

# Institutes of elenctic theology

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# INSTITUTES OF ELENCTIC THEOLOGY

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FIRST THROUGH TENTH TOPICS

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and action of man). In the former sense, theology may be called practical, not in the latter. For besides matters merely practical, it has also many theoretical matters which constitute the doctrines of faith.

XI. Although the knowledge of God and his attributes is not strictly practical (when we understand by practical that which is regulative of some operation so that the thing known may be done—as the knowledge of the law is the rule of obedience and of acts morally good); yet it is practical so far as practical means that which both excites and impels to action, so that if the thing known is not done, yet it incites to moral action. For this very reason, God has made himself known to us that we may worship him. Therefore he has manifested to us his power (that we may stand in awe of it) and his goodness (that we may love it).

XII. Theology may be considered either abstractly in the object or concretely in the subject. Although an impious theologian does not carry his system into practice, it does not cease to be practical in itself because the abuse of the subject does not overthrow the legitimate use of the object.

XIII. The theology of the saints in heaven cannot be termed merely theoretical because their happiness embraces not only an apprehension of the highest good by vision (which is in the intellect), but also an enjoyment of it by love (which is an act of the will).

XIV. Theology is so far theoretical-practical that it cannot be called merely practical, but also theoretical, as the knowledge of mysteries is an essential part of it. (1) For God commands and enjoins upon us the knowledge of the truth no less than obedience to the precepts (Jer. 31:34). Even life eternal is placed in the knowledge of God (Jn. 17:3). Nor can it be said with Schlichtingius that this has reference to a knowledge of his will manifested by Christ in the gospel and not to a knowledge of his nature. John 17:3 teaches us that it refers not only to his will, but especially to his nature: “that they may know thee” (viz., to be the true God, which denotes the nature, not the will). (2) From knowledge arises faith on which religion depends (Rom. 10:17). (3) The Apostles’ Creed which, according to the Socinians, contains a compendium on religion and its articles, treats only of things to be believed, not of those to be done. (4) The knowledge of God is put for his whole worship in Jer. 31:34; Is. 53:11; 1 Jn. 2:3.

XV. Nevertheless, that theology is more practical than speculative is evident from the ultimate end, which is practice. For although all mysteries are not regulative of operation, they are impulsive to operation. For there is none so theoretical (*theōrēton*) and removed from practice that it does not incite to the love and worship of God. Nor is any theory saying which does not lead to practice (Jn. 13:17; 1 Cor. 13:2; Tit. 1:1; 1 Jn. 2:3, 4; Tit. 2:12).

#### EIGHTH QUESTION

*Is human reason the principle and rule by which the doctrines of the Christian religion and theology (which are the objects of faith) ought to be measured? We deny against the Socinians.*

#### Statement of the question.

I. That the state of the question may be perceived more clearly, before all things, the terms must be explained, and some previous principles laid down. (1) Human reason is taken either subjectively for that faculty of the rational soul by which man understands and judges between intelligible things presented to him (natural and supernatural, divine and human); or objectively

for the natural light both externally presented and internally impressed upon the mind by which reason is disposed to the forming of certain conceptions and the eliciting of conclusions concerning God and divine things. Again, reason can be viewed in two aspects: either as sound and whole before the fall or as corrupt and blind after it. The principle which here comes into question should be the first and self-evident (*autopiston*) from which all the truths and articles of faith are primarily drawn, and into which they are at last resolved. As in all the arts, those are the principles by which they are erected and demonstrated, and upon which it is not lawful for them to rise. The object of faith (meant here) is formal, not presupposed (i.e., the articles of saving faith, peculiar [*oikeioi*], properly and strictly so called); not the presupposed which are common to natural theology and sound reason such as these: that God exists; that he is just, wise, good; that the soul is immortal; etc.

II. In this controversy, there is an error on both extremes. They err in excess who attribute to reason in matters of faith more than its due (as the Socinians). They err in defect who underrate it (as the Anabaptists, Lutherans and papists). Here we dispute against the first; afterwards we will engage the others.

