

CHRISTIAN REASONABLE SERVICE

by Brakel Wilhelmus A

A Brakel's comprehensive Reformed systematic theology and practical divinity, treating the doctrines of God, man, Christ, salvation, the church, and the Christian life. First published in Dutch, this four-volume work combines rigorous dogmatic theology with warm experiential piety in the tradition of the Dutch Further Reformation.

116 Chapters

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0.1. Preface from the Translator

Preface

Those acquainted with Dutch Reformed orthodoxy will know that the name of Wilhelmus à Brakel is among the most venerated of the theologians representing the Dutch Second Reformation (Nadere Reformatie) period which is similar to and coincides with English Puritanism. This veneration is largely due to the profound influence of his magnum opus *De Redelijke Godsdienst*, now being made available in English for the first time as *The Christian's Reasonable Service*. The importance of this work was recognized soon after its publication in 1700. Even though à Brakel had great difficulty finding a publisher for the initial edition (finally finding a Roman Catholic publisher!) his work was in demand within a very short time. New and improved editions soon followed, twenty in the eighteenth century alone. The respect for à Brakel was such that he was commonly referred to as "Father Brakel," a title not only expressive of high esteem but also of the authority he commanded and the influence he exerted. He is still known today in the Netherlands by this honorary title. It ought therefore to be self-evident that Father Brakel is considered one of the fathers of the Reformed tradition to be found in present day orthodox Reformed circles in the Netherlands.

One of à Brakel's contemporaries, Abraham Hellenbroek, who spoke of his friend as being a man of tender and intimate piety [Note: J. van Genderen, *De Nadere Reformatie: Beschrijving van haar voornaamste vertegenwoordigers* ("Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1986), p. 165.] , recognized the importance of this work when he stated in almost prophetic terms that this work was so valuable that it would transcend the passage of time [Note: *Ibid.*, p. 166.] . We trust that the very fact that this work is now being made available to the English-speaking world will assist in validating these words. To provide one practical illustration of the influence of this work in the Netherlands which now spans nearly three centuries, we wish to relate an incident from the life of the Rev. G. H. Kersten, the founder of the denomination (the Gereformeerde Gemeenten-- the Netherlands Reformed Congregations) which has initiated and undertaken the translation and publication of this classic. When Rev. Kersten was approximately twelve years old, his parents discovered that their young son, in whose heart the Lord had begun a saving work, was reading regularly far beyond midnight. In order to keep himself awake, he placed his feet in a basin filled with cold water. What book was it that so captivated the mind and heart of this young seeker after God? à Brakel's *Redelijke Godsdienst*. When asked by his parents why he sacrificed his sleep to read this weighty book which was well beyond the level of twelve-year-olds, he responded, "I must know how the Lord converts His people." The reading of these volumes clearly placed a stamp upon the writings and entire ministry of Rev. Kersten.

Why is it that à Brakel's work is one of the true classics of the Dutch Second Reformation? Why has this work been so influential? Why do we trust that *The Christian's Reasonable Service* will be a valuable addition to the rich heritage of post-Reformation orthodoxy? The uniqueness of à Brakel's work lies in the fact that it is more than a systematic theology. His selection of the title is

already an indication that it was not merely his intention to present a systematic explanation of Christian dogma to the public. In selecting the words of Romans 12:1 as the basis for his title, à Brakel not only wished to indicate that it is an entirely reasonable matter for man to serve His Creator who has so graciously revealed Himself in His Son Jesus Christ by means of His Word, but he primarily wished to convey that God demands from man that he serve Him in spirit and in truth, doing so in an intelligent, reasonable, and godly manner [Note: Ibid., pp. 170-171.] . This brings us at once to the heart of the matter. à Brakel wrote this work for church members -- not for theologians, though it was his wish that they benefit from it as well. This explains why this work is permeated with practical application of the doctrines he so thoroughly explains. à Brakel's intent in writing is inescapable: He intensely wished that the truths expounded may become an experiential reality in the hearts of those who read. In a masterful way he establishes the crucial relationship between objective truth and the subjective experience of that truth. He first establishes a solid biblical foundation for each doctrine with which he deals, by quoting profusely from the Scriptures. You will find his selection of quotes to be a most impressive feature of this work, proving he had a profound grasp of the Scriptures and their comprehensive context. This scripturalness is rationally reinforced by his frequent resorting to the scholastic method to validate his positions. As a man taught of God, he very ably defined and described Christian experience in biblical terms. The undeniably mystical flavor of this work represents biblical mysticism at its best -- a Spirit-wrought mysticism that fully harmonizes with the Spirit-inspired Scriptures. This explains at once why Jesus Christ truly has the preeminence in this work. It is the Logos, Jesus Christ, who is the very marrow of God's Word and every doctrine contained in it. It is therefore self-evident that in the subjective experience of this Word, Jesus Christ also has the preeminence. No wonder then that this work brims with references to Him whom the Father has given a name above every name. For à Brakel the name of Jesus is sweeter than honey; you can almost sense the inner stirrings of His soul when He exalts Jesus as the Father's unspeakable gift to fallen sons and daughters of Adam.

These rich experiential applications found at the conclusion of each doctrinal chapter in the first two volumes make this work invaluable and pastoral. à Brakel was first and foremost a pastor who made his astute theological acumen entirely subservient to the glory of God and the spiritual welfare of His church. In writing this work, à Brakel practiced what he advised all ministers to do. In chapter 28 he writes: "He [the minister] ought to use all his scholarship to formulate the matters to be presented, in order that he might express them in the clearest and most powerful manner. While using his scholarship, however, he must conceal his scholarship in the pulpit." When necessary, however, he will cause his scholarship to bear on an argument, thereby proving himself to be a theologian par excellence. In reading this work, one cannot but be struck by its kinship with English Puritan literature. This is particularly evident in the third and fourth volumes which are devoted almost entirely to the life of sanctification. As is true for the Puritans, à Brakel was a most able physician of souls. How ably he proves himself to be a divine intimately acquainted with spiritual life and all its vicissitudes! The chapters pertaining to sanctification particularly validate Hellenbroek's observation that à Brakel was a man of tender, intimate piety. Like the Puritans, he makes it unmistakably clear that godliness is a scriptural vindication that we have experienced the truth in our souls. Inward experience manifests itself outwardly in true piety. à Brakel does not leave us in the dark as to what he understands the Christian life to be. We believe it will be difficult to find a work in English devotional literature which spells out the nature of true holiness as specifically and meticulously as à Brakel does. The obvious similarity between à

Brakel's writings, which represent the cream of Dutch Second Reformation literature, and Puritan literature is highly significant. It proves that the Puritans and the Dutch Second Reformation divines (sometimes referred to as the Dutch Puritans) were essentially cut from the same cloth. It will be difficult to find essential differences in Christian experience between à Brakel and such English Puritans as John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, and John Bunyan. The divines of the Dutch Second Reformation have translated literally hundreds of English Puritans into Dutch, recommending them warmly to their congregations. The Dutch Second Reformation was greatly indebted to English Puritanism for a wealth of sound experiential material. On the other hand, few writings of Dutch Second Reformation divines were translated into English. The translation of à Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service* is an initial attempt to redress an imbalance of several centuries. To acquaint the English reader somewhat with à Brakel's life and times, as well as provide him with an overview of the Dutch Second Reformation, we have included the following in this volume:

(1) A translation of the applicable portion of Theodorus à Brakel, *Wilhelmus à Brakel, en Sara Nevius* (Houten: Den Hertog, 1988), authored by Dr. W. Fieret and A. Ros. Dr. Fieret is the author of the *Wilhelmus à Brakel* biography;

(2) A slightly revised appendix to *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation*, by Joel R. Beeke (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), entitled: *The Dutch Second Reformation* (*De Nadere Reformatie*).

Hopefully, the translation of à Brakel's work in four volumes (volumes 2, 3, and 4 should be available within a year, D.V.) will initiate in some small measure the merger of the rich heritages of the two premier experiential movements of the post-Reformation period: English Puritanism and the Dutch Second Reformation. Orthodox Reformed circles in the Netherlands have enjoyed this privilege already for centuries and have witnessed divine approbation upon these writings. May God grant that the publication of this work will enhance the ongoing proliferation of Reformed experiential writings throughout the world. May this phenomenon prove to be preliminary to a Spirit-worked revival of lukewarm, famished Christianity. Then the vital Christianity à Brakel promotes throughout this work will again flourish and adorn the church of Jesus Christ. May David's cry therefore be ours, "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary" (Psalms 63:1-2). To that end may we pray without ceasing to the God of the covenant of grace -- a covenant that has such a central place in this work -- crying out with the bride, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits" (Song of Solomon 4:16).

Joel R. Beeke, Bartel Elshout.

Preface [to the second volume] This volume begins with Wilhelmus à Brakel's ecclesiology. The fact that his ecclesiology follows his Christology is a departure from the sequence in which the six loci of Reformed theology are traditionally presented: theology, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology.

One might ask what à Brakel's motivation might have been for reversing soteriology and ecclesiology in light of the fact that this traditional sequence is found, for instance, in the Belgic Confession -- the confession of his church. Could it be that his wholehearted commitment to covenant theology moved him to focus first on the corporate and organic outworking of the eternal covenant transactions of a triune God in the establishment of a covenant community, His church -- that community where His eternal good pleasure to form a people for Himself becomes a reality and prospers by the hand of the Mediator of that covenant, Jesus Christ? Could the Anabaptist movement with its individualistic theology have moved him to focus on the corporate operations of the Holy Spirit before dealing with His work in the hearts of individual sinners, realizing that in saving the elect it is the Father's purpose to prepare a body for the Son of His good pleasure -- His Son whom He gave "to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23)? Could à Brakel's reversal of these two loci be an expression of the profound truth expressed in Psalms 87:2, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob"? When considering the whole of à Brakel's theology, as well as the historical context of his ministry, there may be reason to believe that these questions could be answered in the affirmative. This is a subject that might be worthy of further pursuit. For the moment, however, let a sampling of quotes speak for themselves:

One individual person does not constitute a church or a congregation. The church is referred to as a house, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5); as a flock, "... and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16); as a body, "... and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22-23); as a nation, "But ye are ... an holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9); and as a kingdom, "... who hath called you unto His kingdom" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). However, one stone does not constitute a house, one sheep does not constitute a flock, one member is not a body, one person is not a nation, one person is not a kingdom (Chapter 24).

We have previously stated that the primary purpose of the church's existence is the glorification of God. ... The secondary objective is the salvation of the elect. The church functions as a mother (Galatians 4:26), and has within her the Word of God as an incorruptible seed (1 Peter 1:23). As such she is fruitful unto the conversion of many souls, "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her" (Psalms 87:5). By means of the preaching of the Word, the Lord will add to "the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). (Chapter 24).

Thus, upon the foundation of ecclesiology, soteriology constitutes the saving work of the Holy Spirit whereby He adds living stones to the living temple of the Lord, "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Much is to be gleaned from the chapters dealing with the church. In our days, in which the church languishes and is afflicted with numerous spiritual maladies, it behooves us to make a careful study of à Brakel's treatment of the essence, functioning, and government of the body of Christ. The consideration that à Brakel's soteriology constitutes more than half of his total body of divinity should remove all doubt that he might minimize the significance of the saving work of a triune God in the heart of the elect sinner. His grasp of both the nature and scope of this work, as well as his

rich pastoral insights into the experience of the saints, are very evident in chapters 30-37. Particularly his treatment of the doctrine of justification, the heart of the gospel, is of pivotal importance in understanding his theology. The fact that this chapter is the lengthiest of this work implies that this subject was of cardinal significance to à Brakel himself -- as it was for nearly all the theologians of the Reformation, Dutch Second Reformation, and English Puritanism movements. His opening statement in chapter 34 underscores this very succinctly:

Having discussed calling regeneration, and faith, we shall now proceed to justification, which is the soul of Christianity and the fountainhead of all true comfort and sanctification. He who errs in this doctrine errs to his eternal destruction. The devil is therefore continually engaged in denying, perverting, and obscuring the truth expressed in this chapter and, if he does not accomplish this, to prevent exercise concerning this truth. When new errors appear on the horizon, even when they initially do not pertain to justification at all, they in time will eventually culminate in affecting this doctrine. One must therefore be all the more earnest to properly understand, defend, and meditate upon this doctrine.

Bearing this statement in mind, combined with à Brakel's grave concern for the antinomian error, it will be understood why he places strong emphasis on the need for both the personal experience of justification in the heart of a sinner, as well as the need for a daily and repeated sense of justification. It is that concern which led à Brakel to state that there is no justification from eternity -- even though he wholeheartedly endorsed the theological premise that justification is rooted in the eternal counsel of peace, is founded upon the resurrection of Christ, and becomes reality from God's side in regeneration.

After his exhaustive treatment of the doctrine of justification, à Brakel delineates the blessed fruits of justification in chapters 35-37. We trust you will find these chapters to be a veritable spiritual delight. This volume concludes with à Brakel's treatment of the sacraments -- God's visible warranty that all His promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. The importance of these promises is affirmed in a previous chapter (42) dealing with the functioning of the promises in the life of the believer, followed by a chapter (43) in which à Brakel warns against false mysticism, as well as all religion which is the fruit of man's intellect rather than the work of the Holy Spirit.

All who have enjoyed -- and hopefully profited from -- volume one will need no further recommendation and stimulus to peruse the pages of this volume as well.

Though acknowledgements are detailed in volume one, we again wish to thank those who, in a variety of ways, have made a valuable contribution toward and assisted in preparing this translated volume for print: Garret Moerdyk, John Wesdyk, Rev. Cornelis Vogelaar, Nicholas Greendyk, Laurena Quist, Gary and Linda den Hollander, William Berkenbush, Robert Fletcher, and Sam Van Grouw, Jr. Also a word of thanks to Arlene den Hollander for assisting in the proofreading of this volume. Final proofing on the two remaining volumes, as well as the composition of detailed indices, are already well under way. The Lord willing, we hope to be able to complete the set of four volumes in 1994.

It is our prayerful wish that the triune God of the covenant of grace may also crown this second volume with His divine approbation -- to the glory of His worthy Name, the edification of His saints, and the salvation of perishing sinners. Therefore, *tole lege*: take and read!

Joel R. Beeke

Bartel Elshout

0.2 Preface to the Third Edition (author)

Preface to the Third Edition As was stated regarding the second edition, nothing was deleted, except that occasionally we have stated matters somewhat more concisely. Also, nothing was added which was worthy of mention, except here and there an explanation or a subject was treated somewhat more extensively. That edition became available on October 2, 1701. This third edition has been enlarged considerably with the addition of the following material: 1) the life of faith relative to the promises; 2) a warning exhortation against Pietists, Quietists, and those who espouse similar errors which result in a religion which proceeds from nature being void of the Spirit, having, however, the appearance of spirituality; 3) an enlargement of the treatment of the Lord's Prayer, which is both expository and applicatory in nature.

If someone is displeased with the enlargement of the third edition, then let him transform his displeasure into generosity by giving his first or second edition to someone of humble means who could also be edified by it, and obtain a copy of the present edition for himself. May the Lord also bless this edition. May it be useful in defending the truth and true godliness, both of which are under assault in these days. They are assaulted on the one side by people of a corrupt mind who propose reason to be the rule for doctrine and life; on the other side by people who, in striving for holiness and love, set aside the truth and stray towards a religion which proceeds from nature, revolving around the practice of virtue. The Lord shall preserve His church so that Satan and all his adherents shall not be able to prevail against her. As a servant in Christ to all of you, I remain
Wilhelmus à Brakel

0.3. Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments We are indebted to the following persons for rendering us valuable assistance in preparing this translation for print:

Garret' Moerdyk, elder of the Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Mr. Moerdyk, who is proficient in both Dutch and English, carefully compared the entire translation with the original and forwarded numerous valuable suggestions.

John C. Wesdyk, member of the Ebenezer Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. Mr. Wesdyk's thorough grasp of English style and grammar uniquely qualified him for a thorough proofreading of the manuscript. Due to his probing and meticulous analysis of every sentence and paragraph, he has made a significant contribution to the linguistic quality of this translation.

Rev. Cornelis Vogelaar, pastor of the Ebenezer Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. Rev. Vogelaar's knowledge of seventeenth century Dutch proved to be most helpful in arriving at the correct translation of difficult passages and phrases.

Nicholas L. Greendyk, elder of the Ebenezer Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. Mr. Greendyk, who is well-versed in the writings of English divines and has an extensive knowledge of Reformed doctrine, carefully read the entire translation to assure doctrinal and semantic accuracy.

Dr. Joel R. Beeke, pastor of the First Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Mrs. Laurena Quist, his personal secretary and member of the same congregation. After implementation of the suggestions and/or corrections forwarded by all individuals involved, both Dr. Beeke and Mrs. Quist very ably proofread the manuscript prior to being typeset.

Dr. Willem Fieret and Den Hertoo B.V., Publishers, for their permission to translate and include Dr. Fieret's biography of à Brakel in this work.

Gary and Linda den Hollander, the typesetters of these volumes and members of the Ebenezer Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. Mr. den Hollander, in assisting his wife in her typesetting duties, did a final and thorough proofreading of the manuscript in typeset form.

William D. Berkenbush, member of the Ebenezer Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. Mr. Berkenbush, who frequently contributes his time and talent to NRC publications, provided the excellent negatives for the photography found in this work.

Robert Fletcher and Samuel Van Grouw, Jr., members of the Ebenezer Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. Mr. Fletcher did the artistic design work, and Mr. Van Grouw did the final layout and design of the cover. I assume full responsibility for any remaining improprieties in this translation. Among those who have contributed directly or indirectly to the

translation and publication of this work, also my dear wife, Joan, deserves special mention. In having been directed providentially to do the translation of this work, it has been confirmed for us in a most personal way that God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts. As my faithful helpmeet, her support behind the scenes has been invaluable in my pursuance of this task.

Furthermore, I wish to pay tribute to my beloved natural and spiritual father, the late Rev. Arie Elshout, pastor of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations from 1955-1991 -- seven years in the United States and twenty-nine in the Netherlands. At the age of eighteen, shortly after the Lord had begun His saving work in him, he received, upon personal request, the Redelijke Godsdienst as a birthday present from his parents. He immediately began to read these volumes with great diligence -- the first religious works he had ever read. à Brakel's work had a profound and lifelong influence upon him and clearly was used by the Lord to mold him for the ministry to which He would call him. He rejoiced in the fact that the Lord led me to translate this unique work into English. He, together with my beloved mother, often encouraged me to persevere in this task, being convinced that the Lord would also cause the English version of this work to bear fruit -- as has abundantly been true in the Netherlands.

Finally, it is my foremost desire to acknowledge the Lord humbly for having enabled me to complete this rewarding and edifying task. I have truly experienced that the Lord makes His strength perfect in weakness. To Him alone be all the glory for what has been accomplished. May it please the Lord, who sovereignly has caused this valuable work to become available to the English-speaking world, to bless the writings of this beloved servant of God. May this work also contribute to stimulate the growing interest in the writings of the divines of the Nadere Reformatie (the Second Reformation) as well as an ever-deepening appreciation for the rich Puritan heritage the Lord has preserved for us.

Above all, may God's kingdom come -- also as a result of this work. If it may please the Lord Jesus Christ to use this work to build up His people in their most holy faith and add fallen sinners as jewels to His mediatorial crown, my labors will have been richly rewarded and the deep wish of "Father Brakel" will have been fulfilled -- a wish expressed in his preface: "May the almighty and good God, who repeatedly encouraged me when I had intentions of discontinuing this task and who is the Author of whatever good is to be found in this work, pour out His Holy Spirit upon all who will either read or hear this book read." The Translator

Second Printing

We are grateful that a second printing is being called for of volume 1 of Wilhelmus à Brakel's classic, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, and pray that it may continue to be a blessing for many. This printing is identical to the first with the exception of the correction of some Hebrew and Greek spellings and transliterations, and the correction of a few typographical errors, for which we thank Rev. Charles Krahe and Raymond Van Grouw respectively. The entire four-volume set of à Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service* is now available; volume 4 contains detailed indexes.

-- BE/JRB August 1995

0.4. Biography

Wilhelmus à Brakel by Dr. W. Fieret[Note: Dr. Fieret teaches history and sociology at the Van Lodenstein College in Amersfoort, the Netherlands--a school of orthodox Reformed persuasion. He received his doctorate in history from the Rijksuniversiteit (State University) of Utrecht, the Netherlands. He is a professing member of the Oud Gereformeerde Gemeente (Old Reformed Congregation) of Woudenberg, the Netherlands.] His Youth and Education

Wilhelmus à Brakel was born on Jan 2, 1635, in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. He was the only son born to Theodorus à Brakel and Margaretha Homma -- a marriage blessed with six children. To the great joy, wonder, and gratitude of both parents, it became evident at a very early age that the fear of the

Lord was to be found in the young Wilhelmus. At a later date he was at times compared with Obadiah who, by grace, was able and privileged to say, "I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth." Later in his life à Brakel said he knew of no change in his life. From his earliest years he remembers having had a great love for His Savior Jesus Christ. A Christmas sermon by his father, Theodorus à Brakel, made a deep impression upon the young Wilhelmus. The commemoration of the fact that Jesus came into the world to save sinners had so affected him that he asked more than once, "Father, when will it be Christmas again?"

He spoke to his mother about spiritual life on numerous occasions. Once it happened that he asked her a very profound question about the life of grace. She did not respond to that question, but replied: "Child, that is beyond your understanding." This reaction caused him to become somewhat inhibited; no longer did he have the courage to speak as freely about deep spiritual matters. This was no indication, however, that his mother was indifferent toward her child. On the contrary, more than once she would tell him that she prayed so intensely for him that she would forget herself. As Monica, the mother of Augustine, prayed incessantly for the salvation of her son, so did Margaretha Homma. She would earnestly warn him, "Child, how much you will have to answer for if you do not fear God!" In spite of his longing for Christmas and his profound questions which gave evidence of spiritual life, she continued to admonish her son in love. She wanted to impress deeply upon him what it means to "lose life in order to find life," as well as the necessity of the mortification of the old man and the quickening of the new man.

Following his childhood, Wilhelmus attended the Latin school in Leeuwarden. At that time his father pastored in the village of Beers, southwest of Leeuwarden. Distance made it impossible to travel back and forth each day. Wilhelmus would come home on Saturday and return to school on Monday. His father would accompany him for some distance. As long as possible he would watch his son in the distance while quietly beseeching the Lord to protect him. This concern and dependency upon God made such a deep impression upon Wilhelmus that he would frequently be in prayer himself as he continued his walk to Leeuwarden. At the age of nineteen, in 1654, Wilhelmus matriculated at the academy of Franeker. His education was thorough and comprehensive. He studied languages, philosophy, history, was in some measure acquainted with

the study of medicine, and naturally studied his main subject, theology. Later he would write that a minister needs a thorough education. Through philosophy and natural scholarship the intellect and ability to think need to be exercised.

Upon completion of his education the twenty-four-year-old à Brakel was examined by Classis Leeuwarden (the equivalent of a presbytery). This examination included the preaching of a trial sermon. He spoke on Revelation 21:11 : "Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." The measure of satisfaction with the sermon as well as the answers given (which evidenced thorough study) were such that the brothers decided unanimously to admit him to the sacred ministry.

He was promoted to be a candidate for the ministry with a "general commission"; in addition to which, as was common in Friesland, he was also authorized to administer the sacraments. This general commission subsequently rendered him much freedom and joy in the exercise of this honorable office. Since this commission was not limited to the congregation to which he was united as minister, he deemed himself to be a sent servant wherever he came.

Views Concerning the Office of the Ministry

Having received his credentials as a candidate for the ministry, Wilhelmus à Brakel was privileged to labor in the Lord's vineyard. He considered his office to be very weighty, for a minister deals with souls created for eternity. He therefore wrote about the office of the ministry with great earnestness and urgency. In his view there is not a "more abominable man than an unregenerate minister, who uses the holy things of God to his own advantage." He sharply condemned those ministers who performed their task only to gain honor and wealth. They would have been much happier had they become shoemakers.

He deemed the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew to be indispensable for every minister since the Bible was originally written in those languages. He spoke of a "wretched congregation" if the minister of that congregation would be satisfied with a limited knowledge of theology -- a knowledge limited to what had been committed to memory. The searching of the Scriptures is a necessity: the interrelatedness of passages of Scripture needs to be searched out -- such as prophecies and their fulfilment. In short, a minister must daily, while prayerfully looking unto the Lord, engage himself in the study of His Word, as he is the mouth of the Lord to the congregation.

"All this knowledge would be insufficient for a minister, however -- à Brakel even used the phrase "of no avail" -- if he himself has neither been illuminated nor converted by the Holy Spirit, for the truths which he reads in God's Word must be found in his own heart. He must know by personal experience what conversion, prayer, believing in Christ, wrestlings of faith, the subtle delusions and assaults of Satan, darkness, the sealing work of the Spirit, selfdenial, and mortification of sin, etc., are." In addition to these two important prerequisites -- regeneration and learning -- a minister ought to be dignified, lest anyone should despise the minister of the Word of God. Such dignity should, however, not degenerate into affectation, pretending to be different from what he really is, doing so solely to make an impression upon men. As examples of such affectation à Brakel mentions the manner in which some people would wear their hat, hold their heads, or walk. "How abominable is such ludicrous affectation, which has selfaggrandizement as its mother!"

Other traits of a good minister, according to à Brakel, are love toward Christ, His cause, and His sheep; denial of one's own honor and possessions -- yes, even one's own life; and being diligent and exemplary in all things. If a called servant possessed these "prerequisite qualities," he was permitted to commence his ministry.

à Brakel mentions congregational prayer before God as being the first aspect of a minister's task; while praying he is the mouth of the congregation toward God. He ought to pray with great reverence, realizing that he is addressing the eminent majesty of God Himself. This obligation to be reverent engenders modesty and orderliness in the manner in which he expresses himself. "It is dreadful to babble some words in an unintelligible fashion, jumping from one matter to the next, and to speak on, without any rhyme or reason." Then the congregation would benefit much more if the minister were to use a form prayer.

Rev. à Brakel did not disapprove at all of a minister quietly contemplating what he would mention in his prayer and lay before the Lord. It could even be beneficial to make some notations for this purpose, as long as one would not always avail himself of them, as this would result in spiritless intercession, since in true prayer the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

If a minister is not very healthy, he should not dwell upon his weakness in public prayer before the congregation. Often a minister will elaborate upon his weakness when he did not fare too well during the sermon -- for instance, due to lack of study or to solicit admiration for doing so well in view of being so weak. à Brakel evidently had a great measure of common sense.

à Brakel mentions preaching as being the second duty, calling it "a great work." The realization that he is God's ambassador who speaks on God's behalf ought to fill the minister with fear and trembling. The Lord will take careful note of how a minister proclaims His Word. Furthermore, preaching is the means which God uses to translate souls from darkness into light -- from the domain of the prince of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. It is therefore of the greatest importance how a minister explains the Word of God. A continual prayer for a sanctified heart and the presence of the Lord Himself will then precede every sermon. For indeed, the object of every sermon must be the honor of God and the welfare of the souls entrusted to him. A good minister will not flaunt his scholarship on the pulpit, for then he is seeking to honor himself. Even if someone can preach as an angel, it is nothing more than hypocrisy if personal honor is the objective. Such preaching seeks to solicit the praise of men. Such a minister will be very satisfied if there are many people who appear to be emotionally moved. He prefers to be in the company of those who praise and even idolize him. People ought to be well aware of the fact, however, that the devil can also transform himself into an angel of light. The servants of such angels of light can indeed put on the mantle of either Elijah or John the Baptist, but their exterior deportment will be fundamentally different from their heart.

à Brakel mentions catechizing as being the third task. A minister ought to give much attention to this task. He deemed it to be the best means to instill the fundamentals of truth and godliness.

Rev. à Brakel distinguished between four types of catechism:

(1) There must be instruction for children. They are baptized and therefore belong to the church. They are, "in a manner agreeable to their level of comprehension," to be instructed in the doctrines

of Christ.

