's highest enjoyment and good? Where does this enigma find its solution?

#### **II. The Knowledge of God (pp.8-15)**

§ 1 (pp.8-10): How does man come to enjoy God as his highest good (John 17:1-3)? How do such realities shape the church's confession of faith?

§ 2 (pp.10-15): In what ways does the knowledge of God in Christ differ from knowledge of anything else? How does the *origin*, *object*, and *essence* of the knowledge of God inform the nature and content of faith in God? // What is theology, and how should the study of it be pursued?

#### **III. General Revelation (pp.16-27)**

§ 1 (pp.16-18): What difficulties arise when studying inanimate objects? Living things? Man himself? God? // What conditions are needed for us to know God?

§ 2 (pp.18-21): What is meant by the term *revelation*? In what forms has God's self-disclosure come? // What features characterize God's revelation? // Can there be any revelation from God if he is not a personal God? Why or why not? // Can man's knowledge of God ever equal God's own knowledge of himself? Can we still know God truly, even if our knowledge is not exhaustive? // What is man's purpose in knowing God? // More than all else, what is the highest way in which God has revealed himself to man?

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§ 3 (pp.21–22): In what way is the Christian the *least* narrow-minded individual among all mankind? In what way is the Christian the *best*-equipped to recognize the true, the good, and the beautiful in nature and in history? // What is meant by *general* and *special revelation*? What distinguishes the two? What common characteristics do they share? // What is meant by *common* and *special grace*, and how do they relate to one another?

§ 4 (pp.22–25): How does Scripture order us to see God's self-revelation in creation and providence aright? What aid does this give to fallen man? // How does every creature reveal something of God's excellencies and perfections to the rest of creation? // What does God disclose about himself through this general revelation? // How does God's self-disclosure through nature and history speak against the errors of polytheism, deism, and atheism? // Describe six ways or evidences in which general revelation attests to God's eternal self-existence. Are such evidences enough to *compel* men to believe? Are they sufficient to render defenseless the claims of the atheist (Rom 1:20)? In what ways do these six evidences speak to man, not only as a *rational*, but also as a *moral*, being?

§ 5 (pp.26–27): In what ways has God implanted a knowledge of himself within the heart of man? How does this implanted capacity *within man* to know God accord with God's revelation of himself *external to man*? // What elements identify this 'increated sense of Divinity'?

#### **IV. The Value of General Revelation (pp.28–44)**

§1 (pp.28–29): What purpose does general revelation serve? What dangers come in overestimating the value of general revelation? What dangers come in underestimating its value? How can we guard ourselves against both errors? // How does Genesis 1–11 enable us to understand mankind's present plight?

§ 2 (pp.29–30): Why is it necessary to recognize the interdependence of general and special revelation in considering the human condition? What 'special revelation' did all mankind, even in the earliest stages of history, carry with them? Did all mankind continue to hold fast to this special revelation of God?

§ 3 (pp.30–32): Was false religion endemic to human origins? When and in what manner did it arise? // What features distinguished the religious character of the children of Seth from the descendants of Cain?

§ 4 (pp.32–33): What does the flood, and the covenant that followed, tell us, both of the heart of man, and the grace of God? // What characterizes God's 'covenant of nature' with mankind after the flood? How does this differ from God's 'covenant of grace' with the redeemed?

§ 5 (pp.33–34): Why has God sustained and maintained the world after the flood? How does this differ from his care for the world at its creation?

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§ 6 (pp.34–36): How did man’s attempted mutiny at Babel lead to the confounding of mankind into multiple tongues and nations? How can mankind ever be reunited? // After Babel, which nation became the chosen bearer of God’s special revelation?

§ 7 (pp.36–37): Does Israel’s chosen status mean that God ceased caring for the rest of the nations altogether? In what ways did he continue to care for them? Did God leave himself without witness among the nation? How has he continued to reveal himself to them?

§ 8 (pp.37–39): Describe some basic features common to every human civilization after Babel. Do Scripture and history characterize them as ‘primitive’ peoples, or otherwise? To what do their common ideas and traditions point?

§ 9 (pp.39–42): Why does assessing the whole history of civilization from a religious and moral perspective lead to disillusionment? Despite many mighty cultural achievements, what above all else characterizes mankind’s fundamental attitude toward God? // Did human religion evolve from a state of primitive polytheism to a sophisticated monotheism? Why or why not? // What dangers befall us when we abandon our belief in the one true God?

§ 10 (pp.42–43): Though true that some world religions or philosophies have attempted great moral or religious reforms among the nations; nevertheless, how do these religions differ only in *degree*, and not in *kind*, from the rest of the pagan idolatries of mankind?

§ 11 (pp.43–44): What value does general revelation (history and nature) hold, and what are its limitations? For all the good that the wisdom of this world can offer, what does it lack?

### **V. The Manner of Special Revelation (pp.45–56)**

§ 1 (pp.45–47): In what ways does the inadequacy of general revelation demonstrate the need for special revelation? // Why is special revelation a necessary to guide to understanding God’s general revelation? // Though general revelation may speak to the necessity and possibility of special revelation, can it say anything about its reality? Why or why not?

§ 2 (pp.47–49): What is the basis upon which we receive God’s special revelation? How has this mode of revelation been revealed (Heb 1:1)? What is the primary way in which Scripture characterizes the *manner* of special revelation?

§ 3 (pp.49–50): What does ‘speech’ as the manner of God’s special revelation tell us about the nature of God himself? How does pantheism fail to take this facet of God’s special revelation into account? // What distinguishes God’s speech in general revelation from his speech in special revelation? // What constitutes the central content of God’s special revelation?