III. The question is not whether reason has any use in theology. For we confess that its use is manifold both for illustration (by making clear divine mysteries from human and earthly things); for comparison (by comparing old things with new, versions with their sources, opinions of doctors and decrees of councils with the rule of the divine word); for inference (by drawing conclusions); and for argumentation (by drawing forth reasons to support orthodoxy [*orthodoxian*] and overthrow heterodoxy [*heterodoxian*]). But the question is simply whether it bears the relation of a principle and rule in whose scale the greatest mysteries of religion should be weighed, so that nothing should be held which is not agreeable to it, which is not founded upon and cannot be elicited from reason. This we deny against the Socinians who, the more easily to reject the mysteries of the Trinity, incarnation and the satisfaction of Christ (and others of the same kind clearly revealed in Scripture), contend that reason is the rule of religion of things to be believed, and that those things are not to be believed which seem to the mind to be impossible (Ostorodt, *Unterrichtung . . . hauptpuncten der Christlichen Religion* 6 [1612], p. 42, "Man is not bound to believe what reason dictates to be false"; and Smaltzius: "If religion should be opposed to reason, by that very thing it would not be religion, for religion is the highest reason; yea, even reason itself," *Refutatio Thesium D. Wolfgangi Frantzii*, Disp. IV [1614], p. 137).

IV. The question is not whether reason is the instrument by which or the medium through which we can be drawn to faith. For we acknowledge that reason can be both: the former indeed always and everywhere; the latter with regard to presupposed articles. Rather the question is whether it is the first principle from which the doctrines of faith are proved; or the foundation upon which they are built, so that we must hold to be false in things of faith what the natural light or human reason cannot comprehend. This we deny.

V. The reasons are: (1) The reason of an unregenerate man is blinded with respect to the law (Eph. 4:17, 18; Rom. 1:27, 28; 8:7). With respect to the gospel, it is evidently blind and mere darkness (Eph. 5:8; 1 Cor. 2:14). Therefore, it must be taken captive that it may be subjected to faith, not exalted that it may rule it (2 Cor. 10:3-5\*). (2) The mysteries of faith are beyond the

**Reason is not the principle of faith.**

sphere of reason to which the unregenerate man cannot rise; and, as the senses do not attempt to judge of those things which are out of their sphere, so neither does reason in those things which are above it and supernatural. (3) Faith is not referred ultimately to reason, so that I ought to believe because I so understand and comprehend; but to the word because God so speaks in the Scriptures. (4) The Holy Spirit directs us to the word alone (Dt. 4:1; Is. 8:20; Jn. 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:15, 16; 2 Pet. 1:19). (5) If reason is the principle of faith, then first it would follow that all religion is natural and demonstrable by natural reason and natural light. Thus nature and grace, natural and supernatural revelation would be confounded. Second, it would follow that reason is nowhere to be made captive and to be denied, against the express passages of Scripture; and that those possessed of a more ready mind and a more cultivated genius can better perceive and judge the mysteries of faith against universal experience (1 Cor. 1:19, 20; Mt. 11:25). (6) Reason cannot be the rule of religion; neither as corrupted because it is not only below faith, but also opposed to it (Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; Mt. 16:17); nor as sound because this is not found in corrupt man, nor in an uncontaminated man could it be the rule of supernatural mysteries. Nor now when it is corrected by the Spirit must it be judged according to itself, but according to the first principle which illuminated reason now admits (*viz.*, the Scriptures).

#### Sources of explanation.

VI. A ministerial and organic relation is quite different from a principal and despotic. Reason holds the former relation to theology, not the latter. It is the Hagar (the bondmaid which should be in subjection to Scripture); not the Sarah (the mistress which presides over Scripture). It ought to compare the things proposed to be believed with the sacred Scriptures, the inflexible rule of truth. As when we refer the things we wish to measure to the public standard with the hand and eye. But reason itself neither can nor ought to be constituted the rule of belief.