(2) There must be instruction for adults who have indicated that they wish to partake of the Lord's Supper. This initial instruction is insufficient for the partaking of this sacrament. For indeed, such must make confession of their faith and give an account of the hope that is in them. This instruction and examination must be very thorough, for -- thus warns à Brakel -- the well-being of the church is contingent upon granting permission to partake of the Lord's Supper.

(3) There must be instruction for younger and older men who are called upon to defend the truth against assaults from without and within. From this third group some could be trained to function as "assistants" to visit the sick and read in church. The most capable among them could be trained for the ministry.

(4) The subject for the final catechism class was the practice of godliness. Among the subjects which were dealt with, à Brakel mentions the following: analysis of God's dealings with souls in conversion; discussion of the present state of the soul; and giving guidance so that believers may steadfastly walk upon the way of godliness. This type of catechism does not so much consist in an address by the minister, as in having open discussions by means of questions and answers.

All these catechetical labors ought to be performed painstakingly and zealously. à Brakel was well aware of this. He wrote: "I cannot see how a minister who does not engage in the task of catechizing can live and die with a good conscience." The fourth aspect of the work of a minister consists in the visitation of the members of the congregation. Family visitation must not only be conducted prior to the administration of the Lord's Supper, but the minister ought to visit members of his congregation on a daily basis. These visits, according to à Brakel, require thorough preparation. The minister must be fully aware for what reason he makes the visit, as this will keep him from engaging in frivolous and "worldly" conversation. Fundamental matters concerning eternity ought to be discussed.

Undoubtedly the issue of family worship will then have been raised to ascertain whether this was indeed practiced -- as ought to be the case in every Christian family. Twice a day -- morning and evening, and if possible also at noon -- the father as head of the family ought to read a chapter from the Bible, explain what has been read, provide instruction for the children and the servants, and then conclude this exercise with the singing of a psalm and by offering prayer. Such exercises would bear much fruit: "The Lord will then bless the home; the children and the servants will learn to fear the Lord and thus attain salvation; it will beget mutual love and respect; and this will cause everyone to refrain from sinning. People will thus exemplify godliness to each other and emulate it."

If the father was absent for some reason, or if he was incapable of either reading or explaining, it would be the mother's obligation to assume this task. The actual goal which à Brakel pursued, and with him all the representatives of the Dutch Second Reformation, was that the family be a small church. Family visitations were therefore highly important, for ministers were obligated to stimulate people to an understanding of what their task consists.

Every member, whether poor or rich, had to be visited. It would often happen that a minister would tarry long in the residences of the rich where a glass of wine would be offered to him. Consequently, there would hardly be any time left for others. à Brakel lamented, "How wretched

are such ministers and how wretched are family visitations which are thus conducted!" The minister ought to administer the sacraments with reverence for the Lord, doing so as an ambassador of Christ. By means of this sacred administration he seals the promise of the gospel: he who believes in the Son has eternal life. This fifth aspect of the ministry would be "a dreadful desecration of the holy things" if it were to be performed in a careless manner.

à Brakel identified the use of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven as the last aspect of the work of a minister. This task is performed while delivering the sermon, whereby the forgiveness of sins by virtue of the merits of Christ is proclaimed to believers, whereas unbelievers are admonished to repent since they continue to live under the wrath of God. Eternal damnation is imminent for them if they remain unconverted. With care and a sense of responsibility the minister ought to make use of the authority entrusted to him. The use of the second key, Christian discipline, is not the jurisdiction of the minister alone, but rests with the entire consistory (i.e. session). In order to stimulate himself and others, à Brakel concludes his description of the office of the ministry with a word of warning concerning the account that will once have to be given before God. The Lord will ask how the congregation has been dealt with: "How did you deal with souls? Are you to be blamed for any of them going lost? Did you tenderly give attention to My lambs and sucklings? Or did you unjustly grieve them, slay them, and take their veil away from them? Where are the souls which by means of your service have been converted, comforted, and built up?"

à Brakel writes that for many ministers this will be a grievous examination. They will wish to have never occupied that office -- yes, never to have been born. How dreadful it will be if you must perish due to your own sin and guilt! It will be a dreadful burden to hear the accusations of misled and neglected souls: "You knew very well that I was ignorant and lived in sin. If you had looked after me, had warned and rebuked me, and instructed and directed me in the way of salvation, I would have been saved. Look, however, you unfaithful minister, you unfaithful elder -- I am now going lost! Let God require my blood from your hand, and deal with you as a wicked and lazy servant." On the other hand, many faithful ministers will also be found. The Lord will bring their work, prayers, comforts, and admonitions to the foreground and say to them, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Someone who writes so solemnly about the ministerial office which he himself held, will have engaged himself in this task with all his energy -- in spite of the realization of imperfection and sinfulness. This was indeed true for Wilhelmus à Brakel. Also in his magnum opus, *De Redelijke Godsdienst* [The Christian's Reasonable Service] -- which occasionally is referred to as the most popular Dutch dogmatics of the eighteenth century -- he continually pointed to the one thing needful, and instructed believers. In his exposition of doctrinal tenets he did not restrict himself to a dry and logical discourse. For example, when dealing with the prophetic office of Christ, after a clear explanation of what this office entails, he addresses the unconverted as follows: "You who are unconverted, reflect upon your case for a moment! How long has this Prophet already been engaged in instructing you? How many servants has He already sent to you? How often has He convinced you of sin, of your unconverted state, and of eternal condemnation? How frequently has He persuaded you to become a Christian, to repent, and to enter into a covenant with Him? ... Tell me, would it not be just if this Prophet were to turn away from you, and let you go your own way, since you do not desire to hear Him anyway? Has He not stretched out His hands long enough to

you? If He were to cease doing so at this moment, would not your condemnation be just?"

He reminds the regenerate that they were no better. Instead, the Lord in His great mercy persevered and by His almighty power opened their hard heart. It therefore behooved them to be grateful and astonished, for it was the work of the Lord alone. These words are followed, however, by an admonition and exhortation: "Consider, however, at the same time how disobediently you behave yourself concerning this Prophet. You have but a glimmer of light, and should you be satisfied with that?"

Sermons In the few sermons of à Brakel which have been preserved, we again encounter him as a serious minister. In every sermon he addressed all who were present; no one left the church without being warned. He addressed words of comfort to believers. They are united to Christ and are His property for time and eternity. In this context à Brakel stated, "Only he who is in Christ is a new creature." The state of the regenerate is much more glorious than that of Adam in the state of rectitude, for their union with Christ is unbreakable. All blessings and benefits issue forth from this gracious gift. That this is indeed a gift of God Himself is continually stressed by à Brakel: "God alone is the One who conceives, begins, and accomplishes salvation. Paul therefore states in Php 1:1-30 that He who has begun this good work shall also finish it. Therefore, the work of salvation must neither be initiated by nor derived from our own strength, but from God alone." Elsewhere in his sermons he states, "The Lord is the cause of our new nature, and not man -- not in the least measure."

Regardless of the grace the regenerate had received, à Brakel considered it to be his task to give them further instruction; for indeed, there are children, young men, men, and fathers in grace. "Do whatever you can to please Him and render Him pleasure by always giving heed to and improving His stirrings within; by always being submissive to His leadings; and being opposed to sin and committed to virtue -- so that He may seal you more and more and strengthen your soul."

Converted people can so easily grieve the Spirit of God when, for example, there is no special comfort subsequent to the administration of the Lord's Supper. Dissatisfaction with that is an expression of being at odds with God's leading. "Even though you may have prepared yourself well, He is not obligated to give you your wish." Others were warned against being excessively concerned about committed sins. Such a concern is not good; he called it "an unprofitable concern." Isaiah's words, "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength," ought to be observed more. In this manner à Brakel directed the converted to Paul's example of the spiritual race: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Php 3:14). The contrast between those who may possess this "most eminent life of grace" and those who still live for their own account is great. They live "a most wretched life." Unregenerate men are dead in spiritual matters. à Brakel, in one of his sermons, made a comparison between a naturally and spiritually dead person. As a person who is dead in a natural sense is stiff and cold, likewise a spiritually dead person is cold in spiritual matters. In a profound sense he is also insensitive to the Word of God. Even if an unconverted person exerts himself to please God, he finds no delight in it. "O wretched condition -- yes, thrice wretched men! Give ear, you who are spiritually dead; that is, if you are able to hear. Do you not know that you are dead before God, and thus also in all your works? As long as you remain thus, death will be stamped upon all that you do."

After having addressed the unconverted in such an earnest manner, he calls them to repentance. There are three examples in the Bible of people who have been resurrected: the daughter of Jairus, the young man of Nain, and Lazarus. Therefore, "do not despair, but rather look unto this living Jesus and listen to His Word. For, when He called Lazarus, He also gave him the ability to hear. This Jesus is mighty to make you alive, for He is the resurrection and life itself." When someone is sick, he will drink a potion, causing him to expel all the corruption in his body in order to regain his health. Thus, the sinner must remove the evil from his soul by means of a true confession of guilt before God. It is essential for every unconverted person to examine his entire life in the light of the law -- from commandment to commandment. Then it will be evident that the entire law has been transgressed. The Lord pronounces judgment -- the curse of the law -- upon everyone who transgresses His commandments. In one's own strength there is no expectation of deliverance; despair therefore of your own ability. This will be followed by deep humiliation before the Lord, an earnest confession of guilt, and a supplicating for grace. "Persevere in this until you receive it. You will experience that He who has never said to the seed of Jacob 'seek Me in vain,' will manifest Himself while you are inquiring after Him. ... Even if you had committed the sins of all men in a most dreadful manner, there is a sufficient fullness in Jesus." The third group addressed by à Brakel were the hypocrites. [Note: The author uses "geveinsden," "huichelaars," and "hypocrieten," all of which are translated as "hypocrites" in English.] Some are conscious of the fact that they are deceiving themselves for eternity. Consciously they convince themselves that they possess true faith. Such blatant hypocrites, as à Brakel called them, are not so dangerous for the church. The sophisticated hypocrites, however, have much in common with true believers. It can be that they have such exceptional insight into the fundamentals of religion that they can even instruct others with profit. This can be accompanied by an aversion for sin, so that they see themselves as sinners who have made themselves worthy of God's eternal judgments. They confess God to be just in all His punishments. This does not lead them to despair, for by the so-called common operations of the Spirit -- in contrast with the special, saving operations of God the Holy Spirit -- they see the all-sufficiency of Christ as having merited salvation. With urgency, Rev. à Brakel pointed the members of his congregation to the warning examples which are given in the Bible: Herod was pleased to hear John the Baptist; Simon the Sorcerer was a member of the congregation of Samaria, having been baptized and of whom the Christians said that he was a great power of God; Judas Iscariot, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Himself and the other eleven disciples, partook of the Lord's Supper; and, in the parable, the ten virgins all went to meet the bridegroom -- being similar in so many respects, whereas five of them were nevertheless foolish. In one of his sermons à Brakel made a distinction between the sorrow for sin which many have whose conversion is but counterfeit, and the sorrow which true believers have. The sorrow of the first issues forth from a fear for punishment, whereas with the latter there is a sorrow for sin itself, God's goodness and justice having been offended thereby. Hypocrites can also hate sin and be desirous to live a holy life. They deem such a life to be a bitter potion, however -- which, alas, is a prerequisite unto salvation. The true believer, even if he could be saved without living a godly life, would not desire this, for it is his wish to live a life acceptable to God and pleasing to Him.

à Brakel identified self-examination as one of the preeminent activities a listener must engage in. He quotes Hebrews 6:1-20, where mention is made of people who have been enlightened, have tasted the heavenly gift, have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come (that is, of life after this life), who nevertheless

became apostate and thus did not possess true saving faith. "A hypocrite can be a partaker of God in some measure, at least as far as His ordinances and gracious gifts are concerned, being a partaker of some remote operations of the Spirit. They are not -- which, however, is true for every believer -- of one spirit with the Lord." In his sermons, à Brakel regularly addressed the government and exhorted it to carry out its task properly. Rulers ought to give a good example in all areas -- especially in the realm of justice. By exercising justice indiscriminately toward all men, the government will grow stronger. Moreover, God Himself requires this: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Samuel 23:3). à Brakel mentions the example of two Roman government officials of whom it was said that it would be easier to pluck the sun from the firmament than to accuse them of injustice. Such was the measure of moral fortitude issuing forth from Roman philosophy. Would then grace not exert a much greater influence? "Oh, that governments and those who govern would find their delight primarily in the exercise of justice." Regretfully, à Brakel had to conclude that there were many judges in the Republic who were blind to justice. Ungodly lawyers were representing cases which they knew were indefensible. These matters were the cause of God's displeasure toward the Netherlands.

He denounced other sins, such as frequenting fairs, desecrating God's Name and day, drunkenness, excess, and proud dress. Even on days of penitence there were people who would come to church dressed according to French fashion -- a nation which suppressed the Netherlands for such a long period. He reminded them of the cruelties which the French committed in 1672 -- a year of great calamity [Note: In Dutch history this year is referred to as "het rampjaar"--the year of disaster.] .

Rather than excess -- also as far as eating and drinking are concerned -- moderation ought to be practiced. Besides a Christian's duty to be moderate in light of being a stranger in this world -- "there is but a very minimal partition which separates them from heaven" -- moderation also yields advantages for man's intellect and memory. à Brakel advised that one should eat "a sober diet, for too much food and drink is harmful to the brain, and this in turn renders the memory weak." The weakening of the memory would be detrimental to the retention of spiritual knowledge, for the truths of the gospel must be hid and stored in the heart. Indeed, it is the gospel which directs the sinner in the way which he must go to attain eternal life. By nature man has, however, but little room for the things of God's kingdom. Instead, old songs which one learned at an earlier time, as well as former suffering and sinful deeds, are remembered for many years, whereas a sermon is forgotten after a few hours. Thus, evil is continually retained in man's thoughts.

Rev. à Brakel, in one of his sermons, compared the memory of a fallen man to a sieve: that which is good falls through it and disappears, and that which is sinful remains. Thus, man forgets what he should primarily be thinking about: God, our Creator and Preserver; His Son Jesus Christ who gave Himself for the sins of His people; religious truths (are there not many people who have heard God's Word preached and yet are unable to describe faith as it functions in the soul?); the duties prescribed by Christian doctrine, such as visiting prisoners and the observance of the Lord's Day; hospitality; our committed sins which we ought to hate; our vows which we made in times of danger or during a serious illness ("Do not be deceived; God will not permit Himself to be mocked. He has various ways whereby He will cause you to remember them"); the church of God throughout the entire world; and the end of our life.

Pray for renewal of heart, for in conversion all the faculties of the soul are renewed, and thus also our corrupt memory. "Grace fills the gap (in the memory) which sin has made." Believers must see to it that their memories are not excessively filled with worldly things, for then there will no longer be room for spiritual matters. Especially young people whose "memories are still vigorous," must frequently think upon their Creator. Later in life this faculty will be weakened due to sorrow and grief. "Therefore, obtain a Bible, books, a catechism, and a collection of beautiful texts and good instructions. They will not occupy much space." Parents, for example, ought to stimulate their children in this respect by asking them questions about the sermons they hear. Children must have the doctrine according to godliness impressed upon them from their youth. They so easily depart from the way, often causing their parents great sorrow. "Parents, how grievous it would be to bring forth children who will tear down God's temple. Therefore, be diligent in giving them a godly education and pray for them."

à Brakel gave some advice concerning training one's memory. First of all both temperature and humidity need to be comfortable. "Cold brains engender forgetfulness." As a second help he mentions a peaceful conscience; then one's memory is receptive for everything. A third help is repetition. To that end à Brakel advanced the idea that it was useful to take notes of what one heard during the sermon. He called this a good means "to keep you wakeful during the administration of God's ordinances. One will then neither sleep nor look around, which would be detrimental to our mind, causing our thoughts to wander elsewhere." It ought to be recognized, however, that the Spirit's teaching excels this. The truth of the gospel ought to be engraved in our hearts to such an extent that with the Roman, Cassius Severus -- when the Senate ordered that his book be burned -- one could say: "You may as well burn me also, for it is written in my heart." Forgetfulness can be an impediment to our conversion. "How can we be repentant of or grieve over what we have so readily forgotten?" We must not think that God will forget sin. "Verily, I shall never forget their works."

Those who were of the opinion, however, that salvation was to be obtained via a good memory and much knowledge, were corrected by à Brakel with the remark that there are indeed people who can repeat everything; however, when it comes to the practice of godliness they are but midgets. Knowledge without love will puff a person up, and will engender high thoughts of self and a looking down upon others. Therefore, strive to obtain that knowledge which is associated with love, for "it has its origin in God."

Pastorates in Friesland[Note: Friesland is one of the twelve provinces of the Netherlands.] For more than forty-nine years, Wilhelmus à Brakel served various congregations in the national church of the Netherlands. After having completed his studies in Franeker in 1659, he did not immediately receive a call. There were scarcely any vacancies in Friesland at that time. à Brakel, who then was twenty-four years of age, went to Utrecht where, until 1662, he received instruction from the well-known theologians Gisbertus Voetius and Andreas Essenius.

1662-1665: Exmorra In 1662 he received a call from the congregation of Exmorra. This village is located in the province of Friesland, southwest of Leeuwarden [Note: Leeuwarden is the capital of the province of Friesland.] and a short distance from Makkum where his father, Theodorus à Brakel, had been pastor for a period of time. The vacancy in Exmorra was only the third in Friesland since 1659, there evidently being no shortage of ministers. Yet they called a young and

inexperienced candidate for the ministry. The reason for this was, according to one of à Brakel's contemporaries, that his preaching gifts had become known. During the period between 1659 and 1662 he had preached fairly regularly in addition to his studies.

Exmorra was not an easy congregation, as he had to cope with much indifference among its population. He nevertheless labored with great zeal in his congregation and utilized all his talents as he endeavored to cause God's Word to find entrance. His attention was so strongly focused upon his congregation that he was hardly known outside Exmorra. A contemporary said of him that he buried himself as it were within this village. Approximately a year and one half after his installation in Exmorra, the young minister married Sara Nevius. His tenure in Exmorra would not last long; after three years he received a call from the much larger congregation of Stavoren, a port city at the Zuiderzee [Note: During the days of à Brakel the Zuiderzee was an extension of the North Sea reaching into the very heart of the Netherlands. This sea which has now been severed from the North Sea via a large dam (the "Afsluitdijk") is presently known as "Het IJselmeer" (the IJsel lake).] . Rev. Abraham Hellenbroek, who delivered the funeral sermon upon à Brakel's decease in 1711, commented: "The Lord wanted to use him for a greater task." His departure must have been to the regret of the congregation of Exmorra, there being evidence of a "noticeable stirring and blessing" during his tenure. He nevertheless believed that he had to depart. He considered the call for help from Stavoren, which was without a minister at that time, to be a divine mandate. 1665-1670: Stavoren

Shortly after his installation on December 3, 1665, it became evident that the congregation was too large for one minister. The ministers who had served this congregation prior to à Brakel were evidently not of that opinion; however, the new minister wanted to serve this much larger congregation with the same zeal and faithfulness as he had served the significantly smaller congregation of Exmorra. The congregation of Stavoren, due to the costs involved, was not able -- or perhaps not willing -- to call a second minister.

Rev. à Brakel then turned to princess Albertina Agnes of Orange, a daughter of governor Frederik Hendrik, born to him in 1634. She was governor on behalf of her son -- the Frisian governor Hendrik Casimir II -- who was under age. The request for a contribution towards filling the vacancy for a second ministerial position was honored by her; she gave fl. 800.00 from her own means. This was a considerable amount for that time -- an amount to be paid each year. à Brakel decided to forego his own guaranteed salary from the city and receive the much less secure salary from the governor's mansion. He made this decision to remove all objections for calling a second minister.

Rev. à Brakel was most grateful toward the princess. When the book *De trappen des Geestelijken Levens* [The Steps of Spiritual Life] by his late father, Theodorus à Brakel, was published in 1670, Wilhelmus dedicated it to her. He wished her God's blessing in temporal things, but above all with regard to spiritual life. She was evidently a good example for other government officials -- as evidenced by her care for the congregation of Stavoren.

During his tenure in Stavoren, à Brakel came into contact with the French revival preacher, Jean de Labadie. From a letter written at a later date -- à Brakel already resided in Rotterdam -- it is evident that he initially did not reject this gifted minister and his objectives. (In the section, "Pastorate in Rotterdam," more attention will be given to the relationship between à Brakel and the

Labadists.) Not much is known about à Brakel's work in Stavoren since both consistorial minutes and records of city resolutions (ordinances of the city government) are lacking. In the previously mentioned funeral sermon, Rev. Hellenbroek said, "The extraordinary fruit which he enjoyed in Stavoren has been very significant and widely recognized." Thus, also in this city his labors were not in vain in the Lord.

1670-1673: Harlingen

After having labored in Stavoren as a minister of God's Word for five years, a call was extended to à Brakel by Harlingen which, after Leeuwarden, was the largest and wealthiest city of Friesland. Business flourished in Harlingen, an old fortified city. Due to its favorable location, being a port city at the Zuiderzee, there was intense shipping traffic. The increased prominence of the city was evident, among other things, from the transfer of the naval headquarters of Friesland and Groningen [Note: Groningen is the province adjacent to the province of Friesland.] from Dokkum to Harlingen in 1645. Rev. à Brakel accepted the call which had been extended to him in January, 1670 after the death of one of the four ministers in the city, Rev. M. B. Brugbon. He labored in Harlingen for three years with much blessing. Rev. Hellenbroek testified, "The shining forth of the countenance of God upon his ministry was also so evident for him there, that the blessing which he enjoyed and the love of the congregation for him can hardly be expressed. A wondrous change took place under his ministry. He has begotten a multitude of spiritual children there." In *The Christian's Reasonable Service* à Brakel himself makes mention of the extraordinary blessing he experienced in Harlingen. When dealing with the prophetic office of the Lord Jesus and the duty of believers to conduct themselves as prophets toward their fellowmen in explaining the hidden matters of Scripture, he writes that there were six or eight young women in Harlingen who "gave themselves to be prophetesses in the service of the Lord." They traversed the congregation and stirred people up to acquire knowledge and to repent. The Lord richly blessed those labors and many people were converted.

After à Brakel had resided in Harlingen for more than a year, there was much unrest in the Republic of the Netherlands. The events which took place at that time (1672) were of such a far-reaching nature that this year is referred to as the year of disaster. Much also transpired in Friesland. Although there was not much fighting in this region, tensions were high. The aristocratic "grietmannen" who on the basis of old charters had great influence, formed a clique of regents and gradually gained power in the Frisian states. There was dissatisfaction concerning this among the population, which was further aggravated by the heavy tax burden. There was even the threat of rebellion. Added to this were the panic and fright caused by the unexpected attack upon the Republic from four sides: France, England, Munster, and Cologne.

Stirred by the threatening danger, the ministers of Classis Franeker (to which also Harlingen belonged) resolved "that they would unitedly join hands before God's countenance, and not without tears" exert themselves with new zeal for the interests of the church. They confessed that due to numerous offenses they had become "largely abhorrent and unprofitable." At the same time, probably at the request of the government, the resolution was made to convene all the ministers from the region of Friesland in Leeuwarden. From all the classes of Friesland the ministers traveled to the capital. Most of them probably arrived by canal barge. This assembly of 156 ministers took place in July, 1672. It appointed a committee, consisting of six ministers from its

midst, to address the parliament of the commonwealth of Friesland, requesting that the proposals for the liberation of this region and the removal of dissatisfaction be implemented. The most significant request -- the promotion of Hendrik Casimir II, who was but fifteen years old, as governor and commander-in-chief of Friesland -- was already granted a day later. A short time later the ministers again visited the state parliament to "admonish the honorable gentlemen, yes, to beseech them in Christ's Name that they be inclined to investigate and purify all those unhealthy conditions which had also polluted them and brought disarray among them." By taking measures it was hoped that God would be merciful and that thus the land be spared and the church be blessed more abundantly.

It seems that the forceful action of the ministers encouraged the Frisian commonwealth which, due to the rapid succession of both war and dissatisfaction, was in a state of despair. The bishop of Munster met with resistance when he invaded the southeastern part of Friesland. In addition to this, several dikes in this region had been slashed. The Frisians were safe behind their water barrier and the advance of the army from Munster stagnated. Later this army withdrew itself from southeastern Friesland and the siege of Groningen had to be discontinued as well. Bishop Barend van Galen attributed the valiant stance of Friesland to the ministers, whom he furiously cursed with the words: "der Teufel hole die Pfaffen" (May the devil get those popes). The action of the ministers probably prevented excessive manifestations of popular wrath as occurred in the province of Holland. There Johan and Cornelis de Witt were murdered in a most abominable manner in August, 1672.

After stability had in some measure returned, a general Frisian Synod was held. This assembly decided to proceed with the work of reformation. All ministers were under obligation to preach from the Heidelberg Catechism on Sunday afternoon. Those who failed to do so were resolutely excluded from all synodical and classical assemblies. More attention also had to be given to the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline. In short, some measures needed to be taken, the objective being to promote a further reformation of society at large.

These and other measures undoubtedly met with Wilhelmus à Brakel's approval. The fact that the government also exerted pressure to have these resolutions implemented must have caused him and others to rejoice. To have the government function as a wall surrounding the church was an ideal which many espoused as far as the relationship between church and state was concerned.

1673-1683: Leeuwarden

Shortly after this turbulent period, à Brakel received a fourth call -- this time from the Frisian capital, Leeuwarden. In the case of Leeuwarden we are well-informed as to the manner in which a call was extended. It was the consistory rather than the congregation which cast the deciding vote as far as selecting a minister to be called. It was not true, however, that the consistory could act entirely on its own in extending a call. The government also had some jurisdiction in this matter. The first thing a consistory was obligated to do was to ask the local government (i.e., the magistrate) for permission to extend a call. When this was granted, the consistory would establish a list of twelve candidates. During a subsequent meeting, six would be selected from this list, from which in turn three would be selected. After this a delegation of the consistory would go to the magistrate to inform him about the names of the three remaining candidates. The commissioners would then decide whether a minister could be called from this trio.

After the consistory had made its final decision, the magistrate would be informed of this as well. Concurrently, the call letter would be delivered to the minister -- usually by the caretaker of the church. A consistory committee would then visit the consistory of the congregation which the called minister was presently serving, as well as the Classis to which that congregation belonged. In taking all these steps they would beseech the Lord that the decisions about to be made, and those already made, would be in His favor. The calling procedure was not the same in all congregations. In some cases the government would make up a gross list from which the consistory could make a choice. In rural areas it was frequently a requirement to obtain permission from gentlemen or ladies belonging to the nobility, based on ancient privileges. The government's involvement was logical since it paid the salaries. There was the danger, however, that the civil government would involve itself in matters which were purely ecclesiastical in nature. We shall observe subsequently that it was particularly à Brakel who recognized this danger and would resolutely correct the government when it would overstep its boundaries.

After the foregoing procedure had been followed, Rev. Wilhelmus à Brakel could be installed in the city of his birth in 1673, it being the largest city of Friesland with a population fluctuating between 15,000 and 20,000. The provincial government was located in this city, and it was especially the presence of the governor's residence, along with its resident nobility, which gave Leeuwarden the appearance of a distinguished city.

There was much work for the six ministers who resided in Leeuwarden. Three services were conducted on Sunday in the "Groote" or "Jacobijnerkerk," two in the "Galileerkerk," and also two in the "Westerkerk." On Monday, catechism instruction for the public was provided in the "Groote Kerk," and there was a morning service on Wednesday. In the "Westerkerk" there was a morning service on Friday, and "kapittelpreken" (literally, chapter sermons) were delivered on Thursday in the "Galileerkerk." There was a temporary intermission in this sequence during the passion weeks, since attention was then given to passion material. In addition to these services, there were also the various catechism classes and family visitations. Every minister was obligated to visit every family in his parish at least prior to the administration of the Lord's Supper. This sacrament was administered five times annually. The other pastoral labors -- such as visitation of the sick and attendance at consistory, classical, and synodical meetings -- must have also demanded much time.