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§ 4 (pp.51–53): Describe the various objective ways in which God has previously spoken (Heb 1:1). // How are *atheism*, *materialism*, *pantheism*, and *deism* unable to account for the reality of miracles? What do these views presuppose about God and his relationship to the world? How does Scripture's disclosure of God shatter these faulty images and enable us to see God's relationship to the world aright? What do miracles prove?

§ 5 (pp.53–55): In the Old Testament, what two things often accompany miracles? What, then, constitutes the *purpose* of miracles as part of God's special revelation? // In what ways do we confess that the person of Christ himself a miracle? // What do Christ's miracles discharged during his earthly ministry reveal? // Do miracles continue today, and if so, in what form? // How do miracles constitute a 'necessary and indispensable component' to revelation?

§ 6 (pp.55–56): What are some other subjective ways through which God has previously spoken? // Describe *manifestation* and *inspiration* as two kinds of God's special revelation.

### **VI. The Content of Special Revelation (pp.57–78)**

§ 1 (pp.57–59): Where did special revelation begin? Can we speak *meaningfully* of Israel's religion apart from considering the nature and content of special revelation? Is it enough simply to call Israel's religion 'ethical monotheism'? What lies at the core of Israel's religion?

§ 2 (pp.59–61): What constitutes the *content* of God's revelation to Abraham? Why can Paul, looking back to the whole of the Old Testament, contend that forgiveness of sins is received independent of the law's demands? By what means are these promises *given*?

§ 3 (pp.61–62): What divine promise encapsulates the content of special revelation? Is such a promise, given before the law at Sinai, nullified by Sinai (Gal 3:15ff)? By what means are these promises *received*?

§ 4 (pp.62–65): If salvation comes through faith apart from works, then why did God give the law to Israel? Describe two broad ways in which many have misunderstood the role of the law in Israel's religion. How does Paul explain the meaning and intent of the law? In what ways do the law and promise go together? In what ways do law and promise differ? // What negative and positive purposes does the law serve?

§ 5 (pp.65–71): How does God's special revelation to Moses *advance and build upon* his prior special revelation to Abraham? // What is the relationship between law and promise? Which is primary, and which secondary? Which is the goal, and which is the means? Did the giving of the law nullify the promises of God? // What three events constitute the foundation of Israel's history and the pillars on which its religious and ethical life rest? // How was the law given to aid the people of the promise? // What are the characteristic features of the law?

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§ 6 (pp.72–73): In what way was Israel's polity *not* hierarchical, even when she had earthly monarchs? // For what *purpose* did God give Israel the law? // How do the moral, ceremonial, and civil laws relate to each another? Are they at odds with one another?

§ 7 (pp.74–76): In recounting Israel's history the way that it does, what fundamental story does the Old Testament tell? Outline the main narrative features of this story, from Moses to the Exile.

§ 8 (76–77): Outline the main narrative features of Israel's covenant history, from the Exile to the time of the Messiah.

§ 9 (77–78): Where does the whole of Old Testament revelation find its fulfillment and focal point? // How does the Old Testament relate to the New Testament? How does this relationship differ from that of law and gospel? What is the relationship between Israel of the Old Testament, and the Church in the New Testament?

### **VII. The Holy Scriptures (pp.79–99)**

§ 1 (pp.79–80): What is the relationship between revelation and Scripture? How are the two similar? In what ways do they differ? // Is Scripture itself revelatory? What dangers befall us if we claim that Scripture is *merely* a record of revelation?

§ 2 (pp.80–83): How does Scripture demonstrate itself to be specially revelatory?

§ 3 (pp.84–86): What do we mean by the *inspiration* of Scripture? How ought we to distinguish between the operations of the Spirit in the world and church, and the manner in which the Spirit inspired the authors of Scripture? Why is such a distinction important?

§ 4 (pp.86–87): Were the prophets and apostles merely passive agents under the Spirit's inspiration? What Scriptural basis supports your conclusion?

§ 5 (pp.87–89): How can learning how the Bible gradually came into being benefit us? What dangers should we be on guard against in this noble pursuit?

§ 6 (pp.89–91): Describe three other genres of 'holy literature' that arose in Israel's history, under the Spirit's inspiration, after the giving of the Mosaic Law. // What features are common to all the Old Testament prophets?

§ 7 (pp.91–93): What similarities and differences exist between psalmody and prophecy? // Despite the diversity of psalmody within Scripture, what basic feature is common throughout the Psalms?

§ 8 (pp.93–94): What role does wisdom literature serve within inspired Scripture?

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§ 9 (pp.94–97): What relation does the New Testament have with the Old? What genres of literature are found in the New Testament? // What common features do the four Gospels share? What distinguishes each of them? // What purpose did the apostolic letters of the New Testament serve?

§ 10 (pp.97–99): Is it enough merely to study the historical context within which the Scriptures arose? What other sciences have enlarged our understanding of Scripture's content, and in what way do these further studies benefit us?

### **VIII. Scripture and Confession (pp.100–110)**

§ 1 (pp.100–102): What do we mean by the *canon* of Scripture, and how was it received in the life of the early church? // What role did Scripture play in the church's confession?

§ 2 (pp.102–105): What has the church been tasked to do with the Scriptures? // How do church *creeds* and *confessions* help preserve the teachings contained in the Scriptures? Do such creeds and confessions necessarily violate the authority of Scripture? Of what value are creeds and confessions in the life of the church? // How did the Nicene, Chalcedonian, and Athanasian Creeds uphold, preserve, and defend Scripture's teaching on the doctrines of Christ and the Trinity?

§ 3 (pp.105–107): In what ways did the Western Church depart from apostolic Christianity between the fourth and sixteenth centuries? How do these errors curtail the prophetic, priestly, and kingly office of Christ?