VII. We must observe the distinction between an instrument of faith and the foundation of faith. It is one thing to introduce something to be believed and another to educe what may be understood and explained from the words; not by forcing a sense on a passage, but by unfolding that which seems involved. Reason is the instrument which the believer uses, but it is not the foundation and principle upon which faith rests. If in various passages of Scripture the use of reason is mentioned, this is not to make it the foundation of faith (as if I ought to act according to reason as a rule), but its office only is designated that believers may work conformably with and by it, as an instrument.

VIII. Rational worship is used in two senses: either originally, from reason as its origin and principle; or subjectively and organically, in reason as its subject and working by reason as an instrument. In Rom. 12:1, Paul does not use the reasonable service which he prescribes to believers in the first sense, for this would be to approve of will worship (*ethelothrēskeias*, which he elsewhere condemns); but in the second, for that which is founded on reason and is exercised by reason. That is, Paul uses that which is spiritual and inward, not carnal and outward, by antithesis to the Levitical and Old Testament ceremonial service which was carnal in the offering up of beasts; whereas God now no more requires brutes, but rational and spiritual sacrifices, as Peter calls them (1 Pet. 2:5).

IX. Christ's teaching may be called rational either as to the kind of doctrine or as to the mode of teaching. If we take it in the first sense (which is the question here), it is false; yea, he introduced a doctrine opposed and unknown to blind reason (Mt. 16:17). But the second sense has no pertinence here, since we confess that reason stands in the relation of an instrument.

X. There is a difference between deriving a doctrine from nature, and illustrating in a certain manner a doctrine already known; or to seize from nature the opportunity of teaching. The latter we recognize in the parables of our Lord, but not the former. For he did not expressly prove his mysteries by parables, but only illustrated them that under these representations they might be more easily understood.

XI. There is a difference between the "truth of propositions" and the "truth of conclusions," as Augustine remarks (CI 2.32 [FC 2:104-5; PL 34.59]). The former answers to the axiomatic judgment, the latter to the discursive (dianoetic). Divine revelation dictates axioms or sentences of faith to us in the Scriptures. Therefore, when these are beyond our comprehension, we ought simply to believe them on the authority of that infallible master of sentences whose *ipse dixit* (*autos epha*) is in all things sufficient. But right reason apprehends the truth of conclusions, and of itself determines what may be inferred from some other thing.

XII. To ascertain the reason of a consequence is different from ascertaining the consequent itself. Often the reason of a consequence is perceived when neither the antecedent is discerned nor the consequent comprehended. It is only understood that this thing follows from that. Faith perceives the consequent, but reason the consequence. To reason belongs the perception of the reason of a consequence, whether it be right and necessary or otherwise. Nor does it follow from this that faith which perceives the consequent is founded upon reason because reason is not an argument here, but an instrument. As when faith is said to be by hearing, hearing is not an argument of faith, but an instrument because reason does not put upon the text a sense which was not there, but brings forth by legitimate consequence something which was concealed in it and thus was taught implicitly by it.

XIII. In matters of faith reason stands not only in the relation of an instrument by which, but also sometimes from a means and argument from which the theologian argues (viz., when from his own treasury he draws arguments for the faith; or contends for principles by showing their credibility to those who do not acknowledge it; or treats from principles by drawing arguments from nature either to prove or confirm theological conclusion). Hence the same conclusion may be of faith (inasmuch as it is proved from Scripture) and of knowledge (inasmuch as it is demonstrated by reason). Yet we must not from this infer that reason is the principle and rule by which doctrines of faith should be measured.

**Mixed syllogisms  
are of faith.** XIV. In mixed syllogisms (where one proposition is of faith, another of reason) reason is not the foundation and rule upon which the conclusion rests, but only the means and instrument by whose aid the truth virtually concealed in the other premise is elicited. Therefore in syllogisms of this kind the middle term is not taken from reason, but from Scripture. The connection however of the middle with the major extreme when it is denied by the adversary is shown by the principles of reason not to strengthen the truth of the mean,

but of the connection. For example, I deny that the glorified body of Christ is everywhere, having taken from Scripture this mean, that it is a real body. But the major (that no body is everywhere) is drawn from reason. Hence in such arguments the theological conclusion follows from the mean inferring, and the logical from reason which connects the consequence. One of the premises which is of faith communicating its force to the conclusion rests (as to the matter of consequent) upon revelation alone; although (as to the form and mode of consequent) it depends upon reason.