Discord Concerning the "Conventicles"

Rev. à Brakel was even busier than that, for in addition to his official labors, he organized church gatherings for godly persons who desired more depth in their spiritual life. These house services or "conventicles" were referred to earlier already when mention was made of the various catechism classes (p. xxxvii). In his previous congregations, Stavoren and Harlingen, à Brakel had also led similar services. In addition to hearing expositions about portions of the Bible and the explanation of doctrine, there was a desire among members of the congregation to speak about the inner, experiential life of faith -- the practice of godliness. These services were held in private homes.

à Brakel saw many advantages in these services. They could result in the revival of the life of faith as well as of the entire church; and thus they most suitably complemented his endeavor to bring about a further reformation. The consistory was not in favor of this, however, being fearful that this would give rise to a church within a church as well as the possible danger of schism.

Precisely during that time the Labadists had returned from Germany, and settled in Wiewerd, Friesland. These followers of Jean de Labadie had separated themselves from the church and formed an exclusive group to which only believers could join themselves. From his later writings it is evident, that à Brakel was vehemently opposed to the Labadists. The consistory decided that it would take measures to forbid the conducting of private services. In October, 1676, à Brakel was accused by Classis Leeuwarden of continuing to conduct "his inappropriate and unauthorized catechism classes which were held in secret" in spite of the resolution made by the parliament of Friesland that "coventicles" could only be held with the knowledge and approbation of the consistory. This ordinance of the Frisian government was probably intended for the Labadists, but was now used by the opponents of à Brakel. After Classis Sneek also had issued a prohibition concerning "coventicles," the consistory of Leeuwarden drafted a resolution which determined that every minister could instruct individuals in his own parish who were not sufficiently educated but who had expressed their desire to partake of the Lord's Supper. For those who were more advanced, a public catechism class would be held, which would be conducted by all the ministers, each taking his turn. à Brakel acquiesced in this decision, but not with his whole heart. It must seriously be asked whether this decision of the consistory issued from a true concern for the welfare of the church or whether it was motivated by envy. The Koelman Controversy

There was another issue which brought à Brakel into conflict with the consistory -- the fact that he allowed Rev. Jacobus Koelman to preach. This forthright minister, who in addition to his theological study also received a doctorate in philosophy, had particularly become renowned for his serious endeavor to bring about a further reformation. He, along with à Brakel, detected serious spiritual lukewarmness, aggravated by the laxness of many ministers in preaching and of consistories in exercising ecclesiastical discipline. A variety of sins, such as frequenting fairs, public drunkenness, desecration of the Sunday, abuse of the sacraments, etc., were committed by many members of the church. The government, whose duty it was to make ordinances to restrain the sins of its subjects, was also lax in opposing public sin. When Koelman was installed in Sluis, Zeeuwsvlaanderen, [Note: This is the southern portion of the province Zeeland.] in 1662, he made it his objective to warn the population incessantly against sin and to exercise discipline vigorously if necessary. That he did this without having respect of persons was evident in his action taken against two government officials, Commissioner Brienens and Mayor Sluymer. Both men were guilty of drunkenness, and Sluymer had even fought in public. The fact that he did not spare these men earned him their wrath as well as that of a number of magistrates. The government hardly cooperated in carrying out those resolutions which called for reformation. Nevertheless, a certain measure of spiritual prosperity became evident in the congregation -- especially due to impressions left by the plague in 1666 and the events in 1672, "the year of disaster." In striving for spiritual revival, Koelman also objected to the forms read at the administration of Baptism and the celebration of the Lord's Supper, as well as all form prayers. It was his view that these forms caused deadness and a lack of zeal whereby "godliness is greatly inhibited; they greatly suppress, limit, and quench the Spirit. They greatly increase a lack of self-knowledge and it entrenches people in laziness, carnal sloth, and ignorance." In opposition to this "routine religion" [Note: The Dutch reads: "Sleur-en slenterdienst."] engendered by forms and form prayers, he proposed that speaking and praying should occur extemporaneously.

One would then be in need of and ask for God's help, and it would be beneficial for spiritual life. He also condemned ecclesiastical feast days. Their institution was not commanded in the Bible and was a human invention reminiscent of the Roman Catholic Church with all her anniversaries and holy days. The Lord instituted the Sabbath so that the salvific events of Jesus' birth, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension could repeatedly be commemorated.

Due to his consistent stand -- he refused to read the forms and preach about the salvific event related to a given Christian feast day -- charges were filed against Koelman by his opponents. The parliament of Zeeland (the civil government) involved itself and gave Koelman a choice: yield or leave Sluis. He neither could nor was willing to subject himself, and while a mourning congregation bade him farewell, the minister departed from Sluis on Jun 17, 1675. After sometime he arrived in Amsterdam. Wherever he came he was informed that he could not preach. Nevertheless, he deemed it to be his calling and therefore organized "house services."

Rev. à Brakel made the situation of Koelman his concern. When the exiled minister came to Leeuwarden -- the two men evidently knew each other -- à Brakel permitted him to preach in his place. During the classical meetings of 1676 and 1677 it was pointed out to à Brakel that he was not permitted to allow Koelman to preach. The Classis did not wish to impose a prohibition upon him, but he was advised to conduct himself with caution. At the Synod of Friesland, over which à Brakel presided, the proposal was made by a delegate from Zuid-Holland [Note: One of the coastal provinces of the Netherlands.] to impose upon Koelman a general prohibition to preach. à Brakel vehemently opposed this. The most significant argument he advanced was that Koelman had never been subjected to ecclesiastical discipline, nor had been deposed as a minister, but rather that this had been initiated by the government. He was of the opinion that "no political body had the authority to depose a minister." The delegates of the parliament of Friesland, who were always present at such meetings, were offended since in their opinion à Brakel had spoken of the government in an insulting manner. At this meeting they announced that they would inform the parliament of this discourse. In July of that year à Brakel received an invitation to appear before the parliament of Friesland. Before the "offended" government officials he stated that the accusation of insult was unfounded. Furthermore, there was no need for him to be present, for a minister is not accountable to the civil government about ecclesiastical matters. The fact that Koelman was no longer permitted to preach was unlawful, for he had not been deposed by an ecclesiastical assembly. He expressed his view in two "remonstrances" (grievances) which he forwarded to the parliament. However, the parliament was not convinced. Retribution had to be meted out for having offended "his majesty." The penalty was a four-week suspension of ministerial duties. Both the consistory and the Classis would be informed about this decision.

Rev. à Brakel declared boldly before the parliament that he would not subject himself to this penalty, "and that he would be obliged to continue preaching, even if he would shortly have to lay down his life." On Friday, July 21, it was à Brakel's turn to preach again. Tension was mounting. From various quarters he received advice to let someone else take his turn, and a delegation of the consistory would then go to the parliament with the request that any penalty to be meted out to à Brakel be imposed by ecclesiastical assemblies. Thus they were of the opinion that the government had overstepped its bounds; however, many delegates thought it too precarious to oppose them directly in this matter.

Rev. à Brakel, however, ignored this well-intended advice. On Thursday, July 20, late in the evening, a sheriffs officer arrived to inform him that he had received written orders from the parliament to prevent the suspended minister from preaching. He asked à Brakel not to go to church for the purpose of administering the Word. à Brakel replied that he would not oppose the use of force, but he was neither desirous nor able to stay away voluntarily. The following day à Brakel went to church at the usual time. There must undoubtedly have been more churchgoers than would normally have been the case. Those who were anticipating a riot were disappointed, however, for there was neither a sheriff's officer nor anyone else who prevented him from preaching. Without any disturbance he was privileged to proclaim the Word of his Master. He perceived this to be an answer to prayer.

After the service several consistory members visited him to ask on behalf of the parliament whether he would be willing to make confession of guilt for those expressions which were difficult to accept. They would then leave the matter of discipline to the church. This was precisely à Brakel's objective and he was certainly prepared to offer his apologies if he had unintentionally offended the government. A statement was drafted in which he promised to render the government the respect to which it was entitled and to exhort others to do likewise. Hereby the matter became a closed case. The government had acknowledged that in this matter of principle the church had the right to govern its own territory. The government indeed had a task in support of the church, but not a task within the church. By virtue of this courageous conduct, à Brakel became known everywhere. Particularly after the publication of *Waarachtig Verhaal van de rekenschap gegeven van D. Wilhelmus à Brakel wegens zijn E. verdediging van 't Becht der kerke* [True Account of the Explanation given by Rev. Wilhelmus à Brakel in Defense of the Rights of the Church] -- in which in all probability a colleague of à Brakel gives an accurate account of the events -- this controversy and its outcome became known everywhere. It is made clear in this publication that à Brakel could not have conducted himself differently. On the title page it is stated that it was published "to the conviction of ministers given to flattery and to the encouragement of fearful ministers in the Netherlands." The Frisian government will probably have regretted this publication even more than being forced to yield in the à Brakel controversy. The Van Giffen Controversy The first book authored by Wilhelmus à Brakel was published during these years. The reason for writing was a difference of opinion with Cocceian minister, David Flud van Giffen. A characteristic of the followers of Cocceius was that they believed that prophetic types of the Lord Jesus could be found throughout the Old Testament. If a given prophecy was not that clear, the text would be exegeted in an unnatural manner. One would then read things into the text which were not to be found in it. One of the ministers of Leeuwarden, during the winter of 1679-1680, had denounced the prophetic exposition of Psalms 8:1-9. He viewed this psalm as a doxology of the majesty of God and His government in nature over all men. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. ... When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" (Psalms 8:1-4). When Rev. van Giffen, who served the neighboring village of De Knijp, led a service for one of à Brakel's colleagues, he preached about the same psalm and stated with great emphasis that this psalm was a prophecy about the anticipated advent of Christ. It was so obvious that the sermon was a defense of the Cocceian position, that it engendered dissatisfaction among churchgoers and consistory members. That same day Rev. van Giffen was informed that "the correct exposition"

would be given on the next Sunday. Rev. à Brakel took this task upon himself. He explained clearly that one could not explain this psalm to be a prophecy about the condition of the church in the time of the New Testament. Rather, this psalm expresses the holy amazement of a child of God about the glory of God as revealed in the preservation and government of the entire earth -- and particularly in God's care for His children. This sermon was published under the title *David's Hallelujah, ofte lof des Heeren in den achste Psalm, verklaert, tot navolginge voorgesteld, en de verdedicht* [David's Hallelujah, or the Praises of the Lord in the Eighth Psalm Expounded, the Practice Thereof Advocated and Defended]. It was soon sold out. Since reconciliation between the two ministers fortunately came about afterwards, à Brakel rightfully deemed it incorrect to republish this sermon in unaltered form. Instead of that portion in which the Cocceian view was denounced, à Brakel wrote an extensive treatise on the covenant of grace. The title of this new book (reprinted as recently as 1979) was: *Halleluja of Lof des Heeren over het genadeverbond opgesteld naar aanleiding van de verklaring van Psalms 8:1-9* [Hallelujah, or the Praises of the Lord Relative to the Covenant of Grace, Composed as a Result of the Exposition of Psalms 8:1-9]. In spite of all the stir surrounding these three controversies -- the "conventicler," giving Koelman permission to preach, and the discord with Rev. van Giffen -- à Brakel's primary task remained caring for the congregation. As in his three previous pastorates, he pastored painstakingly. His great gifts as a preacher and his forthright conduct caused him to be highly respected in Leeuwarden. It has been suggested that the parliament did not dare to force the issue with à Brakel in view of the love he enjoyed from the population.

It is not surprising that à Brakel received several calls. In 1678 the congregation of Middelburg extended a call to him, which he declined. In 1683, a call from Rotterdam followed, one of the largest cities in the republic with a population of approximately 55,000. In January of that year a minister of Rotterdam, Franciscus Ridderus, had died. The consistory regretted the departure of this renowned minister and was desirous to have an equally capable minister as a replacement. Rev. Hellenbroek noted, "No one was more qualified than à Brakel, the great light of the Frisians. It had shone long enough in Friesland and now the time had come that Holland was to share in this light." After à Brakel had served Leeuwarden for ten years, the call from Rotterdam arrived in July or August, 1683. He declined this call. The consistory of Leeuwarden had acquiesced in a wish which à Brakel had cherished for some time, that is, to be the only one to catechize in the "Westerkerk" on Sunday and Wednesday, and thus not have to share this assignment with others. This wish was undoubtedly related to the "conventicles" in and around Leeuwarden. The fact that the consistory acquiesced in this wish (the opinions as to why vary) indicates that they were desirous to keep à Brakel as a minister.

There was disappointment in Rotterdam about à Brakel's decision, and it was decided to extend a second call to him. A special emissary, carrying with him letters of the magistrate and consistory of Rotterdam for à Brakel himself and the consistory and government of Leeuwarden, traveled to the north. On this journey he was accompanied by "many prayers of the godly." à Brakel had no freedom to decline this second call, and to the disappointment of the consistory of Leeuwarden he bade them farewell. For twenty-one years à Brakel had administered the Word of His Master in Friesland.

Pastorate in Rotterdam The journey from Leeuwarden to Rotterdam was made by ship -- from Harlingen they sailed onto the "Zuiderzee."

During this journey a fierce windstorm arose accompanied by a thunderstorm. The crew members and the passengers feared the worst and prepared themselves for the approaching end. During this storm à Brakel must undoubtedly have asked himself whether the acceptance of this call was indeed in God's favor. Did the Lord perhaps cause this fierce storm to arise to send him back as it were, or to chastise him? It is true, is it not, that nothing happens by chance? It became evident, however, that à Brakel's work in the vineyard of His Master had not been completed. The Lord spared the ship and all its passengers. After the storm had subsided, it became evident that the ship was considerably off course. This caused the journey to be prolonged, and the sorrowful news already spread through Rotterdam that the ship had perished. The alarm and consternation which this news triggered in the city were great. When the minister who had been presumed dead finally appeared, joy and astonishment were that much greater.

à Brakel was installed on November 21 by his local fellow servant, Petrus Tilenus, from Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" A week later he preached his first sermon in Rotterdam. His text was 2 Corinthians 5:20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." With these penetrating words à Brakel began his ministry in Holland. In this sermon he only allowed God's Word to speak for itself; he shared nothing concerning himself. He did not mention where he came from, where he had served, what he had done, and what labors he anticipated to perform, etc. He stood as one who had been commissioned to pass on the words of His Master, or as he himself wrote later: to be the mouth of God to the congregation. This certainly is indicative of the seriousness with which he commenced this new episode in his life. The Struggle against the Labadists

During his tenure in Friesland, only one book authored by à Brakel was published; however, during his tenure in Rotterdam many would follow. A year and one half after his installation in Rotterdam, à Brakel "went to battle" against the Labadists. In two elaborate letters to a circle of friends in Harlingen he delineated his objections against this sect. It is probable that these friends had asked him for advice. In all honesty he wrote that during his tenure in Stavoren he had been sympathetic towards the Labadists and had seriously considered joining them. Yet he had wanted to know more of de Labadie and his views and therefore had traveled to Amsterdam where the Labadists had settled at that time.

He had various conversations with Anna Maria van Schurman, a very gifted woman who prior to her transfer to the Labadists had many contacts with the ministers of the Second Reformation -- among others with Voetius. à Brakel also had extensive conversations with de Labadie himself. In spite of the attractive things he had heard, he was not convinced. De Labadie then gave him the advice to lay this matter before the Lord Himself and to pray for wisdom, doing so in the greatest possible solitude. à Brakel, according to this letter, had followed his advice. "Very early in the morning I went into my garden and remained there all day until late in the evening. I fasted, prayed, and supplicated to understand the will of God. I also read, and after considerable time had passed, the Lord showed me very clearly from His Word and gave a clear impression in my heart that I was in the right way, and that their way (that is, of the Labadists) was a departure from the truth." Nevertheless, it so much appealed to à Brakel that he continually prayed, asking the Lord as it were for permission to join this group. The result was that the Lord showed him with

increasing clarity the error of the Labadists while rebuking à Brakel at the same time. It was as if the Lord said: "Did I not reveal this to you? Why then do you persevere?" Subsequent to this à Brakel firmly resolved to remain in the Reformed Church. He continued to thank the Lord for having prevented him from taking a wrong step. In what did the attraction of Jean de Labadie and his followers consist, so that even a staunch Reformed man as Wilhelmus à Brakel was strongly attracted by it? If he, as he said himself, vacillated to such a degree, people with much less education and experience must have had strife to a far greater degree. In his second letter à Brakel primarily addressed the regenerate and advised them in the strongest possible terms not to join the Labadists. It must indeed be evident that the conduct of Jean de Labadie and his followers caused much agitation in the church. However, à Brakel was not the only minister who felt attracted toward this revivalist. Who was de Labadie and what did he teach? This Frenchman, who had been trained as a Jesuit, left the monastery in 1639; he was twenty-nine years old at that time and until 1650 traveled around as an itinerant preacher. In that year he joined the Reformed Church of Montauban, one of the Huguenot cities. He became the minister of this church and also taught at the Academy. From 1659 to 1666 Geneva was his residence. With great zeal he preached for hours about the great ideal that had to be transformed into reality: a pure church in which the Christian religion would be practiced as strictly as possible. This engendered the idea that only true believers, that is, only those who were partakers of the Spirit of Christ, constituted the pure church. Thus, within the confines of the visible church as institution, a church of the regenerate came into existence. De Labadie organized "conventicles" of true believers and thus attempted to lead the church back to the original manifestation of the Christian church in the first century -- that is, as he perceived it to be. The ideas which de Labadie proclaimed in a captivating and convincing manner -- he could preach for four hours at a stretch without his hearers losing interest -- met with both approbation and resistance. The proponents of these ideas were so convinced of their correctness that many could no longer be convinced to change their minds. Opponents, however, saw so much danger in these ideas that they opposed them with all their might. Therefore, there came unrest wherever de Labadie resided for some time. De Labadie's acceptance of a call to the French congregation in Middelburg signaled the termination of a period of great agitation for the Reformed Church in Geneva. When he came to the Republic in 1666, he traveled on to Utrecht. The Friends of Utrecht-- to which belonged, among others, Voetius and van Lodenstein -- gave him a friendly reception. After having been installed in Middelburg, Koelman from Sluis went to hear him. de Labadie had a tremendous reputation. The same matters which the representatives of the Second Reformation were pursuing were also his objectives. He warned strongly against the laxness of many Christians, the desecration of the Sabbath, the lack of spirituality and morality displayed by many ministers, the non-Reformed and often coarse lifestyle of many church members, etc. His calls to prayer and fasting had effect; and especially due to his many family visitations the results of his activity were noticeable everywhere. Nevertheless, there came discord also in Middelburg, and after many difficulties de Labadie, with a group of followers, moved to nearby Veere. Many supporters from Middelburg went to hear the deposed minister. The parliament of Zeeland intervened at last and expelled de Labadie. When the use of force was imminent, the exiled minister took refuge in Amsterdam. In the meantime, sympathy for him among the Reformed had waned, for he had severed himself from the Reformed Church. He viewed the circle of his followers as a community of the regenerate who had left the worldly national church and had joined the new "house church" of de Labadie. Elsewhere in the Republic

similar house churches came into existence as well. Amsterdam evidently was not the terminus for this group; they crossed the border into Germany, and, after roaming about, settled in Wiewerd, a village south of Leeuwarden. The influential Cornelis van Aerssen had made the castle “Walta Estate” available. De Labadie himself had died in the meantime. Peter Yvon, due to his organizational talent, had succeeded in giving the congregation a solid footing. Around 1680 his following in Wiewerd consisted of about three hundred people. The Labadists were all dressed in the same handmade, modest clothing. As a community they farmed the soil surrounding the castle. Dairy farming was also a means whereby they supported themselves. During meals there was singing and prayer and one or more persons would speak a word. Worldly conversation was held to a minimum; they preferred to share their spiritual experiences. These experiences, according to the Labadists, could occur outside the context of the Word of God. Especially during and after communion services members of the congregation would come into a state of ecstasy, believing the Holy Spirit to be working in them. They would embrace each other, skip and dance, and mutually entertain themselves in spiritual Christian love.

After Voetius and Koelman had recognized the dangers of Labadism, they warned the Reformed against this error. Koelman did this in his work *Historisch verhaal der Labadisten* [Historical Account of the Labadists]. At the end of this work he printed the two letters of à Brakel. Yvon reacted to the contents of these letters by way of a brochure. In this manner à Brakel also became involved in the battle against the Labadists. His best known work, in which these letters were included again, was *Leer en Leydinge der Labadisten* [Doctrine and Government of the Labadists].

Rev. à Brakel, with the Labadists, confessed the corruption (“de verdorvenheit”) of the church; she was corrupt from the head to the sole of the foot. The field of the Lord was filled with weeds and His threshing floor was filled with chaff. The vineyard of the Lord had become a wilderness; thorns and thistles were growing in it. After having enumerated a variety of sins which were committed by members of the church, giving a description of the government as not manifesting itself as the guardian of the church, and deploring the fact that so many ministers proved to be unfaithful shepherds, à Brakel writes: “Who would not weep when he thinks upon Zion and perceives that the Lord is departing from her?” Yet, departure from a church which is that corrupt is not permitted! “May we say that she is no longer the church of Christ due to her corruption? Shall we despise her? Shall we walk away from her? No, that is foolishness. It is certain that a corrupt church is nevertheless a church and that from the beginning until the present God has always permitted His church to be filled with many corruptions. Therefore, he who despises a church for its corruption acts contrary to God’s Word and all experience, thereby denying her to be a church.”

Using examples from the Bible, à Brakel demonstrated that sin, corruption, and a lack of spirituality were to be found in many congregations. Consider the confusion in the congregation of Corinth and the exhortations of John to the congregations in Asia Minor. How could someone have the courage to sever himself from her and thereby despise God and Christ Himself? Thus, à Brakel was strongly opposed to the Labadistic spirit of separatism (or schismatic spirit). In addition to this objection, he identifies three theological differences. The first concerned the doctrine of justification, particularly as it relates to the leading of souls unto Christ. Yvon detained the souls of penitent persons too long. First the soul had to see clearly the sins of the old man and diligently strive against sin, the devil, and one’s own flesh and thus in an alternate way seek to escape the

dominion of sin. This would then be followed by a holy life, and a life in which one would quietly wait upon the Holy Ghost. This quiet separation would have to go sufficiently far that there would no longer be any striving between the flesh and the spirit -- so much so that one would no longer pray for a new life. All this, according to Yvon, "precedes faith in Christ; God unites the soul to Christ subsequent to that."

Rev. à Brakel taught something different. It seemed as if Yvon established conditions which the sinner would first have to meet. This is incorrect, for the sinner may "at once ... as sinful as he is, receive Jesus by a true, justifying faith." Having received the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ, the sinner can and may go to God, "in order to be reconciled with God and be justified by Him."

It seems that, relative to this point, à Brakel and Yvon have parted ways more than was necessary. Yvon made no difference between fathers and children in grace, whereas à Brakel seemed to reject the idea that convicted souls must see themselves so worthy of punishment that they will be prepared to accept God's eternal judgment. However, reference is made to this also in Leviticus 26:1-46 : "If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember My covenant." The second point related to pure and impure love. Yvon called fear for damnation a love for the preservation of self and thus impure since it did not proceed from love toward God. Therefore, this love -- this concern for one's own salvation -- could not be the immediate cause of regeneration. In contrast to this, à Brakel affirms pointedly that no one would then be converted, for no one possesses this eminent love for God prior to conversion. The Lord Himself has caused promises and threatenings to be recorded in His Word in order to induce people to seek their own salvation. Fear for punishment and death are innate and this cannot be designated as impure love. The Lord Jesus Himself was also fearful of death.

à Brakel perceived a different and more dangerous error in Yvon's proposition. This pure love would already be a work of God, and thus spiritual life would already be present prior to one's believing in Christ. "How can anyone be a child in Christ and yet neither be born again, believe in Christ, nor be in Him? What strange error is this? We posit as an irrefutable fact that man neither has life nor can do anything that is pleasing before God prior to believing in Christ."

Finally, à Brakel opposed Yvon's notion that people can have an absolute knowledge about the regeneration of their neighbor. The Labadists would only admit someone to their fellowship when they were certain that he or she was regenerate. à Brakel taught that only God knows the heart, whereas man only sees what is before his eyes. Furthermore, there are great similarities between true believers on the one hand and hypocrites and temporal believers on the other hand. A minister neither may nor is capable of saying to someone in God's Name and with absolute certainty that he is regenerate. That judgment is reserved for the Lord alone. The conditions upon which persons are to be admitted as members of the congregation are knowledge and confession of the truth. The apostles baptized upon confession of sin. This also included people of whom it later became known that they were not regenerate. Think of Ananias and Sapphira, Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Simon the Sorcerer. Confession was the basis upon which the apostles baptized -- not being cognizant of someone's regeneration.

à Brakel earnestly warned Yvon and those who sympathized with him against Labadism. When Yvon subsequently reacted to à Brakel's book, he used rather radical statements. à Brakel, who defended himself, wrote in the introduction that he had besought the Lord not to hold Yvon accountable for this. Also elsewhere it was evident that à Brakel did not fight for the sake of fighting itself. He wrote that Yvon had said to him during a conversation that he (Yvon) would testify against him in the day of judgment. This statement had such an impact upon à Brakel that he was obligated to respond in love to Yvon with a subdued and solemn voice: "... or I against you." A matter closely related to the generally perceived decay of the church was the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In 1690 à Brakel published a brochure in which he contested the idea that believers, due to the corruption of the church, ought not to partake. The fact that many attended without having a right to do so did not mean that believers should therefore remain seated. The Lord Jesus said: "Do this in remembrance of Me." Who would dare to ignore such an express command of Christ? For true believers the Lord's Supper is a means to make their calling and election sure. Many blessings may be enjoyed prior, during, and subsequent to partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is the duty of every true Christian to confess his Savior by means of the sacrament. In à Brakel's view the communicant makes the following confession: "I deem and confess the Lord Jesus to be the only true Savior. In Him I seek my salvation and with Him I enter into a covenant. He is my reliance and for Him I wish to live and die." Such a confession cannot be made by church attendance only. Therefore, true believers, do not abstain, for by your abstinence unrest and confusion will only increase in the church. Consider that your own advantage, honor, and opinion may not have precedence over the honor of Christ and the welfare of the church. God will secretly send judgment upon those who are absent. They frequently will fall into error and become ensnared. Sometimes they will return embracing a different doctrine and will then be as loose as they were strict before. à Brakel exhorted believers who did not attend anymore to humble themselves before God, beseeching Him for forgiveness. A Proponent of the Independence of the Church

à Brakel's conflict with the government in 1688 was a noteworthy experience during his tenure in Rotterdam. In describing the calling procedure in Leeuwarden, it already became evident that the government was capable of exercising great influence in ecclesiastical matters. This was also the case in Rotterdam. This great influence became very evident after the death of a minister of Rotterdam, Johannes Ursinus. The consistory followed the usual procedure in calling a successor. The final choice was David Cornbrugge, a minister from Utrecht and a man whose walk was beyond reproach. A delegation of the consistory informed the government of this decision and did not expect anything but approbation from city hall. To the amazement and indignation of the brothers this was not granted. The magistrate had decided to disapprove of the call without giving any reason for doing so. Rev. à Brakel, who at that time was president of the consistory -- together with a fellow minister, an elder, and a deacon -- was delegated to visit city hall to request that the call still be extended. The consistory minutes convey, however, that this committee, for reasons not given, did not carry out its task. It is not mere conjecture to think that the consistory upon further consideration decided not to pursue this matter which displeased the government. By renewal, the calling procedure was implemented. The consistory again composed a list of twelve candidates and it seems as if the consistory would yield to the government having gone beyond the bounds of its authority. However, à Brakel would not acquiesce in this. Several Sundays later he preached in the "Grote Kerk" from Psalms 2:6 : "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of

Zion.” In this sermon he dealt with the question of whether the government has the authority to rescind the call of a lawfully called minister and to compel the church to call someone else. In an elaborate exposition he based his negative answer upon the Bible, the Belgic Confession of Faith, and the opinions of the best known theologians of that time. The Arminians had also been proponents of the government's involvement in ecclesiastical matters, this being one of the additional reasons why they had been condemned at the Synod of Dordt. This sermon caused the magistrate to be agitated. à Brakel was asked to deliver the sermon in written form at city hall. He did this and seemed to be rather at ease as to the outcome of this matter. The consistory, however, was less at ease. It appointed a committee consisting of four ministers to discuss the difficulties that had arisen with the government. The members of city hall had observed in the meantime that à Brakel had turned against the government, and in their view he had, in doing so, undermined the respect and authority of the magistrates. They took strong measures: à Brakel was temporarily prohibited from preaching and his salary from the city was withheld. In spite of the mediation efforts of the consistory which agreed with the tenor of à Brakel's sermon, the government upheld the penalty which had been levied. On Wednesday, July 28, à Brakel simply continued -- not due to stubbornness, as he said, but in obedience to the commandment of his King.