§ 4 (pp.107–109): What became the Reformational criterion for addressing ecclesiastical corruption in the sixteenth century?

§ 5 (p.110): How has the church handled its confession of Christ since the Reformation? What issues have threatened the unity of the church's confession?

### **IX. The Being of God (pp.111–125)**

§ 1 (pp.111–113): Describe two ways in which the content of Christian doctrine can be treated. What distinctive advantages does each approach hold? How do these separate approaches complement one another?

§ 2 (pp.113–115): In what way is God *knowable*? In what way can we say he is *unknowable* (or perhaps, more precisely, *unfathomable*)? // Why does scientific rationalism claim that God is not knowable?

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§ 3 (pp.115–117): What do we mean when we confess God's transcendence? Does God's transcendence pose a barrier to his intimate relation to his creation (i.e., God's immanence)? // What does it mean to speak of God *anthropomorphically*? Is such language appropriate? Why or why not? // What dangers arise when we deny God's absolute transcendence? What happens when we deny God's immanence? // Are God's transcendence and immanence at odds with one another? Defend from Scripture. // How does confessing an *ectypal* (or *analogical*) knowledge of God maintain a proper view of both God's transcendence and immanence?

§ 4 (pp.117–118): Describe the complementary ways in which the church has categorized God's attributes. What advantage does the Reformed categorization hold? // How does God possess his attributes in a way which no human being can possess with respect to his or her own?

§ 5 (pp.118–120): What do we mean when we confess that God's attributes are incommunicable? // Describe the following incommunicable attributes: *independence, unchangeableness (immutability), simplicity, eternity, and omnipresence*. What is lost if we deny such perfections in God?

§ 6 (pp.120–123): What do the communicable attributes reveal to us about God? How do the communicable attributes relate to his incommunicable attributes? // List and describe some of these communicable attributes.

§ 7 (pp.124–125): Describe the following attributes of God: *holiness, righteousness, justice, mercy, graciousness, integrity, faithfulness, blessedness, and glory*.

### **X. The Divine Trinity (pp.126–143)**

§ 1 (pp.126–128): What must we keep in mind when we join in the church's confession of the triune God?

§ 2 (pp.128–129): Is the doctrine of the trinity the unfortunate byproduct of wedding the Gospel to Greek philosophy? // In which way did God reveal himself as triune—at once or over time?

§ 3 (pp.129–131): Why was the oneness of God the necessary starting point and emphasis for Israel's knowledge of God? // Is the doctrine of the Trinity at odds with the oneness (or unity) of God? What hints do we see through the Old Testament of God's triune being and character?

§ 4 (pp.131–133): How is God's self-diversity revealed in fuller expression through his works of re-creation, even in the Old Testament?

§ 5 (pp.134–136): How do the following events reveal God as triune: the *incarnation, Christ's baptism and ministry, the atonement, and Pentecost*? // What is the threefold name by which God has revealed himself (Matt 28:19)? // Has God always been triune? // Provide Scriptural acclamation for the deity of the Father and the Son.



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§ 6 (pp.136–139): Provide Scriptural support for both the *personhood* and *deity* of the Spirit.

§ 7 (pp.139–141): Describe the following heresies: *Arianism* and *Sabellianism* (modalism). What is lost if we believe or confess such errors? // How do the following terms help safeguard the church's confession in the God of Scripture against such errors: *essence*, *person*, *trinity*, *eternal generation* and *procession*?

§ 8 (pp.141–143): How does the church's confession of God as Trinity preserve the integrity and harmony of passages such as Deut 6:4, with Matt 28:19 and 2 Cor 13:14? // How do *deism* and *pantheism* fail to do justice to God's self-disclosure in Scripture? // Of what benefit is the doctrine of the trinity to our own spiritual vitality? // Explain and defend the following statement: "the confession of the trinity is the sum of the Christian religion."

### **XI. Creation and Providence (pp.144–165)**

§ 1 (pp.144–149): How do we learn to know and glorify God? In what ways has God revealed himself through *creation* and *providence*? // What do the Scriptures tell us about God's creative power and counsel? How is such knowledge a source of comfort? // Why have the *empirical sciences*, *philosophy*, and *evolutionary theory* been unable to supply an answer to the origins of the universe? // What does Scripture tell us about the origin of things, how is it able to do so, and why does it do so?

§ 2 (pp.149–151): How have science and philosophy attempted to answer *why* and *to what end* God created the world? What answer does *Scripture* disclose, in contrast?

§ 3 (pp.151–159): Describe how creation came into being. // Does Genesis 1:1 summarize the *entire* act of creation or an *initial* act of creation? Defend from Scripture. // Assess the various ways in which the church has sought to understand the *length* of the days of creation. What interpretive difficulties exist? What can we positively confess about the creation week, despite these difficulties? // Does a world created as "very good" (Gen 1:31) rule out the possibility of further development? // What does Scripture teach us about creation? What attributes distinguish creation from its Creator?

§ 4 (pp.159–161): What is providence and how does it relate to creation? What errors befall us if we abandon trust in God's providential care over his creation?

§ 5 (pp.161–163): In what ways do creation and providence differ? What errors befall us if we fail to distinguish between creation and providence? // Though God superintends over all things, is he the author of sin? Why or why not?

§ 6 (pp.163–165): Distinguish these three features of providence: *maintenance*, *cooperation*, and *governance*. What is meant by each? // How can the doctrines of creation and providence comfort us?

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**XII. The Origin, Essence, and Purpose of Man (pp.166–202)**

§ 1 (pp.166–167): What does the Scriptural account of the creation week tell us about man’s place and purpose within the created order?