XV. It should not be replied here that the conclusion always follows the weaker part (i.e., reason which is weaker than divine revelation). For (1) that axiom must not be pressed beyond quantity and quality, so that if one of the premises is universal, the other particular, one affirmative, the other negative, the conclusion should always be particular and negative. (2) According to many, the conclusion ought to follow the weaker part, while it follows revelation which is inevident (at least philosophically speaking), where a proposition founded upon authority is considered weaker and more evident than one founded upon reason because it is farther removed from a scientific demonstration.

XVI. Hence we may safely infer that in mixed syllogisms of this kind the conclusion is theological and of faith because every proposition takes its denomination from the subject, not from the predicate. Therefore, since the subject is theological, the proposition is theological, although it may have a predicate philosophical or from the light of nature. Hence the assent given to conclusions of this kind is the assent of faith rather than of knowledge because the assent follows the nature of the proposition to which it is given. Therefore if the proposition is philosophical, it has an evident assent to which the mind is moved by the light of reason and knowledge. But if it is theological, it has the assent of faith to which it is moved by the light of revelation. Therefore although the assent to the conclusion may come from each proposition, yet because the weight of the proposition derived from theology is greater than that from philosophy, the assent itself may be said to belong simply to theology and not to philosophy.

XVII. Reason is taken either materially for the kind of doctrine derived from the light of reason, or formally for the manner of delivering it which is commonly called the mode of instruction (*tropos paideias*). But in neither sense can it be called the principle of theology; not in the former sense because theology is neither built upon reason nor resolvable into it; not in the latter sense because although it is in this sense an instrument (as has been said), yet it cannot be considered as the principle.

XVIII. For a thing to be contrary to reason is different from its being above and beyond it; to be overthrown by reason and to be unknown to it. The mysteries of faith are indeed contrary to corrupt reason and are assailed by it, but they are only above and beyond right reason and are not taught by it. So in neither of these senses can it be called their principle.

XIX. Although things of faith agree with reason and doctrine can be at variance with sound enlightened reason, it does not follow that they agree with corrupted and blind reason, or that even sound reason is its principle. For not only agreement, but also dependence constitutes a principle, such as exists between cause and effect.



XX. The proper rule of things to be believed and disbelieved is not the apprehension of their possibility or impossibility, but the word of God. Nor are those things only possible to God which seem so to men, for he can do above all that we can think (Eph. 3:20; Mt. 19:26), and it would be impious for a finite mind to circumscribe within narrow limits the infinite power of God.

XXI. Although light is not contrary to light, and natural and revealed truths are not at variance with each other, yet natural truth itself is often not what human reason dictates, which is often mistaken by an abuse of natural and revealed light. Therefore revealed truth can be opposed to ratiocination and human conceptions, although it may agree with natural truth which reason often does not see or apprehend. Thus here the first principles of nature (known of themselves) must be distinguished from the conclusions and conceptions of reason which are deduced from those principles. The former are true and sure; the latter obscure, often erroneous and fallible.

XXII. A small and a great light may differ in degree and species: in degree, as to a natural object; in species, as to a supernatural. Reason may be a small light; but in things civil and natural, not in things supernatural.

XXIII. Although reason is not the principle of faith, it does not follow that atheists cannot be converted. The manner of dealing with them can be either theological (by arguments founded on Scripture) or philosophical, so that by the principles of reason the prejudices against the Christian religion drawn from corrupt reason may be removed.

XXIV. The Lutherans falsely object to us that we hold reason to be the principle and rule of demonstration in controversies because we sometimes draw arguments from reason, and argue from reason against the ubiquity of Christ's body. For we assign to reason only a ministerial and instrumental, not a principal office. And if, in compound questions, we use reason for the purpose of proof, it bears the relation not of a principle but of a means from which the theologian argues; and they are not with us primary arguments, but only secondary and auxiliary forces. Besides, while the theologian uses arguments drawn from reason, he does it rather as a philosopher than as a theologian. As to the ubiquity of the body of Christ, we reject this doctrine, both philosophically and theologically, because it is absurd and contradicts the first principles of theology and philosophy.