Upon the urgent advice of friends, à Brakel decided to make a house outside of the city his temporary residence. He continued, however, to fulfil his preaching engagement. Three weeks later à Brakel visited the mayor of the city to discuss how the conflict might be resolved. One of the demands which the government made was that à Brakel would make amends. Understandably, à Brakel wanted to know what the city fathers meant by this. They did not give a satisfactory answer; however, they did request him emphatically not to preach any longer. With strong determination he indicated that he would not comply with this request. He would rather be exiled, yes, lose his life than not preach. The two positions were diametrically opposed to each other. The government asked the consistory to mediate and it made an urgent request to à Brakel “to be silent tomorrow, and to allow someone else to take his turn this time.” à Brakel did not ignore this request but complied with it, for it originated with the church. As negotiations continued, the consistory advanced this proof as fact that à Brakel was not a revolutionary, but as minister was willing to submit himself to ecclesiastical institutions. After the government had twice declared the explanation of à Brakel to be unsatisfactory, a peace accord was signed at last. In reality à Brakel was able to maintain his position that the government has no right to forbid the extension of a call.

Nevertheless, this controversy had additional consequences. The sermon in question had been recorded during the church service and had been published in such a mutilated fashion that à Brakel, in order to remove all defamation and slander, published the actual sermon. He added an extensive description of his contacts with the government. The title was pregnant with meaning: *De Heere Jezus Christus Voor de Alleene ende Souveraine Koninck Over sijne Kercke uytgeroepen* [The Lord Jesus Declared to be the Only Sovereign King of His Church]. This title and the appendix to the sermon, in which à Brakel made known that he neither could nor was permitted to abandon his position, engendered the wrath of the magistrate. à Brakel had to be punished to set an example. His exile appeared to be imminent.

It was then that an influential protector acted on his behalf: Governor William III requested the mayor of the city by letter to allow the matter concerning à Brakel to rest until he had discussed it

with the magistrate himself. Shortly afterwards, however, the prince departed for England, where, after a change of government, he was crowned king. The magistrate decided at last to let the matter rest. In this final conflict the consistory had unquestionably chosen sides with à Brakel. It is possible that the magistrate yielded due to this position. When another magistrate came into office, the city salary was paid again. The relationship between church and government had become so poor, however, that several times subsequent to this the government rejected a call, even giving the consistory orders to cease with the work of calling temporarily. Not until Jan, 1690 could the vacancy of Ursinus be filled.

"De Redelijke Godsdienst"--The Christian's Reasonable Service

After this tumultuous period -- the battle with the Labadists and his conflict with the government -- circumstances surrounding à Brakel became more tranquil. He was now able to devote himself to the book which would become his main work: *De Redelijke Godsdienst* [The Christian's Reasonable Service]. à Brakel derived this title from Romans 12:1 : "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This book was not, as was customary at that time, dedicated to people who had a high position in church or state. à Brakel dedicated it to "the Congregation of God in the Netherlands," [Note: In the subsequent translation of à Brakel's preface (p. cxiii) all references to the Netherlands have been dropped, this translation being intended for the English-speaking world.] thereby having particularly in view his congregation of Rotterdam, his former congregation of Leeuwarden, and Middelburg (where he had been called twice). He exhorted readers to form small groups of acquaintances to read this work chapter by chapter and then have discussions about what had been read. Its contents could perhaps also be useful to instruct theological students, candidates for the ministry, and young ministers -- to "enable them to comprehend the unique, distinct nature of divine truths so that they might safeguard and practice these truths in deed, presenting them to the congregation in such a manner that it results in the conversion and strengthening of souls and the edification of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ." The first edition was sold out after a year, and the second edition was published in 1701. The third edition was enlarged significantly by à Brakel, as various portions were added to his work. In his foreword he told those who possessed a first and second edition that they ought not to be dissatisfied. Instead, he advised them to give their book to someone who could not pay for a book, and to purchase a third edition themselves!

He considered it to be a miracle that the art of printing had been invented shortly before the Reformation. Prior to this a preacher could only reach a small number of hearers during his lifetime. By virtue of the art of printing, however, he could preach throughout the land, even throughout the entire world -- also after his death. "With joyful readiness I avail myself of this opportunity to preach to the Netherlands [Note: See previous footnote.] long after my death, according to the measure of the gifts the Lord has bestowed upon me -- whatever they may be." This work, which has more than two thousand pages, is divided into three volumes. The first volume is a dogmatic exposition. In forty-two chapters the doctrines of faith are discussed in a practical, experiential manner. In the second volume a description is given of how believers are to live a holy life before God. The ten commandments, prayer, patience, sincerity, and other important subjects are dealt with here. The third volume contains, among other things, an exposition of the Revelation of John [Note: This division of volumes does not coincide with the

division of volumes of this translation, which consists of four volumes.] . At the same time à Brakel gives here an elaborate explanation of his view concerning the Jews. It was his view that, relative to the Jews, there are as yet many promises which need to be fulfilled. He believed firmly that the Jews would return from all parts of the world to the land of Canaan and establish a new Jewish state there, which of course occurred in 1948.

à Brakel's views concerning the Jews are related to his views concerning the millennium as described in Revelation 20:1-15. He views this as relating entirely to the future. During this kingdom of peace in which the antichrist will have been annihilated and the devil will have been bound, "the entire Jewish nation will acknowledge our Lord Jesus to be the only and promised Messiah, will turn to Him in repentance, will love Him in an extraordinary manner, and honor and glorify Him." Not all Reformed theologians are of this opinion. Therefore, this third volume -- only 350 pages of the more than two thousand pages -- is the most controversial volume.

Nevertheless, De Redelijke Godsdienst has become a standard reference work for the heirs of the Second Reformation. There have been more than twenty editions, and it was also translated into German. Death As à Brakel advanced in years, bodily ailments and weakness increased. He had difficulty in walking and also his memory decreased. Nevertheless, he continued to preach and exhort as long as he was able. Particularly his exhortations in a chapel in Rotterdam had considerable attendance. Many people from the city itself, but also from Bleiswijk and Zevenhuizen, attended these services. Upon conclusion of the service, the people would gather near the exit of the chapel and wait until "Father Brakel" would come outside. He would address them and pronounce a benediction upon them as they embarked on their homeward journey. Thus, through the dark night, they would "go on their way rejoicing." On Sunday, Aug 30, 1711, à Brakel preached for the last time. In the afternoon he had been driven to the church with a coach and the custodian assisted him in ascending the pulpit. During his sickness, which lasted two months, he suffered much -- especially due to chest congestion. He prayed continually for the welfare of the church, particularly for the congregation of Rotterdam. It was his prayer that the Lord would preserve her in the truth. During the night prior to his death, one of the bystanders asked him how his condition was. "Very well," was his response, "I may rest in my Jesus. I am united to Him and I am awaiting His coming for me; however, I submit myself in all quietness." Shortly after this he died peacefully and with full assurance at the age of seventy-six. His industrious life had come to an end. He departed to inherit eternal life -- not due to his merit, but by virtue of the finished work of His Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. The epitaph reads as follows:

Hier rust hij, die niet rusten kon, Here rests one who could not rest, Voor hij aan Jezus zielen won. Ere to winning souls for Jesus he could attest. Een bidder voor zijn vaderland, A suppliant for the land of his nativity, Maar nu is hij aan d' anderen kant: Who on the other side now may be: In 't vaderland van Abraham, In the native land of Abraham, Alwaar hij volgt het zalig Lam. Where he may follow that blessed Lamb. Volgt dan zijn leer en leven na, May your doctrine and life be like his, Zoo zingt g'ook eens Halleluja! Then Hallelujah will be your song in eternal bliss.

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0.5. The Dutch Second Reformation

The Dutch Second Reformation (“Nadere Reformatie”) by Dr. J. R. Beeke [Note: Dr. Beeke is pastor of the First Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and editor of two denominational publications: *The Banner of Truth* and *Paul*. He received his Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary. This chapter is a slightly revised appendix from his doctoral dissertation, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation*. In addition to editing and translating a number of works, he has authored *Jehovah Shepherding His Sheep*, *Backsliding: Disease and Cure*, *Bible Doctrine Student Work-book*, *Student Workbook of the Reformed Faith*, and several hundred articles.]

The Dutch Reformation proper may be divided into four periods: the Lutheran period (1517-26), the Sacramentarian phase (1526-31), the Anabaptist movement (1531-45) [Note: Dutch Anabaptists continued to be martyred, however, until the 1570s in the Netherlands, despite the fact that the movement itself lost impetus by 1545.] , and the most influential -- the Calvinist infiltration. [Note: Mention should also be made of the followers of Erasmus who precipitated the Dutch Second Reformation in a negative sense. Cf. W. Robert Godfrey, “The Dutch Reformed Response,” in *Discord, Dialogue, and Concord*, ed. by Lewis W. Spitz and Wenzel Lohff (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 166-67. Godfrey also gives a succinct overview of the Calvinist aspect in “Calvin and Calvinism in the Netherlands,” in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. by W. Stanford Reid, pp. 95-122. Cf. Walter Lagerwey, “The History of Calvinism in the Netherlands,” in *The Rise and Development of Calvinism*, ed. by John Bratt, pp. 63-102; Jerry D. van der Veen, “Adoption of Calvinism in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands” (B. S. T. thesis, Biblical Seminary in New York, 1951).] From the outset of the Calvinist penetration into the Netherlands (southern Netherlands, c. 1545; northern, c. 1560), the movement showed greater strength than its persistent numerical inferiority might suggest. Nevertheless, the buds of Dutch Calvinism did not flower profusely until the seventeenth century, initiated by the Synod of Dort in particular (1618-19), and intensified by the Dutch Second Reformation (Nadere Reformatie), a primarily seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century movement, which may be dated from such early representatives as Jean Taffin (1528-1602) [Note: Taffin is often regarded as a precursor of the Dutch Second Reformation, due in part to his being a sixteenth-century Reformer, but S. van der Linde has argued persuasively that he should be regarded as the earliest representative of the Dutch Second Reformation. (‘Jean Taffin: eerste pleiter voor Nadere Reformatie’ in *Nederland*,” *Theologia Reformata* 25 [1982]:6-29; Jean Taffin. *Hofprediker en raad-sheer van Willem van Oranje* [Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1982]). Cf. C. Vogelaar, “Pioneers of the Second Reformation,” *The Banner of Truth* 52 (1986):150-51.] and Willem Teellinck (1579-1629), [Note: What William Perkins was to English Puritanism, Willem Teellinck was to the Dutch Second Reformation; hence these divines are often denominated as “the fathers” of these movements (Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* [New York: Peter Lang, 1991], pp. 105-138).] to its last brilliant lights, Alexander Comrie (1706-74) [Note: *Ibid.*, pp. 281-320.] and Theodorus van der Groe (1705-84). [Note: For a

concise introduction to leading Second Reformation divines, see B. Glasius, ed., *Godgeleerd Nederland: Biographisch Woordenboek van Nederlandsche Godgeleerden*, 3 vols. ('s-Hertogenbosch: Gebr. Muller, 1851-56); Sietse Douwes van Veen, *Voor tweehonderd jaren: Schetsen van het leven onzer Gereformeerde Vaders*, 2nd ed. (Utrecht: Kemink & Zoon, 1905); J. P. de Bie and J. Loosjes, eds., *Biographisch Woordenboek der Protestantsche Godgeleerden in Nederland*, 5 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1907-1943); *Christelijke Encyclopedie*, 6 vols., 2nd ed. (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1959); K. Exalto, *Beleefd Geloof: Acht schetsen van gereformeerde theologen uit de 17e Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1974), and *De Kracht der Religie: Tien schetsen van Gereformeerde Dode Schrijvers' uit de 17e en 18e Eeuw* (Urk: De Vuurtoren, 1976); H. Florijn, ed., *Hollandse Geloofshelden* (Utrecht: De Banier, 1981); W. van Gorsel, *De IJver voor Zijn Huis: De Nadere Reformatie en haar belangrijkste vertegenwoordigers* (Groede: Pieters, 1981); C. J. Malan, *Die Nadere Reformnasie* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO, 1981); H. Florijn, *100 Portretten van Godgeleerden in Nederland uit de 16e, 17e, 18e Eeuw* (Utrecht: Den Hertog, 1982); D. Nauta, et al., *Biografisch Lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme*, 3 vols. (Kampen: Kok, 1978-88); T. Brienens, et al., *De Nadere Reformatie. Beschrijving van Naar voornaamste vertegenwoordigers* ('s-Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1986); T. Brienens, et al., *De Nadere Reformatie en het Gereformeerd Pietisme* ('s-Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1989); J. R. Beeke, "Biographies of Dutch Second Reformation Divines," *Banner of Truth* 54, 2 (1988) through 56, 3 (1990), a series of twenty-five articles representing the major divines of the movement. For bibliography of the Dutch Second Reformation, see P. L. Eggermont, "Bibliographic van het Nederlandse Pietisme in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw," *Documentatieblad 18e eeuw* 3 (1969):17-31; W. van Gent, *Bibliotheek van oude schrijvers* (Rotterdam: Lindebergs, 1979); J. van der Haar, *Schatkamer van de Gereformeerde Theologie in Nederland (c. 1600-c.1800): Bibliografisch Onderzoek* (Veenendaal: Antiquariaat Kool, 1987). Cf. F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), pp. 109-68, covering twelve Second Reformation divines in varying depth and quality; Cornelis Graafland, *De Zekerheid van het Geloof. Een onderzoek naar de geloofbeschouwing van enige vertegenwoordigers van reformatie en nadere reformatie* (Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1961), pp. 138-244, concentrating on the doctrine of faith and assurance in fourteen Second Reformation theologians; Johannes de Boer, *De Verzegeling met de Heilige Geest volgens de opvatting van de Nadere Reformatie* (Rotterdam: Bronder, 1968), which examines the soteriological thought of fourteen Second Reformation divines.] The Term "Nadere Reformatie" The term Nadere Reformatie poses a problem. [Note: The term was used as early as Jean Taffin (1528-1602). Cf. L. F. Groenendijk, "De Oorsprong van de uitdrukking 'Nadere Reformatie,'" *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 9 (1985):128-34; S. van der Linde, "Jean Taffin: eerste pleiter voor 'Nadere Reformatie' in Nederland," *Theologia Reformata* 25 (1982):7ff. Cf. W. van 't Spijker, *De Nadere Reformatie en het Gereformeerd Pietisme*, pp. 5ff.] There is no standard English translation of "nadere," no doubt partly due to its inexactness, and perhaps also because the movement has been unaccountably ignored in English-speaking scholarship. Literally, "Nadere Reformatie" means a "nearer," "more intimate," or "more precise Reformation." The intended emphasis lies on working out the initial Reformation more intimately in personal lives, in the church's worship, and in society as a whole.

Translations of Nadere Reformatie inevitably express judgments of its significance. Consequently, it has been translated on occasion as "Further Reformation." This is not altogether accurate, since

“further” implies that the first Reformation did not proceed far enough. This was not the contention of the Nadere Reformatie. Rather, it sought to apply Reformation truths to daily life and “heart” experience. To avoid this false implication, Cornelis Graafland has suggested the terms “Continuing Reformation” or “Second Reformation.” But the term “continuing” has three disadvantages: It does not sufficiently distinguish the Nadere Reformatie from the Reformation proper; it is of recent usage in English [Note: Jonathan Neil Gerstner, *The Thousand Generation Covenant: Dutch Reformed Covenant Theology and Group Identity in Colonial South Africa, 1652-1814* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), pp. 75ff.] ; furthermore, it sounds awkward. We prefer to use “Dutch Second Reformation” or “Second Reformation.” While this is a weak translation and “misses the Dutch term’s emphasis on continuity,” [Note: *Ibid.*, p. 75n.] it has a long pedigree and appears to be gaining acceptance among scholars, albeit partially by default. [Note: Cornelis Pronk, “The Dutch Puritans,” *The Banner of Truth*, nos. 154-55 (July-August 1976):1-10; J. W. Hofmeyr, “The Doctrine of Calvin as Transmitted in the South African Context by Among Others the Oude Schrijvers,” in *Calvinus Reformer: His contribution to Theology, Church and Society* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1983), p. 260.] Moreover, “Second Reformation” was a term used by some of the Dutch divines of that era. For example, Jacobus Koelman (1632-1695), who had much contact with Scotland’s Second Reformation, spoke of the Dutch movement as a “second reformation” and a “second purging.” [Note: *Christelijke Encyclopedie*, 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1959), 5:128.] Others have dubbed the Nadere Reformatie descriptively as “Dutch Precisianism,” “Dutch Puritanism,” or “Dutch

Pietism.” There are objections to each of these designations. First, “Dutch Precisianism” is a pejorative rather than a constructive expression. It is the least acceptable representation of the Nadere Reformatie, since it attributes to the movement a legalistic (*wettisch*) tone which caricatures the whole. It is true that most Second Reformation divines promoted a strong negative ethic. Voetius, for example, forbade “such practices as visiting public houses, playing with dice, the wearing of luxurious clothes, dancing, drunkenness, revelry, smoking and the wearing of wigs.” Nevertheless, such “precisianism” was not an end in itself. Rather, it was cultivated “in the face of the alleged worldliness then prevailing” and “as a means of sustaining and developing individual faith and conduct against spiritual shallowness.” [Note: Martin H. Prozesky, “The Emergence of Dutch Pietism,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 28 (1977):33.]

Secondly, the Nadere Reformatie is in fact the Dutch counterpart to English Puritanism (and in some senses, to the Scottish Covenanters). The link between these movements is strong, historically and especially theologically. [Note: For historical-theological connections between seventeenth-century English and Dutch Calvinism, see especially the writings of Keith Sprunger (*Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* [Leiden: Brill, 1982] and *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* [Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1972]). Cf. MacMillan, “The Connection between 17th Century British and Dutch Calvinism,” in *Not by Might nor by Power*, 1988 Westminster Conference papers, pp. 22-31.] Keith Sprunger has documented that during the seventeenth century there was an English-Scottish community of Puritan persuasion numbering tens of thousands in the Netherlands, at one point consisting of more than forty congregations and 350 ministers. The Dutch government allowed them to organize churches and form an English Classis within the Dutch Reformed church. Cornelis Pronk rightly notes: The

presence of so many English and Scottish Puritans was bound to have some influence upon the Dutch churches. Many Dutch Reformed ministers were impressed by the practical divinity of the English Puritans. They saw it as a healthy corrective to the dry intellectualistic sermonizing that was becoming the trend in their churches. [Note: "The Dutch Puritans," *Banner of Truth*, nos. 154-55 (July-August, 1976):3.] And Douglas MacMillan summarizes:

Both Puritans and Covenanters were to interact very intimately with religious life in the Netherlands. This linking ... helps identify the point at which British and Dutch Calvinism had their closest contact. Both these great spiritual movements were concerned with Second Reformation issues and that concern was to shape the course of the 17th century in England and Scotland. Events there were, in turn, to reach deeply into the Netherlands, influencing its theology, deepening its spirituality, and linking it closely into the traumatic experiences of the British Church. We have to learn to look at the Second Reformation, not as a small, localized, Scottish, or even British, phenomenon but as a movement of international significance. [Note: "The Connection between 17th Century British and Dutch Calvinism," in *Not by Might nor by Power*, p. 24. Willem Jan op 't Hof also points out the influence of Dutch refugee congregations in England, noting that "it can be justifiably concluded that it is chiefly the Dutch congregations in England which are in the background of the Puritanization of spiritual life in the Netherlands" (*Engelse pietistische geschriften in het Nederlands, 1598-1622* [Rotterdam: Lindenberg, 1987], p. 639).]

The divines of these groups held each other in high esteem. They influenced and enriched each other through personal contact and especially a vast array of translated writings, particularly from English into Dutch. [Note: "From 1598 to 1622 a total of 114 editions were issued of a total of 60 translations. These 60 translations concern works by ... twenty-two English authors. ... Two authors are numerically preeminent among them: Cowper (18 editions of 10 translations) and Perkins (71 editions of 29 translations). Indeed, Perkins alone eclipses all the others taken together. ... Auction catalogues show that Udemans possessed 20 Puritan books in Latin and 57 in English. Similarly, Voetius possessed 30 works in Latin and 270 in English. ... A rough estimate for the period from 1623-1699 gives 260 new translations, 580 editions and 100 new translators. Compared to the first quarter of a century of translational activity there is a considerable increase. ... The flow of translations continued unabated during the whole of the seventeenth century, which is amazing. For what one would have expected was for translations, after a period of taking firm root and of blossoming in the absence of similar originally Dutch writings, to become decreasingly popular by the middle of the century when the Dutch Pietistic writings began to appear in large numbers" (*ibid.*, pp. 636-37, 640, 645).] More Reformed theological books were printed in seventeenth-century Netherlands than in all other countries combined. [Note: Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, p. 307.] These movements embraced similar ideals and bore similar roles: to foster biblical and God-glorifying experiential piety and ethical precision in the life of individuals, churches, and the entire nation. Only England, however, had an opportunity to work out these ideals in full, during the Cromwellian years.

Thus, despite similar outlooks, these parallel movements did have and would develop historically and theologically distinctive identities. To call the *Nadere Reformatie* "Dutch Puritanism" denies the endemic nature of the Dutch movement. Hendrikus Berkhof provides too simplistic an analysis when he states that the Second Reformation resulted merely from "the practical piety of the English Calvinists blowing over to the Netherlands." [Note: *Geschiedenis der Kerk* (Nijkerk: G. F.

Callenbach, 1955), p. 228.] Though English Puritanism was of primary influence on the Nadere Reformatie, as Willem Jan op 't Hof has ably and perhaps exaggeratingly emphasized (particularly in stressing the need for a personal, domestic, and congregational lifestyle of experimental and practical godliness), [Note: Op 't Hof reaches the following conclusions: "First, the influence of Puritanism was largely embodied in writings, either in English or translated into Dutch. This is not to say that, secondly, the significance of personal contacts is to be underestimated. This applies both to Dutchmen in England and to Puritans in the Netherlands. Thirdly, the impact of Puritanism is nearly exclusively confined to exponents of the Nadere Reformnatie. Fourthly, these men, Voetius and J. Koelman for instance, were no uncritical recipients of Puritan ideas. In the fifth place, in the course of the seventeenth century Puritan influence began to manifest itself in some new ways. In both Koelman and M. du Bois this is shown in the area of spiritual (auto)biography and in Koelman's case also in his resistance to fixed formularies. In the sixth place, most exponents of the Nadere Reformnatie prove to have been substantially and in some cases even very decisively determined by the impact of Puritanism. In the seventh place, it was precisely the chief and the most influential exponents of the Nadere Reformatie who were most imbued with Puritanism. Finally, not only did Dutch devotional writers frankly confess their dependence on and orientation towards Puritans from England and Scotland, they also warmly recommended them and to the best of their ability promoted the reading of Puritan writings, which they also contributed significantly to by either undertaking translational activities themselves or stimulating others to do so. Having been nearly exclusively indebted to Puritanism for its rise and having been largely determined by it in its early period, the Nadere Reformatie during the whole of the seventeenth century remained exceedingly dependent on Puritanism. It is this dependence which explains why the large increase of Nadere Reformatie writings did not detract from the need of and the demand for Puritan works, either in English or translated into Dutch. The dependence was so great that the peak years of the Nadere Reformnatie, 1650-1670, coincide with those of the Dutch translations of Puritan writings" (Engelse pietistische geschriften in het Nederlands, 1598-1622, pp. 645-46; also, pp. 583-97, 627-35). Cf. Cornelis Graafland, "De Invloed van het Puritanisme op het Ontstaan van het Gereformeerd Pietisme in Nederland," Documentatieblad Nadere Reformnatie 7, 1 (1983):1-19. Graafland also details influences on preaching, the art of meditation, casuistry, covenanting, the administration of the Lord's Supper, and eschatology.] it was not an exclusive influence, for the Dutch movement was coupled with other non-English factors. [Note: Ibid., pp. 2, 15-16.] In fact, in some respects the Dutch movement was more Puritan-Reformed than English Puritanism itself: In England from an orthodox Reformed perspective, for all but a short period under Cromwell, there were always grossly unbiblical things to fight: the presence of bishops, superstitious rites in the Book of Common Prayer, vestments, etc. In the Netherlands none of these were present, and the task was all the more subtle. Defenders of the status quo were not so clearly unreformed as in England. In this context the true spirit of Puritanism came to the fore. [Note: Gerstner, Thousand Generation Covenant, pp. 77-78.]

Despite similar emphases, English Puritanism and the Nadere Reformatie differed from each other in significant ways. Generally speaking, Dutch Second Reformation divines were less interested in reforming the government and organization of the church (as long as the church was not controlled by the state) than were their English brethren. Theological emphases also varied at times; this work has shown that variations existed between these groups on the doctrine of assurance. [Note: Beeke, Assurance of Faith, pp. 369-370.] The Dutch were more inclined to emphasize theology as

a science, whereas the English emphasized the practical aspects of theology. [Note: Pronk, *The Banner of Truth*, nos. 154-55 (July-August, 1976):6. Gerstner explains: "As orthodox Reformed in their doctrine as the English Puritans were, they were primarily pastors, not formal theologians. Thus one finds a remarkable scarcity of systematic theologies. Dutch Reformed thought while retaining a strong emphasis on the pulpit, produced a remarkable number of theological works, the majority addressed to the average person. Catechism preaching was perhaps part of the reason, but it seems they possessed a greater tendency towards system building. So the Continuing Reformation pastor strove for his parishioner's conversion, and at the same time to make him a dogmatician" (*Thousand Generation Covenant*, p. 78). Sprunger notes that Ames found the Dutch somewhat too intellectual and not sufficiently practical, and therefore promoted Puritan piety "in an effort to make Dutchmen into Puritans" (*The Learned Doctor Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism*, p. 260). Cf. Hugo Visscher, *Guilielmus Amesius, Zijn Leven en Werken* (Haarlem: J. M. Stap, 1894).] These variations are not respected sufficiently when the Dutch movement is collapsed too fully into the English by the use of "Dutch Puritanism." [Note: This term has been used more accurately to depict English-speaking Puritan churches in the Netherlands (cf. Douglas Campbell, *The Puritan in Holland, England and America*, 4th ed., 2 vols. [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892]; Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*; T. Brien, *De prediking van de Nadere Reformatie* [Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1974]). Van der Linde prefers "English Puritanism in the Netherlands" to "Dutch Puritanism," since the English Puritans in the Netherlands confined themselves largely to their own circles (cf. "Jean Taffin: eerste pleiter voor 'Nadere Reformatie' in Nederland," *Theologia Reformata* 25 [1982]: 6ff.). Moreover, the problem of using "English Puritanism" is compounded by the complexities of defining Puritanism itself (Beeke, *Assurance of Faith*, pp. 129-30n).] As Jonathan Neil Gerstner concludes: To notice a similar role between two movements does not imply that one is dependent on the other. Even if English thought had given the initial impetus to the Continuing Reformation, it does not follow that its success was not due to similar ideas present in the Netherlands. [Note: *Thousand Generation Covenant*, p. 77.]