§ 2 (pp.167–171): How is Genesis 2 instructive toward the nature and purpose of *work, worship, and marriage*?

§ 3 (pp.172–174): What consequences arise if one repudiates the Scriptural account of the origins of the human race? What inadequacies present themselves in an anti-creational, evolutionary explanation of human civilization?

§ 4 (pp.174–178): Describe the major philosophical concepts underpinning contemporary accounts of evolutionary theory. In what ways do the following concepts fail to explain the world around us: *natural selection, the survival of the fittest, and transfer of acquired characteristics*? // Discuss: “the theory of the descent of man from lower animal forms does not rest on careful scientific investigation but is rather the postulate of a materialistic or pantheistic philosophy.”

§ 5 (pp.178–180): Is what we believe about human origins important? Why or why not? // Describe in what ways our understanding of human *origins* impacts our understanding of human *nature*. // According to Scripture, what constitutes the essence of man’s being?

§ 6 (pp.181–183): In what ways does the image of God distinguish man from beast?

§ 7 (pp.183–187): In what ways does the image of God distinguish man from angel?

§ 8 (pp.187–189): What does it mean when we confess that man has been made in the image and likeness of God?

§ 9 (pp.189–193): Does man continue to image God, even after the Fall? In what ways has Adam’s transgression corrupted the image of God in all mankind? // What does Reformed theology mean when it speaks of the “broader” and “narrower” sense of the image of God? // Contrast the Reformed view of the image of God with the Lutheran and Roman Catholic conceptions. How is the Reformed view able to address certain realities of human nature that others are not?

§ 10 (pp.193–195): Describe the ways in which man images God in soul and body.

§ 11 (pp.195–197): Through what means was man’s original righteousness expressed as he imaged God? // Is sin essential to human nature—even a fallen human nature? What would be the implication if this was true?

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§ 12 (pp.197–199): How does man's *vocation* relate to being made in the image of God? What happens when we find ourselves bereft of work? What occurs when we make work our chief end? // How does the Sabbath dignify man's work? // What does this six- and-one pattern of work and rest teach us about man's ultimate purpose?

§ 13 (pp.199–202): What prohibition did God give man in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:16–17)? What was the purpose of this prohibition? On what authority did God give this command? What consequence would befall man as image of God if he were to mutiny against his Creator? // How does this probationary command demonstrate that man's *destiny* was to be distinguished from his *creation*, even if he had obeyed? Though created "very good", what did man lack in his estate of innocence?

### **XIII. Sin and Death (pp.203–241)**

§ 1 (pp.203–205): What does Scripture say about the fall of angels? Why does it not say more? // Who tempted Eve?

§ 2 (pp.206–212): How does the Scriptural account of the fall of man provide unsurpassed insight into the psychology of sin? How do modernist accounts of sin fail to explain sin's origin and essence? // Is God responsible for sin? Why or why not? // Is sin essential to human nature or material things? What would be the implication if sin were essential to these things?

§ 3 (pp.212–213): What changed *within* man after Adam's first sin?

§ 4 (pp.213–215): How far has sin extended itself throughout the human race? // Why does Bavinck assert that the whole preaching of the gospel built on the assumption of the universality of sin?

§ 5 (pp.215–218): Wherein lies the connection between Adam's first sin, and the sinfulness that extends to every man, woman, and child in human history (Christ excepted)? // Evaluate the Pelagian explanation for the universality of sin. How does it fare in light of Scripture? How does it fare in light of human experience?

§ 6 (pp.218–220): Evaluate the semi-Pelagian explanation for the universality of sin. How does it fare in light of Scripture? How does it fare in light of human experience? // Are desires sinful in themselves? In what ways has sin corrupted human desire? // What is the criterion for evaluating whether or not a given thing is sinful, be it in our inclinations, affections, thoughts, words, or actions?

§ 7 (pp.220–222): How do Buddhist attempts at addressing sin parallel Pelagian theories of human depravity? In what ways are both views destitute of compassion and grace?

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§ 8 (pp.222–228): Evaluate Scripture’s organic view of the human race over and against Buddhist and Pelagian conceptions. // What makes Adam’s first transgression so unique that it had such an impact on the rest of mankind? // What parallel does Paul bring into view in Rom 5:12–21 between Adam and Christ? // Describe and defend from Scripture the constituent parts that comprise the Christian doctrine of original sin.

§ 9 (pp.228–231): Distinguish *original* from *actual* sins. Where do all sins find their root? // What are differing ways in which we can categorize sin? How are all sins organically related? // Evaluate and discuss: “It is not when we fix our attention upon a single sin, or upon the sins of a particular person or people, but when instead we fasten it upon the whole realm of sin in mankind, taking advantage of the light shed upon it by Scripture, then we for the first time understand what the real nature and intention of sin is. In principle and essence it is nothing less than enmity against God, and in the world it aims at nothing less than sovereign dominion.”

§ 10 (pp.231–233): Though all sins are organically related, are all sins therefore equal in *kind* or *degree*? Explain. // Is everyone as depraved as they could be? What differentiates the various levels of depravity in men? // What, if any, good is unregenerate man able to accomplish?

§ 11 (pp.233–235): In what complementary ways does Scripture speak of the hardening of the human heart? How does it come about? Who does the hardening? Apart from an intervention of divine grace, what is the final fruit of this lifelong hardening? // What is the blasphemy against the Spirit?

§ 12 (pp.236–237): How do modern conceptions of sin fail to do justice to its gravity?

§ 13 (pp.238–241): What sorts of penalties does God mete out against sin? // Are we to infer one’s own sin to be the underlying cause of any and every calamity that befalls him? // In what sense is death unnatural? In what sense do we say it is natural?