#### NINTH QUESTION

*Does any judgment belong to reason in matters of faith? Or is there no use at all for it?*

#### Statement of the question.

I. We must avoid two extremes here: the one of those who sin in excess attributing too much to reason, and regarding it as the rule of religion and faith (which the Socinians do against whom we argued in the preceding question); the other of those who err in defect, who (lest they might appear to consider reason as the rule of faith) attribute little or nothing to it. Of this way of thinking are not only the Anabaptists and Weigelians, but also the Lutherans and papists. These hold that the testimony of reason is not to be heard when it judges of certain mysteries of faith. For example, when it refuses to admit the doctrine of transubstantiation or ubiquity because it is repugnant to the light of

right reason. And because we do not repudiate entirely the use of reason, they write about us as if we made ourselves the judges and final arbiters in matters of faith, and thus deceive the world by a fair pretence, while we glory in acknowledging Scripture as the only judge.

II. The question does not concern the judgment of decision by which controversies are publicly determined. No one of us attributes this to reason, but either to God alone speaking in the Scriptures (if we speak of the supreme) or to pastors appointed in the church (if we treat of the subordinate judgment). Rather the question concerns the judgment of private discretion by which truth is distinguished from falsehood and this we think should be attributed to reason rightly instructed. (2) In a judgment we must distinguish between the subject (or intellectual power) and the rule (or law and foundation upon which the intellect rests) in order to judge from its prescriptions. (3) The rule with regard to the object to be judged, respects the truth either of sentences or of conclusions. Again, sentences are of things known either by nature or known only by supernatural revelation.

III. Having established this point, I say that to reason belongs the judgment of discretion in matters of faith, both subjectively (because it belongs to the intellect alone to know and distinguish these matters of faith) and normally; and indeed with respect to the truth of conclusions in all propositions (whether known by nature or by revelation), but with respect to the truth of propositions only in those known by nature and even then with this threefold caution. (1) That the judgment of reason not be considered as necessary, as if theology could not do without it. (2) That the word of God (where also these truths are revealed) be considered always as the primary rule and reason as the secondary. (3) That when the word adds something unknown to nature to a thing known by nature, then we should not judge of it by nature or reason, but by the word (not that the word and reason are at variance, but because reason is perfected by the word). But in things known only by revelation (as the mystery of the Trinity, of the incarnation, etc.), the only rule is the word of God, beyond or above which we must not be wise.

IV. The question is not whether the mysteries of faith are above reason or whether reason can reach them. For we readily grant that there are things which far surpass the comprehension not only of men, but even of angels the disclosure of which was a work of supernatural revelation. We also grant that reason is not only incapable of discovering them without a revelation; not only weak in comprehending them after being revealed; but also slippery and fallible (readily pursuing falsehood for truth and truth for falsehood), and never believing the word of God and its mysteries unless enlightened by the grace of the Spirit. Rather the question is—Is there no use at all for it, and should we entirely reject the testimony of reason, as often as the truth or falsity of any doctrine is to be judged? This our opponents hold and we deny.

V. Although the human understanding is very dark, yet there still remains in it some rays of natural light and certain first principles, the truth of which is unquestionable: such as, the whole is greater than its part, an effect supposes a cause, to be and not to be at the same time are incompatible (*asystatous*), etc. If this were not the case, there could be no science, nor art, nor certainty in the nature of things. (2) These first principles are true not only in nature, but also in

grace and the mysteries of faith. Faith, so far from destroying, on the contrary borrows them from reason and uses them to strengthen its own doctrines. (3) Although reason and faith are of different classes (the one natural, the other supernatural), they are not however opposed, but hold a certain relation and are subordinate to each other. Reason is perfected by faith and faith supposes reason, upon which to found the mysteries of grace.