"Dutch Pietism" might appear at first to be an acceptable alternative to represent the Nadere Reformatie. Its usage has been the most widespread, [Note: "The word 'Pietist' originally indicated 'an affected and indeed feigned kind of righteousness.' So K. D. Schmidt, *Grundriss der Kirchengeschichte*, 5th ed., Göttingen 1967, p. 416. M. Schmidt reports that the term became established after J. Feller, Professor of Poetry at Leipzig, used it with favourable connotations in two popular verses in 1689. See M. Schmidt, 'Pietismus' in *Die Religion in geschichte and Gegenwart*, 3rd ed., Tübingen 1961, v. col. 374" (Prozesky, "The Emergence of Dutch Pietism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 28 [1977]:29-37).] underscoring that the Nadere Reformatie was pietistic in many respects. Problems with this term, however, also exist. (1) Calling the Dutch movement Pietism suggests too strongly an intimate German connection. [Note: Stoeffler (*The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, which attempts to define "Pietism" as embracing English Puritanism, the Dutch Second Reformation, and German Pietism, pp. 123) and James Tanis (*Dutch Calvinistic Pietism in the Middle Colonies: A Study in the Life and Theology of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967] and "The Heidelberg Catechism in the Hands of the Calvinistic Pietists," *Reformed Review* 24 [1970-71]:154-61) follow German church historians in using the term, "Dutch Pietism," notably Heinrich Heppe (*Geschichte des Pietismus and der Mystik in der Reformierten Kirche, namentlich der Niederlande* [Leiden: Brill, 1879]) and Albrecht Ritschl (*Geschichte des Pietismus*, 3 vols. [Bonn: Marcus, 1880-86]). For the influence of

German Pietism on the Dutch Second Reformation, see Graafland, "De Gereformeerde Orthodoxie en het Pietisme in Nederland," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 19 (1965):466-79; J. Steven O'Malley, *Pilgrimage of Faith: The Legacy of the Otterbeins* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1973); Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*. Cf. Martin H. Prozesky, "The Emergence of Dutch Pietism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 28 (1977):28-37; Willem Balke, "Het Pietisme in Oostfriesland," *Theologia Reformata* 21 (1978):308-27.] Moreover, the Nadere Reformatie predates Spener's initial appeal for reform by nearly half a century and became a more extensive movement than German Pietism. (2) Pietism in German Lutheranism came to be regarded as being largely concerned with the believer's inner life rather than with transforming society, whereas most Nadere Reformatie divines were dedicated also to the latter. [Note: S. van der Linde, *Vromen en Verlichten: Twee eeuwen Protestantse Geloofsbeleving 1650-1850* (Utrecht: Aartsbisdomschoppelijk Museum Utrecht, 1974), p. 2; Gerstner, *Thousand Generation Covenant*, p. 76.] (3) Pietism is usually regarded as a protest against rational Protestant scholastic theology and doctrinal precision, whereas many Nadere Reformatie divines were formulators of Reformed orthodoxy and meticulous doctrinal analysts:

Gisbertus Voetius is generally acknowledged as both the greatest Dutch Reformed scholastic theologian and one of the greatest representatives of the Continuing Reformation. Pietism as it would later develop would more and more show marked antipathy for all but the most simple doctrinal concepts. ... Pietism was ready to embrace and work with all other believers who strove after a godly life, regardless of their confession. Zinzendorf tried to bring all churches together ignoring theological differences. The Continuing Reformation, on the contrary, was on the polemical forefront against theological errors, seeing the divisions within Protestantism as far from irrelevant. William Ames, one of the direct links between English Puritanism and the Dutch Continuing Reformation called Lutherans heretics. When Pietism appeared on the continent, leaders of Dutch Continuing Reformation like Wilhelmus à Brakel attacked the movement. [Note: Ibid., p. 76. According to Graafland, Dutch Second Reformation divines were united in emphasizing the importance of doctrine. Many of them (including even the Teellincks and the Brakels) viewed themselves as being free from "scholasticizing" in formulating doctrine, but nevertheless did frequently utilize scholastic terms and methodology, as is abundantly evident in this translation of *De Redelijke Godsdienst*. Flexibility and variety in terms of scholastic methodology were welcomed. Unlike German Pietists, none of the Second Reformation divines would subscribe to today's popular charges against Reformed scholasticism as being cold and irrelevant. Even Cocceius, known for his approach of biblical theology in a covenantal matrix, used a substantial amount of scholastic methodology. In fact, Gerstner subtitles the Voetian-Cocceian controversy, "The Battle of Two Scholastic Systems" (ibid, pp. 68-75). Richard Muller's conclusions relative to Reformed scholasticism (see Beeke, *Assurance of Faith*, p. 5n) hold true also for the Dutch Second Reformation divines. Cf. Charles McCoy, "The Covenant Theology of Johannes Cocceius" (Ph. D. dissertation, Yale, 1957); H. B. Visser, *De Geschiedenis van den Sabbatstrijd onder de Gereformeerden in de Zeventiende Eeuw* (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon, 1939); T. N. Hanekam, ed., *Ons Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (Kaapstad, 1952), p. 210; Prozesky, "The Emergence of Dutch Pietism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 28 (1977):31ff.; H. Faulenbach, *Weg and Zell; der Erkenntnis Christi. Eine Untersuchung zur Theologie des Johannes Cocceius* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973); Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, pp. 113-15; C. Vogelaar, "The 'Unknown' Voetius Remembered," *The Banner of Truth* 55

(1989):182-83.]

Confusing misconceptions arise when the term “Pietism” is used to describe the Second Reformation, for these terms represent distinct movements which vary in a number of important senses. [Note: “Deze termen suggereren een fundamentele eenheid, terwijl in werkelijkheid een zeer gedifferentieerde beweging voor ons staat met fundamentele verschillen in allerlei opzicht” (van der Linde, “Jean Taffin: eerste pleiter voor ‘Nadere Reformatie’ in Nederland,” *Theologia Reformata* 25 [1982]:7; see also p. 28n). Cf. C. Vogelaar, “The Second or ‘Further’ Reformation,” *The Banner of Truth* 52 (1986):40-41.] German Pietism, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation had much in common. Each was rooted deeply in the sixteenth-century Reformation and longed for more thorough reform; yet each movement retained a distinct historical, theological, and spiritual character. [Note: W. van ‘t Spijker, “De Nadere Reformatie,” in *De Nadere Reformatie: Beschrijving van Naar voornaamste vertegenwoordigers*, pp. 6-16.] *The Essence of the Dutch Second Reformation*

Several additional factors also served to promote the emergence of the Dutch Second Reformation. After the Reformation in the Netherlands, strenuous efforts were made to replace the Roman Catholic Church with the Reformed Church as an inclusive people’s church (volkskerk). During the Reformation, one-tenth of the population held membership in the Reformed church. By the end of the seventeenth century more than sixty percent of the Dutch population were members of the Reformed Church which possessed a “preferred status” (bevoorrechte) with the government. [Note: “While they were not really state churches, they were folk churches. In such a church the tendency always exists to become so closely identified with the prevailing culture that its message becomes little more than a lifeless reiteration of prevailing values. This was overwhelmingly the case in the Reformed churches of the Netherlands ... during the seventeenth century. Preaching was largely a matter of setting forth correct theological dogmas and generally accepted middle class virtues. ... Any attempt to move in the direction of the spirituality and ethics of the New Testament was decried as ‘precisianism’ or worse” (Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, pp. 115-16).] The church’s success in acquiring external growth, however, had dire consequences for spiritual life. Abraham Kuyper claimed that this additional fifty percent of the population which flooded into the church ruined its Reformed distinctiveness: “From that moment on it was impossible to maintain church discipline.” [Note: *E Voto Dordraceno* (Amsterdam: Hoveker & Wormser, 1905), 3:215.] It became easy to confuse being anti-Catholic with being Reformed. Nominal church membership and loose living became fashionably acceptable. Spiritual and ethical sterility grew rampantly, particularly when combined with newfound prosperity. The United East-India Company, formed in 1602, and other Dutch industry ushered in a period of unparalleled affluence. The majority were inclined to live for this life rather than for the world to come. Moreover, the state increasingly interfered in church matters and church discipline. [Note: Jacobus Koelman, for example, “opposed governmental interference in church life on several fronts. He rejected the government’s right to call ministers and to select elders and deacons. He fought against its low view of Christian living and its lack of maintaining Christian discipline in conjunction with the administration of the sacraments. And he staunchly opposed the use of read forms and the observance of church feast days” U. R. Beeke, “Jacobus Koelman,” *The Banner of Truth* 55 [1989]:27.)] The state controlled the universities where Reformed ministers were being trained under the increasing influence of Rationalism, particularly the philosophy of Descartes and

Spinoza.

These spiritual, social, and intellectual conditions existed in sharp tension with historic Dutch Calvinism which was intrinsically oriented toward sound doctrine and piety. The Calvinism of the Canons of Dort stood in marked contrast to the spirit of the age. Moreover, the stipulations the Synod of Dort had laid down with regard to the supervision of pastors, professors, and theological writings were not being followed. All of these circumstances, combined with the influence of English Puritanism, German Pietism, the Genevan reform, [Note: Genevan input came particularly through Jean Taffin, who studied under Calvin and Beza, and whose views are similar to those of the Teellincks, who were primarily influenced by English Puritanism. Balke feels that op 't Hof minimizes Taffin's influence in order to emphasize the role of the Teellincks in the Second Reformation (W. J. op 't Hof, *De Bibliografie van Eewout Teellinck* [Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1988]; W. J. op 't Hof, C. A. de Niet, H. Uil, *Eewout Teellinck in handschriften* [Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1989]). Cf. Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, p. 116; van der Linde, "Jean Taffin: eerste pleiter voor 'Nadere Reformatie' in Nederland," *Theologia Reformata* 25 (1982):6-29.] and native Dutch influences (e.g., medieval mysticism, [Note: Graafland, "De invloed van het Puritanisme op het ontstaan van het Gereformeerd Pietisme in Nederland," *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 7 (1983):11-12; op 't Hof, *Engelse pietistische geschriften in het Nederlands, 1598-1622*, pp. 599-600, 640.] the *Devotio Moderna*, and Anabaptism [Note: Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, pp. 118ff. The *Devotio Moderna* was "a devotional movement of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries chiefly associated with the Brethren of the Common Life; their founder, Gerard Groote; and their best-known writer, Thomas a Kempis" (P. H. Davids, "Devotio Moderna," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by Walter Elwell [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984], p. 317). Cf. R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968); T. P. van Zip, *Gerard Groote, Ascetic and Reformer (1340-1384)* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of American Press, 1963); Albert Hyma, *The Brethren of the Common Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950). With regard to Anabaptism, op 't Hof concludes that the Second Reformation "was one of the answers to the Anabaptist reproach that Reformed doctrine did not lead to sanctity of life" (*Engelse pietistische geschriften in het Nederlands, 1598-1622*, pp. 640-41; cf., pp. 606-607.)] -- each of which emphasized sanctification), gave rise to the Dutch Second Reformation and its protest against the laxity of the age. Reflecting the concern of the Second Reformation, P. de Witte wrote, "Oh times, oh morals! What do parents do but bring up their children to become the prey of all kinds of seductive spirits, such as the papists, Anabaptists, Arminians, and libertines? Yes, even to become the booty of the devil, to be the heirs of eternal damnation and the firewood of hell." [Note: Dedication of his *Catechesatie over den Heidelbergschen Catechismus* (which underwent thirty printings in the seventeenth century!), cited in W. Verboom, *De Catechese van de Reformatie en de Nadere Reformatie* (Amsterdam: Buijten en Schipperheijn, 1986), p. 251.] The Dutch Second Reformation was a movement that arose out of the ashes of the burning expectation which had moved the early Reformers. Also the early Second Reformation divines envisioned a theocratic society and an ideal church in which the bulk of the population would be involved in personal and communal renewal. Reference was frequently made to the unbreakableness of a "three-fold cord," consisting of God, the Netherlands, and the House of Orange. But the vision that the Netherlands would yet become "the New Israel of the West" in society and church life proved to be an unattainable ideal. The post-Reformers lived to view the failure of that dream. They faced the painful reality that the majority of parishioners had

not become more spiritual as a result of the Reformation. To their followers, many of whom found conventicles (gezelschappen) [Note: In the Second Reformation a desire for intimate Christian fellowship led to the development of “gatherings of the godly” in private homes to expound the Scriptures and to speak about spiritual truths in relation to the experimental leadings of God with His people. These became called gezelschappen (literally, “fellowships”) in the Netherlands. “Fellowship,” however, does not fully convey the Dutch meaning of gezelschap. Consequently, gezelschap is usually translated as “conventicle,” the term ascribed to parallel meetings in Scotland. (In English Puritanism such meetings were known as prophesyings and in German Pietism as collegiae pietatis.) Only in Scotland were conventicles more successful as a whole than in the Netherlands due largely to closer supervision by the presbytery on a long-term basis. In the Netherlands gezelschappen were also spiritually beneficial to many and were closely supervised for a time, but on occasion they turned into unsupervised, elitist groups which promoted critical assessment of sermons and highly introspective lifestyles (cf. van’t Spijker, “De Nadere Reformatie,” in *De Nadere Reformatie: Beschrijving van Naar voornaamste vertegenwoordigers*, p. 14). Stoeffler notes that conventicles were accepted by Second Reformation divines “as legitimate in many places. Voetius had recommended them and various ecclesiastical bodies among the Reformed churches had passed legislation to regulate them. They had started out as private meetings presided over by the pastor and held either on Sunday afternoon or on a weekday evening. The activities included singing, the reading of Scripture, discussion of a portion of Scripture, discussion of the sermon, and prayer. Gradually, however, they came close to being ecclesiolae in ecclesia, or small churches within the territorial church. While membership in the latter was based upon baptism and confirmation, conversion was considered the basic condition for acceptability within the ecclesiolae. Thus the conventicle in Pietistic practice developed into a closely knit religious fellowship” (*The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, p. 160). “The use of conventicles is instructive inasmuch as they were necessary adjuncts of the church where people could experience God in small group encounter. In these intimate fellowships discussion and other sharing was possible so that believers felt the presence of the Holy Spirit and were edified. Whereas the history of pietism has portrayed these ‘holy clubs’ as more bane than blessing, in the Netherlands, and also in the New World, they were often a creative instrument in the strengthening of personal relationships between God and his people and within the community as a whole. The ‘communion of saints’ is a necessity and, if the church in its ordinary ministry does not effect it, extraordinary measures must be taken. The use of conventicles was an extraordinary measure and one which proved its merit. When opened to all who desired to come, they became even more beneficial to the Christian community” (Osterhaven, “The Experiential Theology of Early Dutch Calvinism,” *Reformed Review* 27 [1974:189].] more spiritually edifying than formal worship, the church was no longer the communion of saints, but at best a very mixed multitude and at worst a “Babylon” or an “Egypt.” Jodocus van Lodenstein’s assessment of the Reformed church in his day is typical of that of later Second Reformation divines: “Babylon of Babylons, a thousand times worse than that of the Papacy because of the light that she had but did not rightly use.” [Note: J. van Lodensteyn’s *Negen Predicatieën*, ed. by Evarardus van der Hooght (Rotterdam: Gebr. Hugel, n.d.), p. 197; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 152ff.] The church seems “more deformed than reformed,” he lamented. “There is no practicing of the truth, but a parroting of the words of the catechism is all that one finds among Reformed people.” [Note: Pieter Proost, *Jodocus van Lodenstein* (Amsterdam: J. Brandt en Zoon, 1880), pp. 133-34.] Another prominent Second Reformation divine, Bernardus

Smytegelt complained:

There are few converted preachers. Many of them are lazy idlers, vain fops.... Among external professors you will find much chaff and hardly a grain of wheat. There are heaps of external professors, and are they not indifferent and ungodly? What are they like in the families? Dear man! Do you not know how scarce pious parents are? How rare it is to find a godly mother or grandmother! How unusual to find a pious servant or maid! How unusual to find godliness among children as with Timothy! ... How few are acquainted with the Bible! How few use the Bible regularly in the home! How few pray with each other, teach each other, and seek to lead each other toward heaven! [Note: Des Christens Eenige Troost in Leven en Sterven, of Verklaringe over den Heidelbergschen Catechismus in LII Predicatie; Benevens V Belydenis-Predicatie (Middelburg: Ottho en Pieter van Thol, Den Haag, en A. L. en M. H. Callenfels, 1747), p. 336.]

Consequently, in opposition to sin and complacency, an urgent, zealous call went out for fresh personal, church, [Note: For the ecclesiology of the Second Reformation, see S. van der Linde, Opgang en voortgang der reformatie (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1976), pp. 189-200.] and societal reform: The scriptural appeal for sanctification must be zealously pursued; Reformation doctrine must be lived.

S. van der Linde, a leading Dutch scholar on the Second Reformation, rightly affirms that the movement must not be equated with “non-dogmatical” (ondogmatisch) Christendom; rather, its goal was to join doctrine (leer) to the whole of daily life (leven): The Second Reformation ... is not at all a-dogmatic or anti-dogmatic. It only desires that dogma be experienced as spirit and life.... [Note: “De Godservaring bij W. Teellinck, D. G. a Brake] en A. Comrie,” Theologia Reformata 16 (1973):205.]

The protest of the Second Reformation is not primarily against dogmatism as engendering a quenching of the Spirit, but much more against a certain vitalism as well as secularism whereby one observes the Spirit as being grieved. [Note: “Het Werk van de Heilige Geest in de Gemeente: Een appreciatie van de Nadere Reformatie,” Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift 10 (1956):3.] Elsewhere van der Linde expands these concerns and notes: The Second Reformation sides entirely with the Reformation and levels criticism not so much against the reformata (the church which is reformed), but rather against the reformanda (the church which needs to be reformed). [Note: “De betekenis van de Nadere Reformatie voor Kerk en Theologie,” Kerk en Theologie 5 (1954):216.]

Moreover, though the Second Reformation is preeminently concerned with spiritual life (geestelijk leven) and experience (bevindelijk), so that a heavy accent falls on the practice of piety (praxis pietatis; praktijk dergodzaligheid) and even on precision (preciesheid), there is notwithstanding an array of emphases: In Voetius we have the church-organizer, in Ames a very original theologian, in Teellinck and Brakel, divines of practical religion, and in Lodesteyn and Saldenus, the men of “mysticism,” cross-bearing, and meditation upon the life to come. [Note: Ibid., p. 218.]

Despite diversity, however, van der Linde concludes that there is an underlying element of “precision” in the Second Reformation which is inseparable from a fervent desire to counteract prevailing impiety with a piety which “consciously consecrates all of life to God.” [Note: Het Gereformeerde Protestantisme (Nijkerk: G. F. Callenbach, 1957), p. 9.]

Several attempts have been made to define the core of the Dutch Second Reformation as a logical development from and application of the Reformation proper. [Note: Gerstner provides the following summary: "The movement viewed itself as a continuation of the first Reformation, indeed not as significant as the first one.... [Its] task was to apply these truths. Worship had to be purified so that only what was prescribed in God's word would stand. The State was constantly usurping the authority and even the material goods of the church. Above all the gospel must not be only intellectually understood, but people must be converted to saving faith through the preaching of the Word. They must also be instructed in the truths of God's Word and brought more and more closely in communion with him ethically and devotionally. One's time must be used for the glory of God. One's work must be seen as a calling to glorify God and the Roman Catholic idea of 'time-killing' recreations had to be rejected. Thus this Continuing Reformation was seen as consistently applying the truths of the first" (Thousand Generation Covenant, pp. 75-76). Cf. J. R. Beeke, "'Nadere Reformatie,'" in Making Confession and Then..." by A. Hoogerland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 85-88.] Herman Witsius emphasized that the motto, "the Reformed church needs to be ever reforming" (*ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*) applies only to the church's life and not to doctrine since Reformation doctrine was established as foundational truth. Every Second Reformation divine was convinced he was following his Reformed forebears and upholding Reformed orthodoxy, although some pointed out defects in the Reformation era, usually centering around the fact that the Reformation divines were also sons of their time. For example, Teellinck gently chides the Reformers for being more concerned with the reformation of doctrine than of life, with justification than sanctification. [Note: "Cornelis Graafland, "Kernen en contouren van de Nadere Reformatie," in *De Nadere Reformatie: Beschrijving van Naar voornaamste vertegenwoordigers*, al., pp. 351-52.]

Consequently, Heinrich Heppe defines the Second Reformation as "a striving for the completion of the church reformation of the sixteenth century (as being a mere reform of doctrine) by way of a revival of piety or by a reformation of life." [Note: "Geschichte des Pietismus and der Mystik in der Reformierten Kirche, namentlich der Niederlande, p. 6.] Johannes Hofmeyr concludes:

Although this movement also had other spiritual fathers, it can be contended that the central thrust of the Second Reformation (which involves a personal spiritual piety, an articulated ecclesiology and a theocratic outlook on society) is broadly derived from Calvin. It should therefore be regarded not as a correction but as a development of the Reformation. [Note: "The Doctrine of Calvin as Transmitted in the South African Context by Among Others the Oude Schrijvers," in *Calvinus Reformer: His contribution to Theology, Church and Society*, p. 260.] J. van Genderen enlarges these concepts: By this term, *Nadere Reformatie*, we mean a movement in the 17th century which was a reaction against dead orthodoxy and [the] secularization of Christianity in the Church of the Reformation and which insisted on the practise of faith. This may also be called a special form of Pietism, because the central idea is the "praxis pietatis." The origin of the pietistic trend lies in England and the father of Puritan Pietism [who] was William Perkins. Via Willem Teellinck and Guilielmus Amesius a direct influence on a kindred movement in Holland ensued. To this movement belong the Teellincks, Voetius, Van Lodenstein, Saldenus, the two Brakels, and especially also Witsius. This movement is not meant as a correction of the Reformation but as the consequence of it. The background of the conspicuous preciseness is the desire to serve God fully according to His will. [Note: "Herman Witsius: Bijdrage tot de Kennis der Gereformeerde Theologie

(’s-Gravenhage: Guido de Bres, 1953), p. 264; cf. pp. 220-25 for an exposition of this summary.]

Cornelis Graafland, another leading Dutch scholar on the Second Reformation, refers to it as a movement “which turned against the generally poor conditions prevailing in the Reformed church ... to achieve a radical and complete sanctification of all facets of life.”

Graafland describes the movement as a “deepening and broadening of the sixteenth-century Reformation.” [Note: “De Nadere Reformatie en haar culturele context,” in *Met het woord in de Tijd*, ed. by L. Westland (’s-Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1985), pp. 117-38.]

Another attempt to express the heart of the Second Reformation is that of P. B. van der Watt, [Note: *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 1652-1824* (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1976), 1:83.] which is paraphrased by Hofmeyr as follows:

[The Second Reformation] revolted against the unspiritual state of the nation, ministers, and congregations. They plead also for a personal commitment to Christ. The experienced and tested religion is to them of central importance. Although nothing is done to undermine the church, the office, the sacrament, and the covenant, they regard rebirth as the priority. They also assume a reasonably strong Puritan point of view. They plead for the observance of the Sabbath and the carrying out of the demands of the Lord. The church must be pure and should be cleansed of all that is unholy. Finally, they had a high regard for the Scriptures and for the Heidelberg Catechism. [Note: “The Doctrine of Calvin as Transmitted in the South African Context by Among Others the Oude Schrijvers,” in *Calvinus Reformer: His contribution to Theology, Church and Society*, p. 262. Hofmeyr’s own pejorative assessment of the Second Reformation surfaces most strongly when he asserts that the writings of the “old writers” (oude schrijvers) reveal that “subjective experience is stressed ... at the cost of objective truth and the truth of the Holy Spirit” (ibid., p. 263). Derk Visser feels that most scholars of the Second Reformation give too much prominence to a small group of Reformed clergy and to the post-Dort decades: “For if the battle against the ‘-isms’ of the 1600s [e.g., Remonstrantism, Cartesianism, Cocceianism, Labadism, JRB] was fought without the aid of the Heidelberg Catechism and Ursinus’s Exposition, the Heidelberg had been the norm of correct doctrine before, though it continued to produce a large catechetical literature” (cf. the bibliography in Verboom, *De Catechese van de Reformatie en de Nadere Reformatie*, pp. 356-66).]

Finally, a definition of the Second Reformation was formulated in 1983 by the group of scholars responsible for *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie*: This movement within the “Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk,” while opposing generally prevailing abuses and misconceptions and pursuing the broadening and progressive advancement of the sixteenth-century Reformation, urges and strives with prophetic zeal for both the inner experience of Reformed doctrine and personal sanctification, as well as the radical and total sanctification of all spheres of life. [Note: *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 7 (1983):109.]

Despite these somewhat oversimplified generalizations of the versatile Dutch Second Reformation, its complexity is not to be underestimated. Graafland points out that the Second Reformation had no organizational structure beyond a strong feeling of spiritual kinship existing among its divines. At times this led to small organized circles such as the so-called “Utrecht Circle” under the leadership of Voetius or to programs for action such as those promoted by Willem

Teellinck and Jacobus Koelman. For the most part, however, each Second Reformation divine brought the message of the necessity of reform to his own parishioners. The contours of this call to reform naturally took on distinctive shapes in each locality and generation. [Note: Graafland, "Kernen en contouren van de Nadere Reformatie," in *De Nadere Reformatie: Beschrjving van haar voornaamste vertegenwoordigers*, p. 350.]

Due to this lack of organization and an increasing emphasis on internal, experiential life, the Second Reformation's initial call to action in every sphere of life diminished rapidly. [Note: Balke is of the opinion that this spirit of religious-social activism only applies to the prologue of the Second Reformation. For the Second Reformation on mission work, see van der Linde, "De Nadere Reformatie en de zending," *Theologia Reformata* 10 (1967):5-16.] For example, in its earlier, so-called classical period, the Second Reformation strongly opposed a state-dominated church and worked strenuously for the church's independence. Due to opposition from both the government and citizens, however, the classical Second Reformation could not retain this position. Anabaptist tendencies towards isolation increased with time. Various sub-movements, such as the Labadists, tended to withdraw from civil and church affairs, and became separatists, but continued to bear substantial influence on the larger movement. [Note: The Labadists, followers of Jean de Labadie (1610-1674), promoted a Dutch separatistic sect in an attempt to establish "a congregation of the truly regenerate." Their decidedly separatist ecclesiology precipitated a deep crisis in the Dutch church. Cf. Heppe, *Geschichte des Pietismus and der Mystik in der Reformierten Kirche, namentlich der Niederlande*, pp. 240-374; Otto Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908), 1:194-268; Goeters, *Die Vorbereitung des Pietismus in der reformierten Kirche der Niederlande*, pp. 139-286; Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, pp. 162-69; G. Frank, "Jean de Labadie, Labadists," in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* 6:390-91; C. Graafland, "De Nadere Reformatie en het Labadisme," in *De Nadere Reformatie en het Gereformeerd Pietisme*, pp. 275-346.] Though few Second Reformation pietists condoned separatism, [Note: Brakel issued strong warnings against separatistic pietists and their denigration of the church. The Second Reformation divines were church loyalists, not separatists, who sought to bring the apostate church back to God.] numerous conventicles (*gezelschappen*) were formed for the nourishing of spiritual life. Gradually the Second Reformation became increasingly reminiscent of the *Devotio Moderna* in its emphasis on thorough separation from the unredeemed world. This is exemplified in a comparison of Willem Teellinck and Wilhelmus Schortinghuis (1700-1750; renowned for his *Het Innige Christendom* [Inner Christianity]) as typical early and late representatives of the movement: For Teellinck the experience of the heart remained central, but then as a center which penetrated a wide area, including not only the family and the congregation, but also the entire church and nation, politics inclusive. For Schortinghuis subjective experience is the fort to which the believer withdraws himself from the world and even from the congregation around him. [Note: Graafland, "Kernen en contouren van de Nadere Reformatie," p. 350. Cf. John Bolt, "The Imitation of Christ Theme in the Cultural-Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Michael's College, 1982), p. 55.]