#### **XIV. The Covenant of Grace (pp.242–261)**

§ 1 (pp.242–244): In what ways does history testify to the justice of God? // What question do all religions attempt to answer, even if unsatisfactorily?

§ 2 (pp.244–246): Describe some ways in which all world religions differ from one another. In what ways are they similar?

§ 3 (pp.246–250): What distinguishes Christianity from all other religions? // What is this eternal counsel of God, which, according to Bavinck, is the bedrock upon which the whole of God’s redemptive work rests? What other terms does Scripture employ to describe the nature and purpose of this counsel? // What is meant by election, and what is God’s goal in it?

§ 4 (pp.250–252): Does God’s eternal counsel annihilate human volition and responsibility? // How can the knowledge of God’s eternal counsel comfort us?

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§ 5 (pp.252–255): How does Gen. 3:14–15 outline the content of the covenant of grace? // How do the *means* of possessing eternal life differ between Adam’s probationary period prior to the Fall (covenant of works) and the institution of the covenant of grace after the Fall? // Is it *presently* possible for any man to be able to possess eternal life through the covenant of works? Why or why not? // Describe the relationship between the counsel of redemption and the covenant of grace. What happens if we separate the covenant of grace from election (election itself constituting a principle part of the counsel of redemption)?

§ 6 (pp.255–261): In what way must we distinguish the covenant of grace from the counsel of redemption? // As we trace the organic unfolding of the covenant of grace throughout history, what characteristics should we note? // How does Christ fulfill the covenant of works and actualize the covenant of grace for God’s elect? // Is it possible for unbelievers in any sense to be part of the covenant of grace? In what way?

### **XV. The Mediator of the Covenant (pp.262–289)**

§ 1 (pp.262–263): Identify the three major issues with which the counsel of redemption is concerned. // What purpose does a mediator serve in nearly every religion? In what way does Christ differ in his role as mediator?

§ 2 (pp.264–265): What relation does the Son of God hold with the world, including prior to his incarnation? What insight does Scripture give into the eternal pre-existence of the Son? For what purpose was the Son sent? Was the incarnate Son aware of his eternal existence with the Father?

§ 3 (pp.265–268): What was Christ’s relationship to Israel? How are all believers, either under the old covenant or the new, saved? How were Old Testament saints given insight into the person and work of Christ (that is, the Messiah)?

§ 4 (pp.269–271): Into what two categories can we classify Israel’s messianic hopes and expectations? // According to Scripture, in what way is the kingdom of God to be established and fulfilled? // Trace these major messianic hopes through the biblical narrative, from the mother-promise to the time of David.

§ 5 (pp.271–273): Describe the origin and meaning of the term Messiah (Anointed One or Christ) as it unfolds throughout the period of Old Testament revelation.

§ 6 (pp.273–274): How is the messianic kingdom distinguished from all other earthly kingdoms? How does the messianic king supersede all other earthly kings?

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§ 7 (pp.274–279): Into what (surprising) circumstance and condition does Scripture speak of the Messiah’s arrival? What new condition will the Messiah usher in for his suffering people? What three offices does the Messiah occupy? How do these offices clarify the nature of his mission? // What relationship does the New Testament hold to the Old? // What does the New Testament say about Christ’s human nature? // What does the church confess concerning Jesus of Nazareth?

§ 8 (pp.279–281): Though truly and fully man, what features does Jesus possess, according to Scripture, that indicate he is more than a man? // Is there a conflict between the historical Jesus and the church’s confession of him? How do you know?

§ 9 (pp.281–284): What does Christ say about himself, particularly of his relationship to the kingdom of God? What works of Christ confirm that relationship? // Was Christ aware of his own identity and mission from the beginning? Defend from Scripture.

§ 10 (pp.284–286): What sort of mistaken conceptions regarding the person and work of the Messiah existed in Jesus’ day, among not only the Jews but also among Jesus’ own disciples? In what particular ways did Jesus work to engage or correct such misconceptions? // What sorts of titles does Jesus appropriate for himself, and how do these titles elucidate his identity and mission?

§ 11 (pp.286–289): How does the title “Son of God” reveal to us both Christ’s eternal identity and historical mission?

### **XVI. The Divine and Human Nature of Christ (pp.290–311)**

§ 1 (pp.290–292): What confession does the apostolic preaching make concerning Christ? What is the only way in which unbelievers can be convinced of the apostolic testimony?

§ 2 (pp.292–295): Did the apostles consider the historicity of Christianity to be central to the Christian faith? Defend from Scripture. // Why is the historical character of Christ’s life so central to the church’s confession of Christ?

§ 3 (pp.295–297): What significance do the titles “Christ” and “Lord” hold for the church’s understanding and confession of Jesus’ identity?

§ 4 (pp.297–301): On what Scriptural basis can we confess with confidence that Christ is both fully God and fully man? // Describe some early movements in the history of the church that rejected the *full* Scriptural testimony concerning the person of Christ.

§ 5 (pp.301–303): Describe the following heresies: *Arianism*, *Sabellianism*, *Nestorianism*, and *Eutychianism*. In what ways do each of these heresies fail to provide a robust and faithful confession of God and Christ? // What significance do the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Chalcedon (451) hold?

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§ 6 (pp.303–305): Of what value are creeds and confessions? // Can we use non-biblical terms (such as *Trinity*, *person*, *nature*, and *substance*) to describe biblical concepts? // Is Chalcedon's two-nature Christology merely a product of heathen philosophy? Does it matter if we agree with the doctrines espoused at Nicaea and Chalcedon? What dangers befall us if we cast off this confession?