VI. Reason cannot and should not draw mysteries from its own treasury. The word of God alone has this right. Unless derived from this source, they are on that very account to be discarded (Gal. 1:8). (2) Reason must not be listened to when it complains of not being able to comprehend the mysteries of faith. For how can the infinite be comprehended by the finite? Therefore the wish to reject mysteries because they cannot be comprehended by reason is a sin not only against faith but also against reason which acknowledges itself to be finite and far inferior to those sublime mysteries. (3) It must not be heard when it wishes, by overturning the questionable truth of the first principles of natural religion, to establish its own errors under the pretext of their being mysteries of faith (either as to things merely natural or supernatural or mixed) which grace borrows from nature for its own use. Hence right reason ought to reject these fictions as incompatible (*asystata*) with the indubitable first principles of natural religion.

**The use of  
reason proved.**

VII. That the use of reason is manifold was seen before (viz., for illustration, comparison, inference and proof). It may be further proved: (1) by 1 Cor. 10:15 where the apostle appeals to the judgment of the Corinthians, both of the common people and wise men; (2) from the examples of Christ, the apostles and prophets who always employed reason in teaching the mysteries of faith. Nor should it be considered unfair to argue from those inspired (*theopneustoi*) persons to ourselves who are fallible because the force of reasoning does not depend upon the infallibility of the person using it, but upon the evidence of the thing. (3) From 1 Jn. 4:1 where we are commanded "to try the spirits," which could not be done without the help of reason. (4) The testimony of the senses is not to be entirely rejected in matters of faith (as we shall hereafter prove); therefore neither is reason because the senses are far inferior to reason.

**Sources of  
explanation.**

VIII. There is a difference between knowing the meaning of a proposition and knowing its truth. In the former manner, the gospel is regarded simply as the word, but in the latter, as the divine and infallible word. Reason is occupied with the former, but faith alone with the latter.

IX. An incomprehensible thing (which cannot be grasped) is different from an impossible (which cannot be conceived). The mysteries of the Trinity, incarnation and predestination are incomprehensible, as we have only an obscure and imperfect knowledge of them. But the fiction of transubstantiation or of ubiquity cannot be conceived, on account of the natural repugnance of our intellect to the conception of a thing altogether impossible.

X. Reason as corrupt and in the concrete may be at variance with theology, but not reason as sound and in the abstract (which possibly may be ignorant of mysteries and may not teach them, but must not therefore be considered as denying them). As you would improperly gather that the physician is at variance with the lawyer because he does not quote laws, so neither does the philosopher con-

tradict the theologian, although he does not treat of his mysteries, and acknowledges them to be out of his sphere.

XI. Those are called human things which either spring from carnal corruption (in which sense Christ opposes human to divine things, Mt. 16:17) or are the remains of the image of God, and so are not repugnant but subordinated. Nor does light oppose light, nor truth oppose truth because God is the author of both.

XII. Although we allow the judgment of discretion to reason enlightened by the Holy Spirit, we do not by this constitute ourselves the ultimate arbiters and judges in controversies of faith or take away from Scripture the supreme and decisive judgment (for these are subordinate, not contrary). Reason in this sense always judges according to Scripture as the first and infallible standard.

XIII. Because the mysteries of faith surpass the comprehension of reason, it follows that it should not be used as the first principle and foundation for exhibiting the truth of axioms of faith. But it does not follow that it cannot be used to exhibit the truth or falsity of conclusions in controversies of faith. For the truth of conclusions is perpetual in the nature of things and can be learned in those schools also which are out of the church, as Augustine frequently tells us (CI 2.31.49 [FC 2:104]).

XIV. When we allow a certain judgment to reason in things of faith, we do not mean reason as blind and corrupted by sin (in which sense we confess the natural man cannot receive the things of God [1 Cor. 2:14] and that "the carnal mind [*phronēma*] is enmity against God," Rom. 8:7), but we speak of reason as sound and healed by grace (in which sense "the spiritual man is said to judge all things" [1 Cor. 2:15], and Paul often appeals to the judgment of believers, 1 Cor. 10:15; 11:13; Heb. 5:13, 14).