These differences must not be exaggerated, however, for Teellinck also displayed elements of internal withdrawal, as did other early Second Reformation proponents such as Koelman and Lodenstein, [Note: Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, p. 144.] whereas van der Groe, often

considered the last representative of the movement, strongly emphasized church and social life as a whole, including the political context. [Note: Graafland, "Kernen en contouren van de Nadere Reformatie," pp. 350-51.] Van der Linde concludes:

Most of those who can be considered representative of the Second Reformation, being promoters of a theocratic structure as far as the relationship between church and state are concerned, are open for that which is not so purely spiritual, such as the political state. [Note: "De Godservaring bij W. Teellinck, D. G. à Brakel en A. Comrie," *Theologia Reformata* 16 (1973):198.]

Generally speaking, the complex Dutch Second Reformation focused on a variety of major themes. In summarizing the movement, Graafland addresses the following contours: election, regeneration, sanctification, the family and the congregation, the church, creation and natural theology, eschatology, and theocracy. [Note: Graafland, "Kernen en contouren van de Nadere Reformatie," pp. 354-65.] Through promoting a pious lifestyle and a theocratic concept of all social relationships based on family worship, the parish, and the church as a whole, the Second Reformation aimed to establish and enforce moral and spiritual discipline in all spheres of life. Second Reformation sermons addressed all of these mostly active themes, but simultaneously stressed the fall of Adam, the natural man's inability to aspire to good, the absolute sovereignty of divine predestination and grace, dependence upon God, the necessity of adequate conviction of sin, the experience of conversion, and the simplicity of true worship. [Note: The emphasis on personal experience frequently led to a decrease in communicant members, especially in the latter part of the Second Reformation. (Willem Balke, "Het Pietisme in Oostfriesland," *Theologia Reformata* 21 [1978]:324). Cf. Arie Blok, "The Heidelberg Catechism and the Dutch Nadere Reformatie," pp. 47ff.] C. Vogelaar's summaries of the content of the preaching of Bernardus Smytegelt (1665-1739) and Johannes Beukelman (1704-1757), are typical particularly of the later period of the Second Reformation: In [Smytegelt's] sermons much emphasis was laid on the practice of godliness, on the holy duties of Christians, on the life of God's people and on the frames of their hearts, as well as their experiences of light and darkness, the leading and operation of the Holy Spirit, and giving instructions and directions to the godly. [Note: "Bernardus Smytegelt: Spiritual Advisor of God's Children," *The Banner of Truth* 53 (1987):210. Smytegelt lists 296 marks of the godly life in preaching 145 sermons on Matthew 12:20-21 (Het Gekrookte Riet, 2 vols. [s-Gravenhage: Ottho en Pieter van Thol, 1744]).]

In his sermons [Beukelman] applied the message to his hearers: revealing clearly the false, sandy foundations of the nominal Christians, proclaiming plainly our misery and total depravity, recommending especially the way of reconciliation with God in Christ, bringing the sincere invitations and callings of the gospel, encouraging the concerned souls of true seekers of God, showing unto the godly ones the causes for their little progress in faith and sanctification, and also giving the right means to make their calling and election sure -- and to live in true sanctification in the fear of God's Name and to His honor. [Note: Johannes Beukelman: A Clear Teacher of the Truth," *The Banner of Truth* 53 (1987):264-65.]

Thus, the preaching of the Second Reformation emphasized experiential theology, which M. Eugene Osterhaven has defined as "that broad stream of Reformed teaching which, accepting the creeds of the church, emphasized the new birth, the conversion, and the sanctification of the believer so that he might acquire an experiential or personal knowledge of Christ's saving grace."

[Note: "The Experiential Theology of Early Dutch Calvinism," *Reformed Review* 27 (1974):180.] External religion, orthodox doctrine, sound theological propositions are all insufficient for salvation; feeling, experience, spiritual warfare, and genuine prayer are essential for faith and practice. The "head" knowledge of doctrine, albeit necessary, must be accompanied by the "heart" knowledge of scriptural experience:

There were some, of course, who carried the emphasis on feeling, on intense religious experience of an emotional nature, to dangerous lengths, but most Reformed pietists stopped far short of making that the norm. The norm is Scripture alone but, they held, as the Frisian Catechism put it, that "true faith demands an experiential knowledge, emerging from a conviction and an experiencing of God's Spirit, and conforming to the word of truth." [Note: *Ibid.*, pp. 183-84.] For Second Reformation adherents, "formal Christianity, by which they meant a Christianity exhausting itself in externals, was only slightly better than none at all. For that reason they, like the mystics before them, emphasized the primacy of the inward response to God." [Note: Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, p. 14.] Hence struggles of faith held a central place. [Note: Van der Linde, "De betekenis van de Nadere Reformatie voor Kerk en Theologie," in *Opgang en voortgang der reformatie*, p. 146.] With regard to assurance of faith, the Second Reformation as a whole not only emphasized the promises of God and the witness of the Spirit, but also increasingly accentuated the syllogisms, making a transition from the syllogismus practicus in the classical period to the syllogismus mysticus in the later period. [Note: Graafland, "Van syllogismus practices naar syllogismus mysticus," in *Wegen en Gestalten in het Gereformeerd Protestantisme*, pp. 105-122.] Graafland and van der Linde are sharply critical of this transition, but the latter fails to note that also the mystical syllogism is inseparable from the enlightening of the Spirit:

Rather than seeking assurance in the Spirit, i.e., in the promise of the gospel and thus not in ourselves, the "marks of grace" have come upon the scene. It is difficult to view them with anything but pity since they yield so much melancholy and uncertainty. It is thus obvious that one believes to honor the Spirit the most by seeking assurance of faith and salvation primarily in the so-called mystical syllogism, i.e., that one endeavors to draw the conclusion that he is indeed a true Christian due to being acquainted with mystical, inner stirrings and emotions of which a worldly person has no knowledge.... Our Heidelberg Catechism does as yet have the courage to state that we can be assured of our sonship by our good works as being fruits of faith. In the course of Reformed tradition this practical syllogism has increasingly fallen into abeyance. This did not only occur in conjunction with a turning away from all that is external in order only to deem "internal" matters as being spiritual and valid (incorrectly in our opinion), but also due to a fear for hypocrisy when considering how our "pious flesh" is capable of adorning itself....

We are without expectation as far as the syllogismus mysticus is concerned. If this is not conjoined to the external practice of faith, there will be nothing to hold on to for the man who is genuinely in need.... His only certainty is definitely not a syllogism, for it is not logic which reigns in the grace of God, but only the witness of the Holy Spirit in and through the gospel. [Note: "De Godservaring bij W. Teellinck, D. G. à Brakel en A. Comrie," *Theologia Reformata* 16 (1973):202-203. Cf. van der Linde, *Opgang en voortgang der reformatie*, p. 146.]

Assessment in Secondary Sources The complexity of the Dutch Second Reformation is compounded by its assessment in secondary sources. The nineteenth-century theologians at

Groningen were the first to make an effort to view the Second Reformation as a movement from a historical perspective. W. van 't Spijker shows, however, that these divines, such as P. Hofstede de Groot, differed little from the view of Ypeij and Dermout in their *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk* (History of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands). Neither Ypeij and Dermout nor the Groningen professors researched the movement from its primary sources, but tended to model the movement after their own ideals. In particular, the Groningen theologians viewed Thomas à Kempis, Wessel Gansfort, Willem Teellinck, Jodocus van Lodenstein, and others as their ideal. [Note: "Bronnen van de Nadere Reformatie," in *De Nadere Reformatie en het Gereformeerd Pietisme*, p. 6.]

Later in the nineteenth century (1879), Heinrich Heppe published *Geschichte des Pietismus und der Mystik in der reformirten Kirche, namentlich der Niederlande* (The History of Pietism and Mysticism in the Reformed Church, particularly in the Netherlands). The following decade Albrecht Ritschl's three-volume history of Pietism was published (*Geschichte des Pietismus*, 1880-86). These works helped to establish the seminal issues involved in the Second Reformation and are still being discussed by scholars of the movement. Heppe concludes that the roots of Pietism are found in Puritanism, for he posits that the "second reformation" moved from English Puritanism to the Dutch Second Reformation to German Pietism. Ritschl placed Pietism in a broader framework of movements of reform present in the Western church since the Middle Ages, pointing particularly to Franciscan observances, the mystical theology of Bernard de Clairveaux, and the Anabaptists with regard to the Dutch Second Reformation. [Note: *Ibid.*, p. 7. Ritschl's conventional caricature of pietism (that it represents an individualistic, ascetic, and anti-cultural Christianity) is not applicable to the Dutch Second Reformation--especially not to its earliest stage.]

Van 't Spijker views the 1911 work of W. Goeters (*Die Vorbereitung des Pietismus in der reformierten Kirche der Niederlande bis zur labadistischen Krisis 1670*; The Groundwork for Pietism in the Netherlands until the Labadistic Crisis in 1670) as a significant step forward in research on the Dutch Second Reformation in that he emphasized the need to study the divines of the movement on an individual basis. Goeters detected various streams of thought in the Second Reformation and avoided simplistic assessments as to their origins. Moreover, in addition to theological and practical issues, he pointed to social and historical roots which paved the way for the movement. He also highlighted some important themes of the Second Reformation, such as the striving for an ideal church. In fact, he defined "the essence of this movement to be a striving of the visible church to approximate her essence (which is found in the invisible church) as much as possible." [Note: *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.]

Much negative reaction against the Second Reformation can be traced to Abraham Kuyper and his emphasis on the church's cultural mandate. Early in his ministry Kuyper was profoundly influenced by a simple, God-fearing woman of Second Reformation persuasion, Pietje Baltus, who emphasized the necessity of experimental conversion. Subsequently, however, he became troubled that the Christians among whom he labored had become too pietistic and sheltered due in part to a constant diet of reading the "old writers" (*oude schrijvers*), as experimentally oriented laymen were fond of calling Second Reformation authors. At times Kuyper disparagingly called the pietistic elements in the Dutch church, "Methodists," [Note: *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, pp. xii, 300.] though he retained a strong element of piety in his devotional writings as well as respect for the Second Reformation divines. [Note: Cf. *Het Calvinisme* (Amsterdam: Hoveker & Wormser);

William Young, "Historic Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism," Westminster Theological Journal 36 (1973):48ff.] Kuyper's attempts to teach laymen to apply Christianity to all spheres of life led to a revival of Calvinism in the Netherlands. His followers, however, frequently called neo-Calvinists, went far beyond Kuyper by rejecting nearly all semblances of piety and by "externalizing the gospel" in a flurry of kingdom-activity. Still today "the neo-Calvinists in The Netherlands on the whole are quite antagonistic toward the Second Reformation. They see it as an other-worldly, anti-cultural and scholastic movement which has done the church more harm than good." [Note: Pronk, The Banner of Truth, nos. 154-55 (July-August 1976):7-10.]

Also reacting negatively to the Second Reformation are Otto Ritschl who views the Second Reformation as a falsification of the Reformation; [Note: Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus 1:180.] Theodorus L. Haitjema who regards it as degeneration (ontaarding); [Note: Cultuurgeschiedenis van het Christendom 3:337; cf. his Prediking des Woords en bevinding (Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1950).] and Aart A. van Schelven who esteems it to be overly baptistic, spiritualistic, and influenced by Semi-Pelagianism. [Note: "Het Zeeuwsche Mysticisme," Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift 17 (1916):141-62.] E. D. Kraan considers the Second Reformation to be too steeped in subjectivism, [Note: "De Heilige Geest en het na-reformatorische subjectivisme," in De Heilige Geest, ed. by J. H. Bavinck, et al. (Kampen: Kok, 1949), pp. 228-63.] while Rudolf Boon states that it "inclines to Anabaptism." [Note: Het probleem der christelijke gemeenschap, Oorsprong en ontruikking der congregationalistisch geordende kerken in Massachusetts (Amsterdam: Stichting Universitaire Uitgaven, 1951), p. 164.] Teunis Brienens sets Reformation gospel preaching over against Second Reformation preaching which speaks to various "soul conditions" among the hearers. [Note: De Prediking van de Nadere Reformatie (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1974).] Brienens's study, which exaggerates the weaknesses of Second Reformation preaching, re-mains the most thorough on the subject. Brienens asserts that Second Reformation preaching no longer appeals to God's promises or takes His covenant seriously; rather, he claims that the stress is on the individual person by dividing and differentiating the listeners into various classifications. Though Calvin does not present the classification method of the Second Reformation divines, the reading of his sermons does not confirm Brienens's dichotomizing of Calvin and the "old writers."]

Positively, Hans Emil Weber, [Note: Reformation, Orthodoxie and Rationalismus: Beiträge zur Forderung christlicher Theologie, 2 vols. (Gietersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1937-51).] Arie Vergunst, [Note: Vergunst, Neem de wacht des Heeren waar (Utrecht: Den Hertog, 1983), pp. 232-36.] James Tanis, [Note: Dutch Calvinistic Pietism in the Middle Colonies, pp. 4ff.] J. H. R. Verboom, [Note: Dr. Alexander Cowie, predikant van Woubrugge (Utrecht: De Banier, 1964), pp. 185ff.] Jonathan Gerstner, [Note: Thousand Generation Covenant, pp. 68-79.] Willem Jan op 't Hof [Note: "The Second Reformation is to be preferred above the Reformation in a variety of points" (Engelse pietistische geschriften in het Nederlands, 1598-1622, stellingen no. 6).] and others view it largely as a profitable outgrowth of Calvinism. Also Stoeffler's assessment is largely positive and a most helpful, needed corrective:

[The Second Reformation] was by and large a thoroughly responsible, evangelical movement. On the personal level it emphasized love for God and man and a type of daily conduct based on what it regarded as the New Testament ethic. Its larger aim was the reformation of the visible Church according to the pattern of apostolic Christianity. Intellectually it was highly respectable in so far as

practically all of its leaders had enjoyed the opportunity of excellent theological training. For that reason it had the support of the best minds of the day. Voetius, Essenius, Hoornbeeck, and later such Coccejans as Witsius endorsed it enthusiastically. ... [It] constituted a significant and influential party with the Reformed churches. ... The coming of Pietism [i.e., the Second Reformation], like the rise of any reform movement which tends to challenge the established order of things, caused some strains and difficulties. At the end, ... however, the Reformed churches were the better for having made the necessary adjustments. [Note: The Rise of Evangelical Pietism, pp. 178-79.]

Still others provide mixed assessment, noting the evolving changes within the movement itself. This is particularly true of several Reformed scholars in the Netherlands (such as J. G. Woelderink, Arnold A. van Ruler, S. van der Linde, Cornelis Graafland, Willem Balke, [Note: Balke feels that the Second Reformation's theology was more irenic prior to the Synod of Dort (1618-1619), but that it became too rigid in "post-Dort" years. The Second Reformation depended too much on medieval philosophy and mysticism. This movement was in a different theological climate from Calvin, as can be evidenced by their promoting the syllogisms. Balke concludes: "Calvin would not permit himself to rigidly adhere to certain formulas, as is evident in his controversy with Caroli as well as in his contacts with Bullinger. His objective was to convey the message of Scripture as faithfully as possible. In doing so the *actus tradendi* is the *actus formulandi*. Time and again we must formulate anew and search to remain as close to the meaning of the Holy Scriptures as possible. Calvin did not want to be subordinate in any form or shape to any type of philosophy. Every attempt to find traces of Plato, Seneca, or Duns Scotus in his writings are to be rejected as incorrect interpretations. Calvin only desired to be a student of the Holy Scriptures" (personal correspondence; cf. "Calvin and the Theological Trends of His Time," in *Calvinus Reformator His Contribution to Theology, Church and Society*, pp. 48-68; "Calvijn en Luther," in *Luther en het Gereformeerd Protestantisme* [s-Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1983]).] K. Exalto, W. van 't Spijker, J. van Genderen, and others [Note: Cf. bibliography of Beeke, *Assurance of Faith*, for pertinent writings of each of these authors.]) who have done considerable pioneer work on the Second Reformation. Generally speaking, these Dutch scholars have varying degrees of appreciation for the Dutch Second Reformation (particularly its classical period) though they feel that it was not as theologically rich as the Reformation proper. S. van der Linde and Cornelis Graafland affirm the early Dutch Second Reformation as embracing some positive characteristics, but see decay setting in largely through excessive introspection such that the movement failed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries "to combine breadth with depth." [Note: Van der Linde, *Vromen en Verlichten* (Utrecht: Aartsbischooppelijk Museum Utrecht, 1974), p. 2; cf. Graafland, "Het eigene van het Gereformeerd Pietisme in de 18e eeuw in onderscheid van de 17e eeuw," *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 11 (1987):37-53.] Similarly, Hofmeyr asserts that "the classical phase of the Second Reformation shows definite links with Calvin, while the distance between Calvin and the stricter pietism of the later phase of the Second Reformation is much greater." [Note: "The Doctrine of Calvin as Transmitted in the South African Context by Among Others the Oude Schrijvers," in *Calvinus Reformator: His contribution to Theology, Church and Society*, p. 260.] In a different vein, Prozesky concludes that "the movement as a whole underwent gradual change with its early precisianism losing ground to devotional and on occasion mystical pursuits, besides also evolving or adapting its own typical institutions, such as conventicles, edificatory sermons and

Pietistic literature.” [Note: Martin H. Prozesky, “The Emergence of Dutch Pietism,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 28 (1977):37.] Osterhaven discerns two streams in the Second Reformation: The one stream emphasized mysticism, inwardness, felicity, prayer, spiritual elation, and joy in the Lord. Overworked words among these folk were *gelukzaligheid* and *godzaligheid*.... Involving the whole person, his intellect, feeling, and will, it is the ultimate blessing that God can give one in this life and the greatest proof that God is a gracious father to his children. The other stream was activist and laid stress on doing the will of the Lord. Here the law as an expression of God’s will was much to the fore and the practice of piety was conceived largely in thinking, saying, and doing what is right before the Lord. This latter emphasis ...came to be known as *Preciesen* in Dutch, or, as they were sometimes called by their opponents, *Fijnen*, sanctimonians, we might say.

Whatever the emphasis, all pietists believed heartily in experiential theology and were known as *de ernstige*, the earnest, zealous Christians of their place and time. ... In its better representatives, like *Wilhelmus à Brakel*, the experiential theology sought a healthy balance between mysticism and precisionism. [Note: “The Experiential Theology of Early Dutch Calvinism,” *Reformed Review* 27 (1974):182.]

Van Ruler calls the movement as a whole a “legitimate experiment.” [Note: “Licht-en schaduwzijden in de bevindelijkheid,” in *Theologisch Werk* (Nijkerk: G. F. Callenbach, 1971), 3:43-60.] The wide divergence of these opinions calls for further studies in the Dutch Second Reformation as a movement in its own generations. In future studies the Second Reformation should be evaluated in its distinct spiritual, theological, and political milieu. Too often the Second Reformation is judged by the Reformation proper, the latter being regarded as normative. Calvin is presented by A. Ritschl and others as an ideal and all differences from him (even in areas where his thinking is largely embryonic, such as covenant theology) [Note: Cf. Peter Lillback, “The Binding of God: Calvin’s Role in the Development of Covenant Theology” (Ph. D. dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985).] are prone to be considered in a negative light. The unfair conclusion is then reached that the Second Reformation is not a “further reformation” (*nadere reformatie*), but a “further deformation” (*verdere deformatie*). [Note: Graafland, “Kernen en contouren van de Nadere Reformatie,” in *De Nadere Reformatie: Beschrijving van haar voornaamste vertegenwoordigers*, pp. 352,366.] It is our conviction that a more careful, objective study of the Second Reformation will yield the conclusion that these Dutch divines as a whole did not misread Calvin and the Reformers, but simply adapted the teaching of the early Reformers in a practical way to their own day.

Additional work also needs to be done on the influence of *Phillipp Jakob Spener*, *August Hermann Francke*, *Friedrich Adolph Lampe*, *Gerhard Tersteegen*, and other German Pietists on the Dutch Second Reformation. Monographs need to be written on several important Second Reformation divines who are either the subjects of outdated studies or who, as yet, have not been thoroughly studied. [Note: E.g., *Theodorus G. A Brakel*, *Theodorus van der Groe*, *Adrianus Haspius*, *Abraham Hellenbroek*, *Nicolaas Holtius*, *David Knibbe*, *Johannes a Marck*, *Petrus van Mastricht*, *Gregorius Mees*, *Franciscus Ridderus*, and *Rippertus Sixtus*.] Caricatures against the movement and the influence of Reformed scholastic orthodoxy need to be unveiled for what they are. Particularly needed are both primary [Note: We trust that this English translation of *Brakel’s* theological-devotional classic, *Redelijke Godsdienst*, which is representative of the Second Reformation as a whole, will open a major stream of the theological thought of this Dutch

movement to English readers.] and secondary sources published in English on the Dutch Second Reformation.

English and American Puritanism have received considerably more attention from Dutch writers than the Dutch Second Reformation has received from English writers. The Dutch Second Reformation divines deserve to be treated with the same scholarly care devoted to their Puritan counterparts. Such treatment will recognize that the long-term influence of the Second Reformation has been seriously underestimated. An amplification of Stoeffler's reassessment is needed:

While the [Second Reformation] dream of reforming the Reformed never succeeded it could hardly be doubted that the perfectionistic ideals of this reform party brought about significant changes in the life of the Church. It was responsible for an emphasis upon effective, religiously significant preaching such as is seldom found in territorial churches, together with a similar emphasis upon pastoral work which is equally unusual under such surroundings. Many of the classes and synods began to stress catechization to a degree unknown since the early days of the Genevan reformation. Church discipline, which had been exercised almost solely with regard to faith and order, was oriented to include the daily conduct of church members. A devotional literature was created such as continental Protestantism had never known because its need had not been recognized. Family worship was encouraged and free prayer found a place along with printed prayers. In fact prayer was encouraged as perhaps never before within the Reformed churches. Even conventicles ... were authorized by various ecclesiastical bodies. For the first time since the days of Geneva the Reformed churches knew of genuine religious awakenings such as the one at Friesland in 1672, where a group of pastors entered together upon an evangelistic venture with noticeable results. Last but not least the matter of training an effective ministry, interested in piety as well as doctrine and polity, was given serious attention. The result was the later development of theological seminaries. [Note: *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, pp. 178-79.]

Further, the influence of Second Reformation devotional writings and sermons in the eighteenth and nineteenth (and even twentieth) centuries remained great among the conservative, experimental Reformed in the Netherlands, South Africa, [Note: Hofmeyr, "The Doctrine of Calvin as Transmitted in the South African Context by Among Others the Oude Schrijvers," in *Calvinus Reformer: His contribution to Theology, Church and Society*, pp. 261-62; cf. Gerstner, *Thousand Generation Covenant*.] and North America. Today their writings are being reprinted as rapidly as the Puritans are in the Englishspeaking world. It is our hope and prayer that the translation of Wilhelmus à Brakel's classic, *De Redelijke Godsdienst*, may serve to arouse interest in the history and theology of the Dutch Second Reformation.

0.6. Forword

To the Congregation of God Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Our Lord Jesus Christ, Grace and Peace be Multiplied to You from God Our Father!

God wills that man be occupied. Prior to the fall He called him to an enjoyable task, and after the fall, to a difficult task. It is His will that everyone be faithful in the calling to which He has called him. Some callings are of a temporal nature, whereas others have a spiritual dimension. Even if a calling is of a temporal nature, this neither detracts from nor contributes to the spirituality of one's service of God in the discharge of this calling; rather, such spirituality is contingent upon the spiritual state of the individual as well as the manner in which he engages himself in his calling. A natural man deals even with spiritual matters in a natural manner which is not pleasing to God. The spiritual man, however, deals even with temporal matters in a spiritual fashion. He views his encounter with them as a dispensation of the Lord, embracing them as the will of God. He performs his temporal obligations in willing obedience as a service to his God, having God's glory as his objective.

Among all callings there is none so holy, excellent, necessary, and profitable as the office of shepherd and teacher in the church. Whomever God calls, qualifies, and renders faithful to be a minister of the New Testament is a marvel in this world. He is an instrument in the hand of God to save lost souls, to gather and edify God's church, thereby encouraging the church to promote God's glory upon earth. An unqualified minister is the most despicable and harmful creature to be found in the world. He is a disgrace to the church, a stumbling block whereby many fall into eternal perdition, and the cause of the damnation of many souls. A faithful servant of Christ, on the contrary, is an ornament in the house of his God, a light upon a candlestick, a city upon a hill, a leader of the blind, a terror to the ungodly, a joy to the godly, a comforter for the sorrowful, a counselor for those who are perplexed, and a guide for believers on the way to heaven. His life generally is of short duration, during which his preaching reaches but a few and he himself is consumed while illuminating others. The loss of a minister who is endowed with grace is inestimable.

God has wonderfully compensated for both the brevity of a minister's life as well as the limited scope of his audience, by having given man the wisdom to become acquainted with the art of printing. It should be noted that this began during the time when the church was about to depart from Babylon. This art was brought to perfection precisely when the Reformation dawned at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Now a single minister, even centuries after his death, is capable of preaching to an entire nation, yes, even to the entire world. With joyful readiness I seize this opportunity to preach long after my death, according to the measure of the gifts the Lord has bestowed upon me.

Prior to the invention of the art of printing, it was necessary to dedicate one's work to an individual of distinction from whom the various commissions would originate. This, however, is no longer necessary. At times these were offensive in nature, and occasionally a work was too insignificant

for consideration by the eminent individuals to whom it was dedicated. In addition to this, such dedications many times lent themselves to misinterpretation of the author's intention. Therefore I have omitted this and rather address myself to you, the Congregation of God, dedicating my work to you. May this book particularly be of service to the congregation which I am currently serving, the congregation which I previously served, as well as the congregation which called me twice but was not able to obtain me due to the condition of the congregation which I was serving at that time. Receive it with much affection and read it diligently and thoughtfully. Form small groups of acquaintances among yourselves for the purpose of reading a chapter or portion each time, and may that which is read present subject matter for edifying discussions.

I do not wish to comment upon the contents of this book as you will be able to read it for yourself. You should know, however, that whatever was useful from my previous works, such as Halleluja [Hallelujah], Scrupuleuze Communicant [The Scrupulous Communicant], and Leer en Leiding der Labbadisten [Doctrine and Government of the Labadists], has been included in this work, the material rightfully belonging to me.

I will also rejoice if my work may be useful in giving direction to theological students, student preachers, and young ministers. May it enable them to comprehend the unique, distinct nature of divine truths so that they may safeguard and practice these truths in deed. May they present them to the congregation in such a manner that it results in the conversion and strengthening of souls and in the edification of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the almighty and good God, who repeatedly encouraged me when I had intentions of discontinuing this task and who is the Author of whatever good is to be found in this work, pour out His Holy Spirit upon all who will either read or hear this book read. May it be to the conversion of the unconverted, the instruction of the ignorant, the restoration of backsliders, the encouragement of the discouraged, as well as to the growth of faith, hope, and love in all who have become partakers of a measure of grace. May the Lord preserve His church, causing it to increase in number and in godliness, and may He bless our nation for the sake of the church. May He live and walk in your midst, illuminate you with His light, supply you with manifold grace, and guide you by His counsel. And, upon having run your course, may He take you up into everlasting glory. I am, and remain your fellow brother and servant in Christ, to whom be praise, honor, and glory to all eternity.