§ 7 (pp.305–311): Did the Son limit or divest himself of divinity when he took on flesh and blood (cf., Phil 2:6–7)? // Was the Son *always* incarnate? // Was Christ's human nature eternally pre-existent? // Did Christ's human nature ever exist apart from his divine nature? // Did Christ's two natures ever meld into one single nature? // What dangers befall us if we deny any of these distinctions? // What advantage does the Doctrine of the Two Natures give us in our confession of Christ?

### **XVII. The Work of Christ in his Humiliation (pp.312–337)**

§ 1 (pp.312–314): To effect the salvation of mankind, was it enough for the everlasting Son to become incarnate? What else was needed to reconcile man to God?

§ 2 (pp.314–317): What three offices (or perhaps more pointedly, what threefold office) did Christ execute as our Redeemer? How does this office illuminate the nature of his incarnate work? // What distinguishes Christ's office from a trade or calling? // How does Christ's appointment to office fulfill man's original calling and purpose? // How does the Old Testament shed light on the nature of this threefold office? // Why are all three offices necessary to understand the work of Christ? What dangers befall us if we fail to confess that any of these offices belong to Christ?

§ 3 (pp.317–322): Why is the virgin birth an essential component of the gospel? What would be lost were it not true? // What kind of human nature did Christ derive from his mother: (1) unfallen or fallen; (2) weak or glorified? // Is Christ's humiliation restricted to his suffering on the cross (cf., Phil 2:6–8; Gal 4:4)? How is every moment of Christ's life, from his conception to the grave, one of deep humiliation? // Why did Jesus have to be baptized, if indeed he was sinless and in no need of repentance? What purpose did it serve? // Explain the significance of Jesus' temptations.

§ 4 (pp.322–325): In what way do the events leading up to Christ's public ministry prepare him for assuming the offices of prophet, priest, and king? // How did Christ execute the office of prophet? How does Christ's prophethood differ from all the other Old Testament prophets who preceded him? // What did Christ's preaching reveal? What was its content?

§ 5 (pp.325–327): Of what significance were Christ's miracles? In what way do Christ's miracles illuminate our understanding of his priestly office? // How does Christ's priesthood supersede the Aaronic priesthood under the Mosaic law?

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§ 6 (pp.327–329): What peculiar character do we find in Christ’s kingship? How did Christ demonstrate his legitimacy to the Davidic throne? How does Christ’s kingship supersede the kings of all the other nations?

§ 7 (pp.329–333): Why did Jesus die? Elaborate in terms of *cause*, *necessity*, and *purpose*. // Did Christ know he was going to die? // How does Christ’s priestly office frame our understanding of his death? // What purpose did the Old Testament sacrificial system serve?

§ 8 (pp.333–337): In what way does the Old Testament sacrificial system prefigure and find its consummate fulfillment in Christ’s death? // What did Christ’s death accomplish for sinners? // Distinguish what is meant by the passive and active obedience of Christ, and explain its significance in the accomplishment of redemption. Can the two be separated? // What is meant by substitutionary sacrifice [atonement]? What has this to do with Christ’s fellowship with sinners?

### **XVIII. The Work of Christ in his Exaltation (pp.338–366)**

§ 1 (pp.338–340): What is the principal benefit we receive from Christ’s humiliation? What two words does the New Testament use to describe this benefit?

§ 2 (pp.341–345): To whom is the gospel to be preached? Though the gospel is to be preached to all, does this mean that Christ’s benefits are destined for every individual? // Did Christ by his death and resurrection achieve the possibility of salvation for all, or accomplish the actual salvation of God’s elect? // Why is the exaltation of Christ crucial to the work of redemption? Was the cross not enough? Explain.

§ 3 (pp.345–348): What does the Reformed church mean when it confesses that Christ “descended into hell”? // Why must we confess that Christ’s resurrection was a *bodily* resurrection? // What distinguishes Christ’s body before and after his bodily resurrection from the dead?

§ 4 (pp.349–353): What does Christ’s physical resurrection mean, for *Christ*, for *the church*, and for *the world*? // What is lost if we contend Christ’s resurrection was only *spiritual*? // What other benefits do we receive by Christ’s exaltation?

§ 5 (pp.353–355): What do we mean when we confess that Christ “ascended into heaven,” and what benefit is that to us?

§ 6 (pp.355–359): In what way does Christ continue the work he began on earth in heaven? In what way does his exalted work differ from his time of humiliation? // How does Christ continue to execute the office of prophet in his exaltation? How does Christ speak to us from heaven as the consummate prophet?



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§ 7 (pp.359–363): How does Christ continually execute the office of Priest, in his humiliation, and in his exaltation? How does Christ aid us in our present afflictions as our Great High Priest?

§ 8 (pp.363–366): How does Christ continue to execute the office of king in his exaltation? What is meant when we confess Christ to be the Head of his church?

### **XIX. The Gift of the Holy Spirit (pp.367–384)**

§ 1 (pp.367–369): What is the first work Christ executes after his exaltation into heaven? // What is so significant about Pentecost?

§ 2 (pp.369–371): Can we rightly confess that the sending of the Son and the outpouring of the Spirit constitute the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecy? On what basis? // In what way does the ministry of the Spirit differ after Pentecost?

§ 3 (pp.372–373): What distinguishes the form of languages spoken at Pentecost from Corinth's experiences as found in their letters (1 Cor 14:2ff)? What was the purpose of the variety languages miraculously spoken at Pentecost?

§ 4 (pp.373–378): What sort of gifts does the Spirit distribute throughout Christ's church, and what is their collective purpose? Which gift, above all others, is to be pursued? // What is the chief redemptive work of the Spirit within the church?

§ 5 (pp.378–382): Where does the church find its unity? Of what character is this unity? // How do we come to share in Christ and his benefits?