XV. The "captivity of thought" which the apostle recommends (2 Cor. 10:5) does not exclude all liberty of judgment, but only the desire of contradiction when it exalts itself against Christ and his gospel. Not that reason cannot discern, but that it ought not to oppose (although the mysteries proposed do surpass its comprehension and cannot be reached by it). He does not therefore mean to take away reason entirely because grace does not destroy, but perfects nature. He only wishes it to serve and be a handmaid to faith and as such to obey, not to govern it as a mistress; that it may be in subjection and not entirely discarded, that it may be not the foundation, but the defender of faith and embrace, contend for and adorn the faith already established.

XVI. To deny or oppose an article of faith because it does not seem to agree with reason is different from opposing erroneous opinions respecting it and false expositions of Scripture. Not because philosophical rules do not admit of them, but because they are contrary to the word of God to which the natural truth of conclusions conforms.

XVII. Although we use reason and its principles in theological controversies, it does not follow that we make a mixture of philosophy with theology and of human with divine things. They are not used as the foundation and principle of faith (from which we prove these mysteries), but only as instruments of knowledge (as when with the eye of the body and the light of the sun we see any visible object, there is no mixture of the eye with the sun because they do not concur in the same, but in a different manner).

XVIII. The transition from a genus to a genus then occurs when that which belongs to one system is taken to demonstrate the conclusion of another. But this is by no means our method in this subject because the middle term is not drawn from philosophy to prove a conclusion of faith, but from Scripture. (2) The principles or axioms drawn from reason or philosophy in order to prove some article of faith are not so peculiar to philosophy as that they cannot be supposed to belong also to natural theology (which ought to come before supernatural and revealed). Thus they can be said to have a reference to articles of faith, if not formal at least presupposed.

#### TENTH QUESTION

*May the judgment of contradiction be allowed to human reason in matters of faith? We affirm.*

#### **Origin of the question.**

I. This controversy is conducted by our party against the Lutherans (especially the Ubiquitarians) who (when we say that their opinion about Christ's body being in many places [*polytopia*] or everywhere [*pantachousia*] is contradictory) usually reply that the judgment of contradiction in matters of faith does not belong to reason, but to the sacred Scriptures (Lucas Osiander [the elder], *Enchiridion controversiarum . . . Calvinianus* 1.3 [1608], pp. 25-45; Balthasar Mentzer, *Elencheus errorum Antonii Sadeelis*, Arg. 6 [1609], pp. 75-76; Josua Stegmann, *Photinianismus hoc est succincta refutatio errorum Photiniarum* [1643], disp. 2, q. 3, pp. 17-19). Hence Balthasar Meisner says that this axiom ("contradictory things are therefore impossible because for the same thing to be and not to be is impossible [*adynaton*]") is extremely dangerous in divine things (*quaest. metaph. 3. contra Calvin. +*). For a proper knowledge of the state of the question, three things must here be distinguished: the reason judging, the principle from which the judgment is formed, and the rule of consequence by which it is formed. (1) Reason here does not mean that which is blind and corrupted by sin, but that which is restored and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. (2) The principles are axioms not known by nature or founded upon human authority, but given in the Scriptures. (3) The rule by which reason directed and strengthened in tracing and applying the truths of Scripture is the rule of just consequence impressed upon the rational creature by God. This rule is not the rule of the truth itself (which is the word of God alone and the first normal truth), but only the rule of consequence by the assistance of which we may know and discern with greater certainty what follows from a truth and what does not.

#### **Statement of the question.**

II. The question is not whether reason can of itself reach into the mysteries of faith (for no one doubts that many of them far surpass the comprehension of reason), but whether it can judge of the contradiction of propositions (which can be discerned only by the laws of nature and reason). (2) The question does not concern the absolute and unlimited judgment of decision, but concerns the judgment of discretion which is bound and limited by the word and must always be proved by it (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Jn. 4:1). This, if not always producing conviction in others, nevertheless suffices for our own.