Wilhelmus à Brakel Rotterdam, February 2, 1700

002. Chapter 1: The Knowledge of God from Nature

----- CHAPTER ONE ----- The Knowledge of God from Nature The title of this book, The Christian's Reasonable Service, has been derived from Romans 12:1, "... which is your reasonable service." Religion [Note: à Brakel uses "religion" here since Romans 12:1 reads as follows in the Dutch Bible: "... welke is uw redelijke godsdienst," that is, "... which is your reasonable religion."] consists of four matters:

1) its foundation or basis, 2) its form or essence, 3) its regulative principle, and 4) its practical manifestation. The Foundation of Religion

First, the foundation of religion is the character of God. The works of His omnipotence and benevolence are indeed reasons to stimulate man to serve God; however, they are not the basis for such service. This foundation is the very character of God. God possesses within Himself all glory and worthiness to be served, even if there were no creature. No creature could have its existence, except it be of Him and through Him. By its very existence the creature is obligated to God's majesty to exist for the purpose of serving God, having its origin in Him and existing by virtue of His influence. If this creature is rational, then God, because He is God, obligates him who has been placed directly under his Creator to honor and serve God and devote his entire existence to Him. The character of God eternally obligates the creature, and therefore also man, to this. "Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations? For to Thee doth it appertain" (Jeremiah 10:7); "Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to Thine ordinances: for all are Thy servants" (Psalms 119:90-91). The Form or Essence of Religion

Secondly, the form or essence of religion consists of man's knowledge, recognition, and heart-felt endorsement of this binding obligation, which is to live unto God at all times and in all things with all that he is and is capable of performing. This is so because He is God and by virtue of His nature this is His worthy due. For this reason he willingly devotes and sacrifices himself unto God, surrendering himself to the service of God. He does so because He is his God, it is his obligation, and it constitutes his felicity. "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant" (Psalms 116:16); "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord" (Isaiah 44:5). The Regulative Principle of Religion

Thirdly, essential to religion is the revelation of God's will as the regulative principle according to which man, as a servant, must engage himself. It has not been left to man to determine the manner in which he would serve God, for then he would stand above God. Anyone who engages himself in this way exalts himself above God and displeases the Lord in all his activity. "But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

Rather, the Lord Himself establishes for and reveals to man the regulative principle, indicating what He requires man to do and in which manner He wishes this to be accomplished. should not a people seek unto their God ... "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:19-20); "That ye may prove what is that

good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). The Practice of Religion

Fourthly, the essence of religion consists in an active agreement with, and execution of the will of God. All that God wills, the servant of God also wills, because the will of God is the object of his desire and delight. He rejoices that God desires something from him and that God reveals to him what He wishes to have done. This motivates him to perform it whole-heartedly as the Lord's will. "Doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6). As we consider the subject of religion, we shall not only discuss these four matters, but shall do so in the order which we have established. In the first place we must show that God is the foundation of religion, considering both His existence and the purpose for His existence. If man is to make God the foundation of his religion, recognizing his obligation towards Him, then he must know God. This makes it necessary first to demonstrate from which source the right knowledge of God must be derived.

God has decreed within Himself what He desires to reveal of Himself and the extent of this revelation of Himself. This knowledge of God is referred to as *Theologia archetypa*, *protypa* (Original and essential revelation). The knowledge in the rational creature which corresponds with this is referred to as *Theologia ectypa* (conferred revelation). The manner by which this certain knowledge is instilled or granted to creatures varies according to the differences among rational creatures. The angels know God by an immediate beholding of the countenance of God. "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). Such already is, and shall be, the knowledge of the elect in the state of glory. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7); "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Christ according to His human nature knows God by virtue of His union with the Godhead as the Son of God, and thus in a more excellent way than can be comprehended by angels and men. "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9); "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John 3:34). Man upon earth knows God by revelation. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). This revelation occurs either by means of nature in all men, or also by means of the Holy Scriptures, which the Lord grants only to some. The Innate Knowledge of God

God has created within all men an innate knowledge that God is, that is, an acknowledgement that God exists. [Note: à Brakel here, as well as throughout the chapter, uses the word "Godserkennendheid." In the Dutch text he admits that this word does not really exist in Dutch vocabulary, but has coined it for lack of a Dutch word to accurately describe this doctrinal concept.] This does not mean that man, in his existence, is immediately conscious of God; rather this consciousness comes gradually with an increase of age. Such knowledge is innate in man as reason is innate -- which man also does not initially exercise. As time progresses, however, he begins to reason about matters which confront him. Both reality and mental exercises concerning the knowledge of God spontaneously proceed from his own nature, without external stimulation by means of instruction. This innate knowledge of God does not necessarily manifest itself in action. Prior to birth children are not capable of engaging in the activity of hearing, seeing, speaking, and thinking; they can do neither good nor evil (Romans 9:11). They cannot commit actual sins after the similitude of Adam's transgression (Romans 5:14). Anyone who maintains the contrary does so without foundation. It is contrary to Scripture and experience.

Some, not being satisfied with ordinary expressions relative to the innate knowledge of God, wish to refer to it as a mental image. It is to be feared, however, that this notion is a cloak for strange sentiments. This would, for example, suggest that this uncreated mental image, as a mirror, would reveal to man all the perfections of God and His creatures, and that man passively, by mere observation or in response to this mental image, would be able to know all these perfections. What else does this suggest than that God is finite and the mental image within man infinite? Thus, the knowledge of God would not be obtained by man as created objects from God's revelations about Himself and His creatures, but from within ourselves, derived from this innate mental image. This is doing nothing else but attributing infallibility to every man. This would bring the infallibility of one person into direct conflict with the infallibility of the other by the opposing views they may have concerning this matter. From this it follows that all views concerning God are nothing but fantasies and waking dreams, which, to put it mildly, serve no other purpose than to generate confused and foolish ideas concerning this matter.

If, however, one understands this mental image to be nothing other than the innate ability to acknowledge God, that is, to perceive that God exists, is Creator and Ruler over all things, and is Lord over each person, such that each man is obligated to live according to His will and that whoever fails to do this must expect the just manifestation of His wrath notwithstanding that all this is impressed upon the conscience of every man -- if such is the understanding, then this matter is viewed correctly. One should, however, avoid this terminology of "mental image"; it may, in addition to that mentioned, generate images of God within the mind similar to the external images Roman Catholicism creates, both of which are prohibited in the second commandment. The inner perception of the form and image of all things is not innate in man. Unless there would be proof to the contrary, this must be emphatically denied. Man does not acquire knowledge about matters from within himself but rather from his own observation with his five senses. What image or perception do we have concerning the form of animals which live in other parts of the world, which we have never seen or heard mentioned? It is as if they neither exist nor ever existed. Does a child prior to birth or at the time of birth have a mental image of a lion, dog, or cat, as well as of their physical stature and nature? Of course not. To enable Adam to name the animals after their kind, the animals first had to be brought to Adam (Genesis 2:19). Man sees, hears, tastes, smells, and touches various objects from childhood on before he consciously takes notice of them. When he is accustomed to them, he will in time become knowledgeable concerning these things. The concept that he, without the conscious involvement of his five senses, acquires knowledge by means of innate imagery already being present prior to his birth, must be rejected as soon as it is formulated. In similar fashion do we function within the realm of Christianity. From childhood on we observe the works of God in nature without reasoning about them or paying special attention to them. From childhood on we hear mention being made of God, which causes the innate knowledge of a god -- or lest we be misunderstood, the acknowledgment of God -- to be activated. It becomes reality and increases more and more, albeit unevenly, that is, in the one more than in the other. The idea that man, by observing the works of God, being instructed about God, or hearing about God, is able to develop this innate mental image of God, is irrational and entirely erroneous. Man, having been gifted with innate knowledge and created with the ability to reason as well as to acknowledge God, is capable of knowing God in due season. This is the very reason why God reveals Himself as is evident from Romans 1:19-20. That which may be known of God (which is not the full essence of God, nor that which God reveals and makes known to angels, the

saints on earth, and the glorified saints in heaven, but that which the heathen are capable of knowing from nature by observing the works of God) is not evident to the heathen by way of innate, mental images, but by virtue of God's revelation to them. How? By means of mental images? No, but it is known to them from the works of God. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20). Thus, in the absence of Holy Scripture, the heathen have had the knowledge of God, insomuch as they were able to obtain this from the light of nature. This consists of that which may be known of God in distinction to that which must be believed concerning God, according to the apostle's testimony in Romans 1:16-17. That man possesses such innate knowledge of God is evident in the following passage, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law ... shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:14-15).

Here the apostle refers to people who do not possess the Holy Scriptures. He states that the law is written in their hearts and that they know by nature that they must live according to this law. Thus, they are a law unto themselves, their conscience the meanwhile accusing or excusing them in relation to whether or not they live according to the law written in their hearts. The knowledge of the Lawgiver is proportionate to the knowledge of the law. This knowledge obligates them to obedience, and teaches that the Lawgiver will justly reward the obedient and punish the disobedient. This Lawgiver, not being a man, is therefore acknowledged to be God.

Man's innate ability to reason enables him by way of research to become knowledgeable in various subjects as well as to increase in this acquired knowledge. Likewise the innate knowledge of God enables man, by observing the works of God in their created nobility, to increase in the knowledge of God and by means of the visible ascend to the invisible One. That which is visible could not possibly communicate to man that there is a God if prior to that he did not have an impression of God in his soul. This internal knowledge of God can be increased by viewing the creatures and their experiences as being representative of the activities and government of God. This is therefore referred to as the external knowledge of God, it being derived from external matters (Romans 1:19-20). Job testifies of this, "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?" (Job 12:7-9). This is confirmed further in the following passages, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Psalms 19:1-3); "... who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:16-17). From all this it becomes evident that man by nature possesses both an external and internal knowledge of God. The most brilliant philosophers have made much progress in this knowledge as a result of the observation of creatures. One can increase in this knowledge in a threefold manner:

- (1) By way of negation, barring from God all imperfection, frailty, finality and insignificance, all of which are to be found in the creature;

(2) By way of excellence, infinitely and perfectly ascribing to God all that can be observed as glorious, beautiful, and enjoyable in the creature, for the original cause will always excel that which is to be found in any created object;

(3) By way of causality, ascending from a simple matter to its cause, from thence proceeding to the higher cause, thus finally arriving at the ultimate cause which is God, and from thence descending by way of various causes to the lowest of all creatures.

Question: Is there such a knowledge of God in the natural man?

Answer: The Socinians deny all knowledge of God from nature and maintain that the knowledge of God has been passed on from generation to generation since the time of Noah or, by means of a special revelation of God, to certain individuals. Our response to this question, however, is positive.

First, it is evident from the texts previously referred to: Romans 2:14-15; Romans 1:19; Job 12:7-9; Psalms 19:1-3; Acts 14:16-17.

Secondly, it is evident from experience which teaches that there is not a nation under the sun which does not acknowledge a deity. The heathen themselves bear witness to this in their writings. Christians, who by virtue of maritime travel to Asia, Africa, and America have visited places where Christians have never been, have discovered that all nations, however savage they may have been, had an impression of a deity, albeit that some did not manifest any exercise of religion. Thus, the entire world exclaims: There is a God!

Thirdly, it is evident from man's inclination to honor something that is tangible. The religious worship of such things gives evidence that there is an external impression of the existence of a god. The lofty affections of men could not be persuaded to honor a piece of wood or stone, unless they would consider it as containing a deity or to be representative of the immediate presence of a deity who would be pleased by such service.

Fourthly, it is evident from the fact that one can teach a savage heathen, even if he is deaf and dumb, by means of signs and gestures to have respect for God and to animate his conscience concerning sin and virtue. This could certainly not occur if he did not have some initial internal knowledge concerning a deity.

Fifthly, if the knowledge of God in man were not innate and he lacked the ability by way of the visible to ascend to the invisible God, then the heathen would be without sin. In the absence of a lawgiver there is also no law, and wherever there is no law there is no transgression; therefore, they could not be condemned. To hold to the latter is absurd, and thus it is certain that the heathen have knowledge of God.

Objection #1: All that comes naturally to man is to be found in all men at all times. The knowledge of God, however, is not to be found in all, since in some heathen it has been observed that not the least trace of religion was found. Such knowledge of God is not always present, for David states, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalms 14:1). And Paul refers to **■θεοι** (atheoi) or atheists: "... without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

Answer: (1) It is *petitio principii*: this is precisely the point of contention. We maintain that the acknowledgement or impression of the existence of a god is at all times to be found in all, as we have proven in a five-fold manner. This is potentially true and also as far as man's rationality is concerned.

(2) Even if there might be people who do not give the least evidence of any religion, it does not necessarily follow that there is no impression concerning a deity concealed in their heart. Our discussion does not concern itself with the practice of religion, but with the propensity toward the acknowledgment of a deity.

(3) David speaks of fools, of ungodly persons given over to themselves who testify by their behavior that they neither honor, fear, nor serve a deity. By means of their wickedness they seek to erase the impression they have concerning God and rashly desire to silence their disturbed conscience. David, however, does not here address the innate knowledge of God.

(4) Paul calls such individuals atheists who neither have God as their reconciled God, Benefactor, or Salvation, nor as their Hope for eternal felicity. This text obviously does not relate to this matter.

Objection #2: There have always been atheists and those who utterly reject God. In our day atheism is clearly breaking forth in France, in England, and to some extent also in the Netherlands, primarily by means of various sects. There are even some who cleverly introduce atheism, secretly or openly, by way of their speech, writing, and lifestyle. Their objective is to distort Scripture by establishing reason as the expositor of Holy Writ, and in doing so remove its divine authority as well as its infallibility. In order not to be despised, they use the word "God"; however, they do not understand this to refer to the Creator, Sustainer, and Governor of creation and all that is contained in Him who is eternally self-existent, independent, and Wisdom personified -- existing prior to the creation of creatures and the universe. They rather understand it to refer to the common nature of all things as if this were the origin and maintaining cause of all things, being governed in the same fashion as gears setting a clock in motion. Fortune and misfortune would then occur due to the motions of nature in specific objects, it being implied that one should be passive and quiet in response to these motions as they can neither be changed nor opposed.

Atheists acknowledge no law except the law of nature which they propose to be such as to endorse a pleasurable pursuit of their own lusts. They consider it sin when one does something contrary to his own interest and advantage; and they consider it a virtue if one engages himself in promoting the fulfillment of his lust. They consider salvation to consist merely in finding joy in eating, drinking, fornicating, boasting, indulging in pleasure, as well as yielding to one's lusts. Lying and deceit are considered honorable means to obtain such bliss, or to enable them to avoid whatever would disturb them in their bliss. They know of no punishment except when damage and shame are experienced, and no damnation except for a restless and melancholy frame of mind. Their motto is *Ede, bibe, lude, post mortem nulla voluptas!* that is, eat, drink, and play, for after death there is no pleasure. Irrespective of whether a man, horse, or any other creature dies, dead is dead. They ridicule the existence of a soul, angels, and devils and relegate them to the realm of fables. They are at peace with this conviction, having no acquaintance with a stirring and remorseful conscience. In this the wretched Jew, Baruch de Spinoza -- born in December, 1633 and deceased in February, 1677 in The Hague -- led the way. It is obvious that other atheists have borrowed sentiments from him.

It is thus evident that atheists do exist, and therefore there is no such thing as innate knowledge of a deity in the heart of man. If there were such innate knowledge, one would not be able to root it out as so many have done and currently are doing, or as many are attempting to learn how they may accomplish such a thing.

Answer: Such a conclusion is the consequence of establishing reason as the expositor of Holy Writ, as well as the arbiter in determining what to believe and what not to believe. How will those who hold to this principle be able to refute atheistical writings? The arrows fly back and they themselves will be wounded. These are the consequences of wresting and manipulating the Holy Scriptures, as well as the fruits of ridiculing the exercises of true godliness which are sneeringly referred to as lessons in morality. Those who do so are ignorant of the distinction between the virtues of the heathen, and those of Christians which proceed from faith in Christ, a knowledge of the truth, and are performed in love, godly fear, and obedience toward God. The acknowledging of the truth is after godliness (Titus 1:1). These are the fruits of dishonoring God and of denying the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Ghost. First they propose the existence of three collateral persons -- that is, existing side by side -- which is followed by the notion of three gods, and eventually this culminates in denying the existence of God. These fruits proceed from a distaste for the old paths which are unknown to them and from a hankering for the promotion of that which is new. Such are the fruits of doubting the existence of God. The objection itself has no validity, for we do not deny that those persons who labor to erase the impression of God from their hearts will be given over by God to a reprobate mind (Romans 1:28), and that He sends them a strong delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:11) so that the knowledge of God is fully suppressed. Consequently, a person can become completely oblivious to the existence of God; however, from this it does not follow that God did not create this knowledge and consciousness within man. Is a person in a deep coma no longer a rational creature, even though reasoning itself is not evident? Is this person conscious of his ability to reason? When a person, due to a fall or a blow to the head, is deprived of his intellect, having neither knowledge, speech, nor his emotions -- similar to a newborn child who shows signs of life in a limited sense -- is he therefore without reason? Such is also the case with the ability to acknowledge the existence of a deity. In the absence of actually doing so, one cannot conclude that a person is without the propensity or the ability to do so.

Objection #3: Only by faith, and consequently not through nature, does one know that there is a God, which is evident from Hebrews 11:6, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is."

Answer: This issue of faith can be viewed in various ways. Nature teaches that God is who He is by virtue of the maintenance and government of all things; Scripture teaches that God is who He is in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). In Hebrews 11:1-40 the apostle refers to the latter, whereas in the previously quoted texts from Romans 1:1-32; Romans 2:1-29 he refers to the former. The recognition of the Godhead by faith does not exclude the knowledge of God from the realm of nature; rather, it includes and presupposes it.

Question: Relative to the natural knowledge of God the question must be posed: "Can man be saved by virtue of such knowledge?"

Answer: The Socinians answer this question in the affirmative. The Arminians and some within Roman Catholicism also lean in this direction. We deny this emphatically, however, as is verified by the following:

First, all natural knowledge of God, whatever its measure may be, is cognizant of God's justice in punishing sin (Romans 1:32), but is ignorant of the satisfaction of the justice of God and of the holiness with which one is able to stand in the just judgment of God. Without this satisfaction no one can be saved, as shall be shown comprehensively subsequent to this. Thus, for them God remains a God who will by no means clear the guilty, and who will recompense everyone according to his deeds.

Secondly, there is no salvation except in Christ and there is no other way unto salvation but by faith in Christ. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6); "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12); "But without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6); "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:36).

It is certain that the knowledge of Christ and faith in Christ are entirely absent in the natural knowledge of God. He is revealed only in the gospel, a revelation to which the heathen are not privy. "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations" (Colossians 1:26). Faith can only be exercised in response to the declaration of the gospel. "so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). It is therefore incontrovertible that the natural knowledge of God cannot bring about salvation for man.

Thirdly, the heathen, one as well as the other, even the wisest and most virtuous among them, are called: (1) fools, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22); (2) blind and dead, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18); (3) atheists, without promise or hope, "... strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and ■θεοι ■ν τ■ κ■σμω, atheists, without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). Their condition is denominated as, "and the times of this ignorance" (Acts 17:30).

Objection #1: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them ... so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19-20). On this basis the following conclusion is made: Since the heathen by the light of nature already know what is to be known of God, and they, not walking according to this light, are without excuse, then in following this light, this knowledge should lead them to salvation.

Answer: (1) The apostle does not say that they knew all that is to be known of God, but merely that which is to be known from nature, which the apostle limits to "His eternal power and Godhead." It must be proved that such knowledge is sufficient unto salvation, for we deny it.

(2) That man is without excuse, because he is cognizant of God and his own duty, does not imply that he by the light of nature should be able to progress to such an extent that he should be without excuse, and therefore be able to come to salvation. It also does not imply that this light was fully sufficient, even if he had lived in accordance with it. The contrary must be inferred: the light of nature convicts man that God is just in condemning him, both because of the wickedness of his nature and because of his opposition to the light which is in him. Thus, this light has no other purpose than to convict him. Even if this light of nature were capable of excusing him in some measure, it should not be inferred that it would do so completely.

Objection #2: "... not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4); "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). These texts indicate that the knowledge of nature is adequate to bring about repentance, as well as to seek and find God. Salvation is promised upon repentance, and to find God is salvation itself. Thus, the knowledge of nature is sufficient unto salvation.

Answer: (1) In Romans 2:4 the apostle addresses those to whom he preached the gospel, Jews as well as Greeks, for he addresses them in the second person "thou," which he continues to do in the remainder of the chapter. This text is therefore not applicable to this situation.

(2) Contingent upon the extent of natural light, the natural knowledge of God also does indeed convict of sin, and shows the desirability and necessity of conversion from sin to virtue. Such a conversion, however, is not true conversion which results in a radical external and internal change in man -- a transformation from death to spiritual life, without which no salvation is to be expected.

(3) In Acts 17:27, the idolatrous heathen were addressed who, in addition to their idols of wood and stone, had an altar with this inscription: "To the unknown God," whom they ignorantly served. The apostle declared them to be ignorant and taught that the light of nature did not direct them to depart from God in favor of idols; rather, God had given them this light of nature for the express purpose of instructing them concerning their duty, which was to seek God "if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him." This communicates what man, having fallen away from God, must do, rather than what he is capable of doing, being guilty of having robbed himself of light and life. Man is obligated to seek God, if haply he might feel after and find Him; however, without the wondrous light which God grants to His children in the moment of regeneration, they shall never "feel after Him, and find Him" unto reconciliation and salvation, even though the light of nature may bring them to the realization that God truly exists and wishes to be served in spirit and in truth. This feeling after and finding of God to which the apostle refers, differs infinitely from that feeling after and finding of God by and in which salvation is experienced.

Objection #3: In Romans 2:14-15, the apostle states that the heathen by nature do things contained in the law, being a law unto themselves, but have the work of the law written in their hearts and their conscience excuses them. They in whom these things are found are doers of the law, and doers of the law shall be justified. Since these matters are to be discerned in the heathen who possess only the light of nature, they must be considered doers of the law, and therefore shall be justified. Thus, it must be inferred that the natural knowledge of God is sufficient to lead man to salvation.

Answer: To be a law unto one's self, to have the law written upon the heart, and to do the things which are contained in the law, is nothing more than to be cognizant of the relationship between man and God, as well as to be aware of the will of God. To be cognizant of this is to know that the law commands, forbids, promises, threatens, and convicts. The law, but also the light of nature does this even without having the written law, so that it does not imply the fulfilling of the law but shows what the law requires. Therefore if a person does not walk according to this light, it will then accuse him, and if he does so, it will excuse him, albeit not altogether as if he had fully kept the entire law at all times, thus being justified by God as Judge. The reference is to a specific deed, and only then in proportion to the measure of light received.

Objection #4: If the knowledge of nature in and of itself is not sufficient unto salvation, it is nevertheless salvific by virtue of its result. For example, if a man is faithful to the light of nature and lives accordingly, then God gives additional grace which is of such a nature that he can be saved according to this promise: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance" (Matthew 13:12). This is further confirmed by examples such as Job, the centurion (Matthew 8:5; Matthew 8:10), and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48).

Answer: (1) No one uses the natural knowledge of God rightly, for in reference to all who are in the state of nature it is written, "There is none righteous, no not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10-12). All the virtues of the heathen lack the true essence of virtue. They do not proceed from faith, are not in true harmony with the law, and are not performed to the honor of God. Rather, they are so beset with sinful qualities and circumstances that these virtues are nothing but glaring sins.

(2) Even if a heathen were to live in full accordance with this natural light, there is not a single promise that God will therefore grant such a person saving grace. God is so free that He is debtor to no one, and His justice is so pure that no performance of a child of wrath -- which necessarily misses the mark even if it were to conform with the light of nature -- would move Him to draw such a person to Himself and to be gracious to him.

(3) Matthew 13:12 is not applicable here, as it does not refer to the gifts of nature, but to the gifts of grace which the Lord bestows upon His children in granting them grace to improve grace received, thus honoring them with additional grace. "In keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalms 19:11).

(4) The examples indicated are not applicable in this context since these individuals had the gospel and lived under its administration.

Even though the natural knowledge of God is not salvific, it nevertheless serves a purpose and is useful for the following reasons:

(1) It teaches that God exists; that He is an invisible, spiritual Being; is infinite; is the first cause of all things; in His Being is infinitely exalted above all that exists; and is holy, omnipotent, good, and just.

(2) It teaches that God is the cause of all things (also of him who meditates about God), and thus is sovereign Lord over all. It teaches that by His influence He upholds, governs, and directs all things according to His will, so that no one can stay His hand or say, "What doest Thou?"

(3) It teaches that every human being is obligated to Him with an irrevocable obligation to do His will as expressed in His law, which is revealed to him by virtue of the light of nature.

(4) By this man can view his sin and guilt against the background of God's justice. (5) It also promotes the maintenance of human society. (6) Man, by means of the revelation of Holy Writ, is a fit subject to be led in the way of true godliness by the Spirit of God. The Origin of the Natural Knowledge of God and Morality

Question: Where do the natural knowledge of God and morality originate? Answer: They do not originate from a new gift which God bestowed upon man after he lost the image of God.

There is not a word in Scripture to suggest this. Reason neither teaches this, nor does necessity require it. It is also not a remnant of the image of God in its narrower sense, which consists of spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. It is a remnant, however, of the image of God in its wider sense, as far as this refers to the subject or essence of the image of God itself. In order to understand this correctly one must consider what the image of God actually is as well as what belongs to it. At the appropriate place these matters shall be discussed more extensively.

(1) Man was not first created in *puris naturalibus*, that is, he was not created as a purely natural and rational person, having no more than the five senses along with the instant ability to reason, the image of God being impressed upon him subsequent to his creation. It is my opinion that man would not have been truly man if the consciousness of God had not been present from the very outset. Rather, man was created in, and in possession of, the image of God. God, in creating man, created him in His image, generating this image in the very act of creating (Genesis 1:27). The existence of sensitivity as well as the capability for growth, both of which are inherent in the life of animals and vegetation, do not function as components united within a larger entity, but virtualiter et efficaciter, that is, by virtue of innate ability and propensity. The rational soul is also similarly capable of reasoning. Thus, in a similar manner the image of God contains within itself both the natural knowledge of God and morality. These are not individual entities; neither do they coexist as components of a larger entity, as if in Adam there were a distinction between a knowledge of God and morality which would be of a natural sort, and a spiritual knowledge of the same which would be the image of God. Adam possessed these by virtue of innate ability and propensity. The image of God permeated everything and energized all faculties and motions of the soul; hence all that was within him and was performed by him was spiritual and holy in nature.

(2) Even though the image of God in Adam was indivisible, one can nevertheless distinguish three matters by way of intellectual deduction: 1) its basis or focal point, 2) its nature or essence, and 3) its consequence or purpose. The focal point of the image of God was the soul which is an invisible, immortal spirit, endowed with intellect, a will, and affections. The essence was spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The consequence or purpose of the image of God was his glorious position and his exercise of dominion over the animal kingdom. In reference to the focal point the following must be noted, which when properly understood will answer the initial question and eliminate much confusion concerning this matter. An artist cannot impress someone's image upon water or sand. To accomplish this he must have the appropriate base or medium. Similarly, the image of God could not have been impressed upon wood, stone, or an irrational creature. It required an intelligent, willing, rational soul, and a consciousness of God. The soul in Adam could not be separated from the image of God in its narrow sense, as the image of God permeated and energized the entire soul. We are merely making an intellectual deduction here. As a result of Adam's fall, the image of God in its narrow sense, consisting of spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, has been entirely removed from all the faculties and propensities of the soul. Nevertheless, Adam did not lose his human nature. He retained the soul in its essence and propensity, consisting of intelligence, will, disposition, reason, and consciousness of God. The consciousness of God is as natural to man as his ability to reason. This ability is at all times common to man, and to man only. One can therefore state this in reverse: every human being is

conscious of a deity, and a being which is conscious of a deity is necessarily a human being. Yes, by virtue of his consciousness of God man distinguishes himself even further and more clearly from animals than by his ability to reason. In some animals one can discern a trace or semblance of the ability to reason, although such animals are not consciously aware of their activity. The impression of the existence of a deity is entirely absent and cannot be taught. Man's consciousness of God is innate, however. Even if someone no longer manifests any evidence of this, it does not require many hours, for example, to bring the most savage heathen to an acknowledgement of it, which proves that such is his natural propensity. The consciousness of deity, viewed here as a propensity rather than the act itself, is not a remnant of the image of God in its narrower sense which consists of spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. To insist otherwise would create unsolvable difficulties. It is, however, possible to state that it is a remnant of the image of God in its wider sense, which includes the previously mentioned faculties of the soul, and those only. It therefore belongs to the essential nature of man, so that the natural consciousness of God, as well as the natural morality which proceeds from it, do not merely differ in degree from the essential elements of the image of God -- that is, spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and holiness -- but they differ in their very nature. This becomes evident from the following:

First, he who still possesses a remnant of the image of God [that is, in its narrow sense], or a measure thereof, is neither spiritually blind nor spiritually dead, for spiritual life consists in the possession of the image of God. A part is of the same nature as the whole; a drop is as truly water as is the entire ocean. Man however, possessing both the natural knowledge of God as well as morality, is entirely blind and dead. For verification of this blindness turn to Galatians 4:8, Ephesians 4:18, and 1 Corinthians 15:34. For verification of spiritual death turn to Ephesians 2:1-12. Consequently, there is neither a remnant nor a certain degree of the image of God in natural man. It is therefore evident that both natural knowledge and morality do not differ from the image of God in its narrow sense in degree, but in essence.