§ 6 (pp.382–384): Which one term comprehends all the benefits that Christ gives in fellowship and union with his people? What particular benefits does he give by his Spirit? Into which three categories can we classify these rich benefits? What does the Spirit have to do with respect to these benefits?

### **XX. The Christian Calling (pp.385–419)**

§ 1 (pp.385–387): What two things does Christ use to include us in the fellowship of his person and benefits? // What is the relationship between the Word and Spirit? In what ways do both rationalism and mysticism fail to apprehend the proper relationship of Word and Spirit? // Assess how the following Christian traditions relate the Spirit to the Word: *Roman Catholicism*, *Lutheranism*, the *Reformed church*, the *Anabaptists*, and *Socinianism*.

§ 2 (pp.388–390): How is the Word a means of God's grace? // What does the Reformed faith intend when it speaks of a "general" or "material call"?

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§ 3 (pp.390–392): How does God’s special call differ from his general call? // Identify the two component parts to the Word of God. // How does “law” differ from “Old Testament” and “gospel” differ from “New Testament”? // Describe the relationship between law and gospel. What role does the law play within the Christian life?

§ 4 (pp.392–394): What does God reveal specially in Scripture that he does not reveal generally in nature?

§ 5 (pp.394–396): What accounts for the great spiritual inequality found among men—between those who serve the Lord—and those who do not? Where do men so often seek (wrongly) to locate the source of this inequality?

§ 6 (pp.396–398): Distinguish between the internal and external calls of God. // What power and value does the external call possess?

§ 7 (pp.398–400): In what way is the external call insufficient on its own to save a man? Why is this the case? // Explain how Word and Spirit relate to the external and internal calls.

§ 8 (pp.401–404): Describe the nature of the internal call. What spiritual problem exists for the unbeliever who hears the gospel, and how does the internal call address this problem?

§ 9 (pp.404–408): What is regeneration? How does the biblical notion of regeneration differ from eastern religious conceptions? // What images does Scripture vividly employ to portray this benefit of redemption in Christ? // Which faculties within a man are renewed in the act of regeneration?

§ 10 (pp.409–414): How are repentance and faith the fruit of regeneration? // What is saving faith, and how does it differ from a feigned faith? What factors inhibit true faith from taking root in one’s heart?

§ 11 (pp.414–419): What is repentance? // Why is the preaching of repentance necessary? // How is repentance concretely expressed in the lives of believers? // How does the Roman Catholic practice of penance fail to conform to the contours of a truly biblical repentance? // What distinguishes true from feigned repentance?

### **XXI. Justification (pp.420–450)**

§ 1 (pp.420–422): How can we summarize the contents of the benefits of redemption? // What is righteousness? How does God reveal his righteousness?

§ 2 (pp.422–425): How can any man, sinful as he is, ever be declared justly to be righteous? // How can Christians bless God with joy for his righteousness, knowing full well their own sinfulness?

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§ 3 (pp.425–428): How can a sinful man stand in the presence of a holy God and live? On what basis is man justified?

§ 4 (pp.429–430): What sort of righteousness does Christ demand, and how does one acquire such righteousness? // How is it that this righteousness is both the *condition* for entering the kingdom of God and the *gift* of that same kingdom?

§ 5 (pp.430–433): How does the righteousness received by *faith alone* (that is, apart from the law) outshine any righteousness achieved by our own good works? How are our own works insufficient to merit anything but condemnation and death?

§ 6 (pp.433–436): What is “the deepest ground and final cause of our justification”? // In what way is the gospel “at one and the same time an order of justice and an order of grace”? // Is it possible to share in the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection without sharing in Christ himself?

§ 7 (pp.436–438): In what way is man’s relationship to God a *legal* relationship? How does the gospel attend to this legal relationship?

§ 8 (pp.438–443): How can we say that justification is not only a gracious but a juridical act of God? // What is imputation, and how does it relate to the Christian’s justification? // In what ways does justification differ from sanctification? Why is maintaining such a distinction critical to the gospel message? // Does faith itself save, or faith’s object (that is, Christ)? Why does this matter? What does Scripture teach in this regard? // In what ways are justification and sanctification, though distinguishable, inseparable? Why must the church maintain this important relation as part of our confession?

§ 9 (pp.443–447): What two benefits are bound up in the believer’s justification? // Why can God not simply turn a blind eye to our sins and look the other way? What is required for God to forgive sin? How has Christ purchased our pardon and with it, eternal life? // How can the Christian, though hounded by the memories of past sins, grow in his assurance of forgiveness in Christ? // What is meant in the prayer that Christ taught his church to pray daily: “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”? // What benefits does *adoption* into God’s family afford us?

§ 10 (pp.447–450): Of what value is the doctrine of justification to the one who puts his hope in Christ? // In what sense is the Christian liberated from the law? In what sense is he not? // How does the Christian’s justification change his relationship to God and to the world?

### **XXII. Sanctification (pp.451–494)**

§ 1 (pp.451–453): What is holiness, and how does it differ from righteousness? // What does the church mean when it confesses the holiness of God?

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§ 2 (pp.453–455): What twofold distinction does the church make when it confesses the holiness of Christ? // In what way was Christ holy by nature? How did Christ secure holiness for his people?

§ 3 (pp.455–459): What do we mean when we confess the active and passive obedience of Christ? What proof do we have that Christ secured holiness (or sanctification) for his people by his active and passive obedience unto death? // In what way does justification differ from regeneration? In what way does justification differ from sanctification? // Of what comfort is it to know that Christ achieved holiness for us? What Scripture passages confirm this wonderful work of God?

§ 4 (pp.459–462): On what basis are all Christians properly designated “saints”? // Is sanctification a work of God or the responsibility of the believer? Defend from Scripture.

§ 5 (pp.462–464): What role does faith serve in the process of sanctification?

§ 6 (pp.464–468): How does faith attend to the believer’s sanctification?

§ 7 (pp.468–472): Of what value is it to distinguish between the Reformed notion of law and duty, and Roman Catholic conception of commandments and advices? // Where in Scripture can we find a brief summary of the Christian ethic as a rule of life? Are we bound to any other laws? What distinguishes the Ten Commandments from these other laws?

§ 8 (pp.472–477): When one first confesses Christ, is he immediately perfected? Will he achieve perfection in this life? How does our answer shape our expectations for fellow Christians? // How does the battle that rages within the Christian’s heart differ from the conflict that resides within the non-Christian? // What does Paul mean when he speaks of the struggle between ‘the Spirit’ and ‘the flesh’? // What is antinomianism? What dangers befall us if we embrace such a mindset?

§ 9 (pp.477–485): What dangers befall us if we attempt to divorce love of neighbor from its religious (read: *Christian*) context? Why must we tether the second table of the law to the first? // If perfection is unattainable in this life, of what value is it to heed the admonishments and appeals of Scripture to pursue holiness? // How is it that believers can become holy?

§ 10 (pp.485–488): What is meant when we confess the perseverance of the saints? What is not meant by this doctrine? How is such perseverance accomplished? // Is it possible for one truly regenerated to fall away? // Does the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, properly understood, encourage any pride or false security in the believer?

§ 11 (pp.488–494): In what way does the preservation of the saints comfort believers? What relationship does the preservation of the saints hold to an assurance of salvation? // Provide some Scripture passages that speak of the assurance of salvation that God gives to repentant sinners. // Can we have certainty in this life of salvation in the next? In what ways does the Spirit assure believers of salvation in Christ?

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**XXIII. The Church of Christ (pp.495–524)**

§ 1 (pp.495–498): What is the *way* through which Christ brings the benefits of redemption to his people? // Into what *community* does the Spirit place each believer? What comfort is this to you?

§ 2 (pp.498–503): Describe the historical process and circumstances that led to the separation of the Christian church from the Jewish synagogue. // What relation did the individual home-churches initially hold to one another? // What is meant by the “church militant” and the “church triumphant”, and what relation do they hold to each other?

§ 3 (pp.503–509): Describe the *unity* and *diversity* found within Christ’s church. How does each find its expression? // What obstacles continually threaten to impede the church’s unity? // What is meant when we confess the *holiness* of Christ’s church? // What does the holiness of the church tell us regarding (a) the church’s relationship to the world, and (b) discipline within the church? // What is meant when we confess the *catholicity* of Christ’s church? // Describe the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church.

§ 4 (pp.510–514): In what ways did the organization of the people of God organically develop throughout the history of redemption to the time of Christ? // What role did the apostles serve within the new covenant church during Christ’s earthly ministry?

§ 5 (pp.515–518): What role did the apostolate serve within the new covenant church following Jesus’ ascension? // As the church spread throughout the world, in what ways did the organization of the church develop after Pentecost? // In what ways were the extraordinary offices of apostle, prophet, and evangelist unique to the early formation of the church? // What *ordinary* offices were instituted as the *extraordinary* offices faded out, and what purpose did each of these new offices serve?

§ 6 (pp.518–521): How many offices are scripturally warranted within the church today? // Evaluate the changes implemented to the organization of the church after the apostolic period. How did such changes impact church officers and members? // Describe the differences in ecclesiastical government among the following: *Roman Catholicism*, *Anabaptism*, *Anglicanism*, *Lutheranism*, and the *Reformed Churches*.

§ 7 (pp.521–524): What sort of power has Christ given his church? // What are the ‘earmarks’ of the church? // How does the Word govern and nourish Christ’s church? // What are the sacraments and how do each of them attend to the building up of Christ’s church? // How do discipline and mercy attend to the building up of Christ’s church? // Looking back on the entirety of this chapter, what principles has Christ set forth in Scripture regarding the organization of his church?

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**XXIV. Eternal Life (pp.525–549)**

§ 1 (pp.525–528): What dangers befall us if we allow science and modernity to dictate the purpose of man? // Evaluate vying conceptions, both ancient and modern, regarding the nature of death and the afterlife. In what ways do these ideologies fall short?

§ 2 (pp.528–533): According to Scripture, *why death*? How does Scripture reorient our perspective on matters of life, death, and eternity? // What benefits does the covenant of grace afford man in the face of death and the final judgment? // What does Scripture mean when it speaks of the day of the Lord?

§ 3 (pp.533–539): How has the first coming of Christ inaugurated the Old Testament promises concerning ‘the day of the Lord’? How will his return bring those promises to completion? // How should we then live between these two advents? // Evaluate the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory in light of Scripture. According to Scripture, what happens to all believers immediately upon death?

§ 4 (pp.539–543): Though the Christian is immediately ushered into heaven upon death, how is his condition still lacking? What final benefit of Christ’s redemption does he still await? // Evaluate the doctrine of premillennialism in light of Scripture. What misunderstanding gives rise to this error? // What signs and events will precede the return of Christ?

§ 5 (pp.543–547): What event will immediately follow the return of Christ? // Describe the blessings bestowed upon the righteous, and the judgments that will befall the wicked, at the resurrection of the dead. // Characterize the nature and quality of the bodies of believers at the resurrection. // What event follows the resurrection of the dead? Who will be judged, what will be judged, and what will be the standard for judgment?

§ 6 (pp.547–549): What event follows the judgment of the wicked? // Describe the new creation. In what ought this future hope shape our present life?