Secondly, if the natural knowledge of God were identical to the image of God in its narrow sense, and merely differed in degree, then man would be able to convert himself. A man in the state of nature is obviously capable, by virtue of his natural abilities, to progress very significantly in self-manufactured knowledge and virtue, thereby in some areas excelling the truly regenerate. Man, however, is not able to convert himself -- a truth which we will consider more extensively at the appropriate place. Therefore, natural knowledge and morality are not synonymous with the image of God, merely differing in degree, but the image of God is of an entirely different nature.

Thirdly, in view of this we must consider that both knowledge and morality (1) proceed from different causes, one being the original, creative power of God, and the other being the regenerating power of God; (2) function through different means, one being nature, and the other being the gospel; (3) have different objects, one being that which is known of God by virtue of His revelation in the realm of nature, and the other being God's revelation of Himself in the face of Christ;

(4) have different results; the one renders man inexcusable, whereas the other results in salvation. Since there is a difference in all these aspects, there must also be a difference in essence rather than degree. If the restoration of the image of God does not consist in an increase of natural

knowledge, but rather in a transformation resulting in knowledge and virtue, which are of an entirely different nature, then natural knowledge is not a remnant of the image of God in its narrow sense. This restoration does not consist in an increase of natural knowledge but in a transformation resulting in an entirely different sort of knowledge. Thus, natural knowledge is not a remnant of the image of God in its narrow sense, and differs with it not in degree, but in essence.

Even though these two are of a different nature, they are, however, not contradictory, just as one light does not clash with another type of light. His very nature makes man a qualified object to be the recipient of both spiritual and natural knowledge. Even though the natural propensity of man is confined to a limited realm of knowledge, and the spiritual is focused upon matters which are far loftier -- they being viewed in another light and the subject under consideration being viewed with different eyes by the spiritual man who discerns other matters in it -- it does not follow that natural and spiritual knowledge are therefore contradictory; instead, they complement each other.

Thus far we have demonstrated that all men have an impression of the existence of God. All that now remains is to answer the following concern.

Question: May one, in order to become more steadfast in his knowledge that God exists, temporarily set aside all the revelations concerning God in both nature and Scripture, and consider them to be non-existent? May one consider the inner conviction that God exists to be an advantage, thus enabling him to entertain the hypothesis that there is no God, so that by questioning everything and viewing the matter from all angles, he may with more steadfastness conclude that God exists? In sum, may one doubt whether God exists?

Answer: Since our intellect has been darkened, man is inclined to doubt whether a matter which presents itself is truly as it appears. This necessitates further research in order to be so conversant with the matter that all doubt is removed. Such, however, is not the case relative to the knowledge of the existence of God. This He has created in our nature and has further confirmed to every man by Holy Writ, so that one is not permitted to doubt the existence of God, for the following reasons:

(1) It is a rejection of God willingly to maintain that God does not exist as well as willingly doubt His existence. (2) It is tantamount to challenging God face to face and declaring Him a liar. He reveals both in nature and Scripture that He exists, and this revelation is so clear that man in his conscience from the very outset cannot keep himself deaf to the voice of God.

(3) The person who maintains this, being desirous to doubt, knows that he is lying. When he initially tries to doubt, it is impossible to do so.

(4) Willful doubt will never result in more steadfastness, as a corrupt intellect and an ungodly heart -- being granted more room and strength to function -- are capable of transforming a doubter into an atheist as far as such is possible. Thus he would rob himself of salvation. God, in response to all this, will at times execute this very judgment.

(5) The proper way, however, to increase in the knowledge of God is to believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him. To do what is right is to do what one knows to be right, for if any man will do God's will, he will know and confess that this doctrine is of God. The proper way is to seek the Lord, if haply one might seek after Him and find Him. The knowledge of God in all men is so evident that even the most ungodly, as much as they may labor to do so, are

entirely incapable of eradicating all knowledge and consciousness of God, even though they may temporarily succeed in rendering themselves insensitive to this consciousness, and thus become oblivious to the existence of God. May this be to the conviction of many so-called Christians who in addition to nature have the Word of God but reckon so little with God; yes, who in the consciousness of God and the practice of virtue do not proceed as far as many heathen do through the light of nature. How such heathen shall arise in judgment in the last day against such so-called Christians, approving of their damnation! How dreadful shall their judgment be, when God shall appear, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). May everyone therefore strive earnestly to acquire the knowledge of God, without which there can neither be faith, love, religion, nor salvation. Do not be satisfied with only a natural knowledge which cannot lead you to a saving knowledge of God, but rather strive to behold God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Likewise, strive for the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness. From the foregoing, the godly may conclude that they are merely being tempted when they are troubled by atheistic thoughts. Their dismay concerning this is sufficient evidence that they know God and believe that He is." Do not yield to such thoughts, but resist them. Even if for some time you cannot rid yourself of these temptations, still hold to your inner conviction. As troublesome as it may be to you now, it shall make you more steadfast later. Persevere in reading God's Word and join yourself to the godly in order to hear them speak about the delight they may have in God. Refrain from reading books authored by atheists or those who encourage atheism. Avoid interaction and disputation with confirmed atheists. Instead, turn to the Lord by continually engaging yourself in prayer; live in simplicity, knowing what the will of God is. In so doing you shall grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

003. Chapter 2: The Word of God

----- CHAPTER TWO ----- The Word of God

We have shown that the knowledge of God derived from nature is insufficient unto salvation. If man were ever to be brought to salvation, it was necessary for God to reveal a way whereby he could become a partaker of it. Although in retrospect we are able to deduce this truth, nature does not reveal it. It does disclose, however, that God is able to reveal something that is salvific in nature. This has encouraged some to claim to be the recipients of divine revelations and has caused people to believe such pretended revelations.

God, in His unfathomable goodness, being desirous to have a people of His own on earth whom He would lead unto salvation, has revealed to them a way of salvation, beginning with the first gospel declaration to Adam. The Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). In addition to this, God repeatedly gave to His prophets more comprehensive and clearer revelations believed these revelations unto salvation, which they in turn proclaimed to the people who then believed it unto salvation.

Whether these revelations had been recorded prior to the time of Moses and had been forwarded to the church of that time in written form, we can neither affirm nor deny. Similarly, it is not known to us whether Moses, upon divine command and having been led by the Holy Spirit into all truth, had recorded those matters which transpired from the beginning of time to his time by means of holy and divinely inspired writings, or whether he received them himself by virtue of immediate revelation via the inerrant transmissions of men guided by the Holy Spirit. Since the fathers in the sacred lineage lived for the duration of several hundred years, such transmission could transpire more readily. Abraham, who faithfully made the way of salvation known to his seed, was able to learn third-handedly all that had transpired before him. Abraham was informed by Shem, with whom he lived contemporaneously, Shem from Methuselah, and Methuselah from Adam.

We know one thing with certainty, however: The church of that time was neither deprived of the Word of God nor of divine revelations. Moses conveys this to us in his first book, and the fact that the elect of that time were brought to salvation makes this a necessary prerequisite. The Word of God of that time is generally referred to as the unwritten Word, as it neither appears to have been recorded, nor to have been transmitted to us in written form. We are limited in our knowledge concerning this by what Moses conveys to us. Only Jude speaks of the prophecy of Enoch in verses 14-15, which is rendered credible by his account. However, to adorn the Holy Scriptures with an unwritten Word which would reveal things not recorded in the Bible -- as Roman Catholicism does in order to make their traditions credible -- would be an act which would invoke the curses pronounced upon those who would add something to the written Word. The Names Assigned to God's Word

We generally denominate the written Word of God as the Bible, the word "Bible" itself being a Greek transliteration. In our language this word means "book," which corresponds with the fact

that the Bible is the Book of all books. Such it is called in Isaiah 34:16, “seek ye out of the Book of the Lord”;

Mark 12:26, “the book of Moses”;

Luke 4:17, “the book of the prophet Esaias”;

Acts 1:20, “the book of Psalms”;

Revelation 22:19, “the book of this prophecy”;

Psalms 40:7, “in the volume of the book,” so called because at that time one did not make use of pages, but rather of a long strip of parchment which would be rolled up and tied together with a string. The written Word is also called the Holy Scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:15-16. In Acts 8:32 it is referred to as Scripture. Since the art of printing had not yet been invented, everything had to be written by pen. Therefore, few possessed the entire Bible, the cost of a Bible at that time being thousands of dollars. Some only possessed a book of one of the prophets, one of the gospels, or one of the apostolic letters. In addition to this, many were not able to read. It was a wonderful mercy of God, upon which one cannot meditate without thanksgiving, that the art of printing was invented and brought into production a short time prior to the Reformation. As a result now even a poor person, can now own a Bible for a small price. Consequently, you will scarcely be able to find anyone of the Reformed faith who does not possess a Bible or at least a New Testament. The Holy Scriptures are also denominated as the Word of God. In Romans 3:2 it is stated, “Unto them were committed the oracles of God.” [Note: The Dutch Statenbijbel reads: “Hun zijn de woorden God’s toebetrouwd,” that is, “unto them were committed the words of God.”] God, in condescension to man, has revealed the way of truth in a manner consistent with humanity by speaking to holy men of God, who, moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21), have spoken these things to the church, thus transmitting the words of God to her. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2). The Necessity of the Written Word

After God enlarged the church to include Abraham and his seed, to which it was primarily limited until the time of Christ, it pleased Him to give to His church an immovable and everlasting rule for life and doctrine, by submitting His will in written form to her. This does not imply that such was necessary from God’s perspective, as by His omnipotence He would have been able to reveal the way of salvation to His church without the written Word, and preserve the truth amongst her. From man’s perspective, however, there was such a necessity, in order that the truth would be preserved so much better against the wickedness of man whose heart is inclined towards superstition, carnal religion, and carries within it the seed of numerous heresies. This was also necessary to protect the church against the wiles of the devil because his objective is always to use the smoke of heresy to tarnish the truth, knowing that without the knowledge of the truth there can be no true godliness. Finally, it was necessary that the gospel might come in a more efficient manner to every individual member of the church, be transmitted from father to children, and be distributed among the nations that much more rapidly. It was needful for Jude to write Jude 1:3. The written Word is a light upon our path (Psalms 119:105). If they speak not according to the law and to the testimony, “it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). Thus, the existence of the written Word is a necessity.

Roman Catholicism, in order to safeguard their traditions and superstitious legends more effectively, contradicts the necessity of Scripture, presenting the following arguments:

Argument #1: There have been particular churches which have existed without the written Word, such being the case when the apostles initially proclaimed the gospel among the heathen and established churches among them.

Answer: Such was the case only for a short period of time. Even if they were not in the immediate possession of the written Word, they had the word of the apostles who were infallibly moved by the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, in a general sense the church had God's Word in its possession, as one particular congregation would share it with another congregation (Colossians 4:16). The Jews who were dispersed among the heathen had the written Word, and as you know, in many places they were generally the first to believe.

Argument #2: For the illiterate it is as if the written Word does not exist in written form.

Answer: They hear the Word read, as well as the quotation of Scripture passages by the minister, and thus their faith is founded upon the written Word the same as with those who are able to read.

Argument #3: The Lord's people are taught by the Lord Himself and therefore are not in need of other instruction (cf. Isaiah 54:13; Jeremiah 31:34; 1 John 2:27).

Answer:

(1) It may similarly be argued that the church certainly has no need for her traditions and therefore they must necessarily be discarded.

(2) When God instructs His people by means of His Word, they are being instructed by Him.

(3) One does not exclude the other, as God grants His Holy Spirit by means of His Word (Acts 10:44). The Bible is comprised of this written Word and consists of sixty-six books. Thirty-nine were written prior to the birth of Christ and are therefore referred to as the Old Testament (2 Corinthians 3:14). It begins with the first book of Moses, generally referred to as Genesis, and concludes with Malachi. These books are divided in a variety of ways, such as "Moses and the Prophets" (Luke 24:44); and "Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44). Generally they are divided as follows:

(1) the books of the Law, that is, the five books of Moses;

(2) historical books, Joshua to Esther inclusive;

(3) poetical books from Job to the Song of Solomon;

(4) the prophets, consisting of the four major prophets from Isaiah to Daniel, and the twelve minor prophets from Hosea to Malachi. The New Testament encompasses those Holy Scriptures which were written after the time of Christ, beginning with Matthew and concluding with the Revelation. These are divided as follows:

(1) the historical books, that is, the four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles;

(2) the doctrinal books from the Epistle to the Romans to the Epistle of Jude;

(3) a prophetic book, being the Revelation of John. The Apocryphal, that is, the “hidden” books -- not being read in the churches nor being recognized as divinely inspired -- do not belong to the Bible. They are writings of human origin of which there are also so many today. They were composed prior to the time of Christ, neither by the hand of a prophet nor in the Hebrew tongue, but in the Greek language. They were neither given to the church, nor did the Jews to whom the oracles of God were entrusted (Romans 3:2) accept them. They contain many errors and heretical statements which contradict the canonical books. For more comprehensive information you may refer to the excellent preface by the Dutch translators of the Statenbijbel preceding the Apocryphal books. It satisfactorily confounds Roman Catholicism which desired in later times to consider these books as canonical. As the Holy Scriptures are the only rule for doctrine and life, the devil is intent upon overthrowing or obscuring this foundation to the utmost of his ability by means of instruments at his disposal. Therefore we shall engage ourselves to defend the Holy Scriptures, and for this purpose we shall consider, 1) their origin, both primary and secondary causes, 2) their contents, 3) their form, 4) their purpose, 5) the subjects to whom they are given, and 6) their profitableness. In considering each of these elements, we shall deal with matters of controversy which can be brought against them. The Origin of the Holy Scriptures With regard to the origin of the Holy Scriptures, we must consider the primary as well as the mediate causes. The primary, yes, the only essential cause is God. The evidence is as follows:

1) Throughout the entire Scriptures the following expressions are found: “God spake,” “God said,” “Thus saith the Lord,” and similar words.

2) God Himself did not merely proclaim the law with a loud voice (Exodus 20:1-26), but also recorded it in two tables of stone (Exodus 24:28).

3) God expressly commanded the sacred writers to record His Word, “Write this for a memorial in a book” (Exodus 17:14); “Write thou these words” (Exodus 34:27); “What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia” (Revelation 1:11). This is also expressed in several other texts, as in Isaiah 30:8, Jeremiah 30:2, and Hebrews 2:2. Such is also the purpose of the preface to the various books containing the credentials of the writers, whether they be prophets, evangelists or apostles.

4) The entire Scriptures bear testimony to this, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16); “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21); “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2). This has been stated in rebuttal to Roman Catholicism, which denies that the Holy Scriptures were written upon divine command, but rather at this or that arbitrary occasion. The intent of such a notion is to secretly undermine the Scriptures and to give credence and respectability to Rome’s traditions. They seek to prove this by maintaining that God would have caused an orderly book to be written, in which all creedal issues would have been recorded in an orderly fashion, the words and stipulations being such that no misunderstandings or heresies could issue forth from them.

Answer: (1) Who was the Lord’s counselor? Who can say, “What doest Thou?” (Job 9:12); “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19). He makes foolish the wisdom of this world (1 Corinthians 1:25); “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25); “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness

unto him" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Errors and heresies do not issue forth from the Holy Scriptures, but from the corrupt intellect of man. "For there must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Corinthians 11:19).

(2) We do not deny that some matters have been recorded at specified occasions; however, this does not eliminate the fact that God has inspired them and has caused them to be recorded. The Inherent Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures

Question: Are the Holy Scriptures truly the Word of God, having divine authority, both in regard to historical accounts where many words and deeds of the ungodly are related, and in regard to the rule for doctrine and life? It is necessary for man to be convinced of this and to esteem the Scriptures as the Word of God. Therefore, how may man be assured that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God?

Answer: Roman Catholicism answers that we must believe it because the church says that it is so. We do affirm that the true church, which believes and declares that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, is a means whereby the Holy Spirit brings man to the Word, and thereby persuades man to believe it. The church is neither the foundation upon which rests the faith that Scripture is the Word of God rests, and whereby man is assured of the same. Rather, the Holy Scriptures, by virtue of the inwrought evidences of their divinity and the Holy Spirit speaking in that Word, are themselves the foundation and basis whereby we believe them to be divine. The authority of the Word is derived from the Word itself. The church cannot be the foundation upon which one believes that the Scriptures are the Word of God, for: First, the church derives all its authority from the Word. We cannot acknowledge a church to be the true church except by means of the Word of God -- and only if it preaches the pure doctrine and has the credentials which Scripture expresses as belonging to the true church. "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2:20); "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house" (2 John 1:10); "... and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

If the Word of God is the only criterion by which we can determine a church to be the true church of God, then we must first acknowledge Scripture to be the Word of God before acknowledging the church to be the true church. Furthermore, we cannot receive the testimony of the church unless we acknowledge her to be the true church. Thus, we do not believe the Word to be the Word of God because the church affirms it, but on the contrary, we believe the church to be the true church because the Word validates her as such. A house rests upon its foundation, and not the foundation upon the house. A product proceeds from its origin; the origin does not proceed from its producer.

Evasive Argument: The two can be interchangeable; Christ bore witness to John the Baptist, and John in return to Christ.

Answer: It is one thing to bear witness, but quite another to be the foundation of faith itself. Christ was Truth personified, and He testified with authority; John, however, was merely an instrument whereby the truth was disclosed, as every minister is today. God's servants are nevertheless not the foundation upon which the faith of the hearers is resting; that foundation is Jesus the Christ. Rather, with the Samaritans we must confess, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we

have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42). The basis for respecting someone’s words is the person himself. The laws issued by the government derive their authority to demand compliance from the government itself. The laws do not receive this authority, however, from the person who publishes these laws either by reading or by displaying them. Thus, we acknowledge the Word to have divine authority solely because God is the One who speaks, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken” (Isaiah 1:2). The church merely functions as a herald.

If the Word derived its authority from the church, then we would have to hold the church in higher esteem than God Himself. For whoever gives the credence and emphasis to someone’s words is superior to the person who speaks them. God has no superior and therefore no one is in a position to give authority to His words. “I receive not testimony from man” (John 5:36), exclaimed the Lord Jesus. Even though John testified of Him, that is, declared that He was the Christ, it would nevertheless be contrary to the will of the Lord Jesus that someone would believe for that reason only. John’s testimony was merely a means to an end. “But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me” (John 5:36).

Objection #1: “... which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). Whatever provides the truth with support and stability, provides it with the authority to be received as truth. Such is the relationship of the church to the truth.

Answer: I emphatically reject the conclusion of this proposition. The most eminent proponents of the church are called pillars, which is true in daily conversation as well as in Scripture. “James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars” (Galatians 2:9).

Nevertheless these men did not give to the church the authority to be recognized as the true church. Similarly, the church is the keeper, the defender, and the protector of the Word. If there were no church, the Word of God and the truth contained in it would almost entirely disappear from the world. The expression “a pillar and ground” has no reference to giving of authority and credibility, but rather to preservation and protection. The oracles of God have been committed to the church (Romans 3:2). Her calling is to preserve and defend them, as well as to publish them abroad. What credence does this give to the Word of God itself?

Objection #2: No one would know that the Bible is the Word of God if the church had not declared it to be so. God is not now declaring from heaven that the Bible is the Word of God; therefore there must of necessity be someone who declares such to be the case in order that the people can hear it.

Answer: (1) No one can know which law the government has issued forth, except for the announcement by a herald and yet he is not the person who gives these laws their authority. Such is also the case here.

(2) The argument that no one can know that the Bible is the Word of God except the church declares it to be so, does not hold. It occasionally occurs that someone born and raised far distant from other people, and being ignorant of the existence of a church, will accidentally find a Bible in his home. While reading it diligently, he finds delight in these matters and they are used as a means for his conversion. Consequently he acknowledges the Bible to be of God and he begins to

love His Word. I have known such an individual and what has happened to him can also happen to anyone else. Hundreds of people are ignorant concerning the church and thus have no regard for it. Yet they will acknowledge the Bible to be the Word of God and may even attempt to seek out the true church by means of the Word. Whether the church or someone else gives us the Bible and declares it to be the Word of God is immaterial. In either case it can motivate a person to search, and while searching, he can discern evidences of divine authorship in it.

(3) The objector will claim the Roman Catholic Church to be the true church, thereby giving authority to the Word. We believe, however, that the Bible is the Word of God, but not because the Roman Catholic Church says it is, as we do not even recognize them to be the church of God. Thus, with how much more certainty -- ten times more than they -- can we declare that the Bible is the Word of God! And we are not basing this on the acknowledgement that the Roman Catholic Church is the true church. Scripture neither receives its divine authority from the pope, from papal assemblies, nor from the entire power structure of the Roman Catholic Church.

Objection #3: The church existed prior to the written Word and is better known than the Word; thus the church gives the Word divine authority.

Answer: The church is not older than the Word; the very opposite is true. The Word is the seed of the church. The first gospel message was issued forth prior to the existence of the church and was a means whereby the church came into existence. It is true that the church existed prior to the time that the Scriptures were fully contained in the Bible. Nevertheless, the church did not give credence to the books of Moses and the Scriptures which followed them. Today when someone is born under the ministry of the Word, Word and church are simultaneously present. Generally one acquires esteem for the Bible as the Word of God prior to comprehending what the church is and discerning what she has to say about the Word. From this it follows that the church does not have more recognition than the Word. The contrary is true. Assuming that the church did precede the written Word and has more recognition, this fact would not give her the privilege above another to declare the Word to be divine.

Thus, the church does not give divine authority to the Word among men. We do not believe the Word to be divine because the church declares it to be so, but the Holy Scriptures themselves manifest their divinity to the attentive hearer or reader and this becomes clear from the following:

(1) The prefaces of the books of the Bible and apostolic letters, and such words as, "Thus saith the Lord," "The Lord speaks," "Hear the Word of the Lord," etc., touch the heart.

(2) Scripture manifests its divinity to man by its revelation of the lofty mysteries of God and divine matters, which nature does not reveal, no human could have conceived, and which, apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit, cannot be comprehended. The divinity of Scripture is also manifested in the holiness and purity of its injunctions as well as by the way in which man is commanded to conduct himself. Therefore all other writings which are not derived from this Word are carnal, unrefined, vain, and foolish, whereas those writings which are derived from Scripture compare to Scripture as a painting resembles a living human being.

(3) The divinity of Scripture is further evident from the power it exerts upon the human heart, for wherever the gospel is preached, hearts are conquered and brought into subjection to Scripture. The more those who confess the truth of Scripture are suppressed and persecuted, the more the

Word will exert its power.

(4) It is evident from the wondrous light with which the Word illuminates the soul, the internal and external change it engenders, and the manner in which it fills believers with sweet comfort and inexpressible joy. It enables them to endure all persecution in love and with joy as well as to surrender themselves willingly to death.

(5) Finally, it is evident from the prophecies which, having declared thousands of years in advance what would subsequently occur, have been fulfilled in minute detail, thus validating these prophecies.

These and similar matters are rays of the divinity of the Word which illuminate and convince man of this divinity by its inherent light. However, the task of fully persuading someone, especially a person who uses his corrupt intellect to judge in this matter, is the work of God's Spirit who is the Spirit of faith (2 Corinthians 4:13). He gives faith (1 Corinthians 12:9), and bears witness that the Spirit speaking by means of the Word, is truth (1 John 5:6); "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Mediate Causes Whereby God Has Provided Man with His Word

Having considered the primary moving cause, we now will consider the mediate causes or the means which it has pleased the Lord to use in providing man with His Word. These were "holy men of God, moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). They received revelation, (1) by means of immediate address, "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently" (Numbers 12:8);

(2) by means of a trance (Acts 10:10), and being "in the spirit" (Revelation 1:10);

(3) by means of dreams in which God would speak (Matthew 1:20), or in visions accompanied by verbal declarations (Genesis 18:13; Genesis 18:17);

(4) by means of angels, be it during sleep, during a trance, or while being awake (Genesis 18:2). In whatever manner the prophets received their revelations, they, as well as the evangelists and the apostles, wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who inspired them (2 Timothy 3:16), moved them (2 Peter 1:21), and who guided and directed them into all truth (John 16:13), showing it unto them (verse 14).

These men, being guided by the Holy Spirit in regard to matters, words, and style, wrote in the language in use by the church, thereby enabling her to understand the Scriptures. The Scriptures of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew, since at that time the church existed within that nation. Only a few chapters have been recorded in the Aramaic language which resembles Hebrew so closely that whoever understands Hebrew will be able, to quite an extent, to understand the Aramaic language as well. The Scriptures of the New Testament were written in Greek, this language being most commonly in use among the Gentiles.

Both languages have remained so untainted in the Holy Scriptures that even though various manuscripts contain some writing or printing errors, and heretics have sought to corrupt them in various places, the Scriptures have nevertheless been fully preserved due to the faithful, providential care of the Lord, as well as the meticulous attention given to the manuscripts by both the Jewish and Christian churches.

Only the aforementioned languages are authentic, having the inherent authority to be both credible and acceptable. It was in these languages that it has pleased the Lord, by the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit, to cause His Word to be recorded. All translations into other languages must be verified by means of the original text. Whatever is not in harmony with this text must be rejected, as God did not cause His Word to be recorded in the languages into which it is being translated, but only in Hebrew and Greek.

Roman Catholicism considers the common Latin translation to be authentic, albeit that some of the more educated among them, being conversant with Hebrew and Greek, are of a different opinion. Others among them would rather die in ignorance than come to the knowledge of the truth. Their efforts to whittle away the authenticity of the original texts are so fraught with ignorance that they are not deserving of a reply. The Substance or Contents of the Word of God The substance or contents of the Word is the covenant of grace, or to state it differently, it contains the perfect rule for faith and practice. This rule is comprehended in the Old and New Testament. It is not true that part of this rule is to be found in each such that the Old Testament would not have been sufficient for the church of the Old Testament and that the New Testament would not have been sufficient unto salvation without the Old Testament, as if they of necessity belong together in the absolute sense of the word. This would suggest that if one book of Scripture were to be lost, part of this rule would be missing and therefore would not be perfect. For one book or several together -- for example, the books of Moses or the gospels -- perfectly contain the complete rule for faith and practice. Someone being in possession only of these books would still be able to be saved, presuming he would understand them correctly. In giving us many Scriptures, however, authored by various prophets, evangelists, and apostles, all bearing witness to the same truth, the Lord is manifesting His wondrous goodness to us. One book will shed light upon one doctrine more comprehensively and more clearly, whereas another book will do so in reference to a different doctrine. Thus, all the books of both Old and New Testaments obligate us to believe and to practice all that God commands, which implies that nothing may be believed or practiced which is external to the Scriptures. This confronts us with the following questions:

Question: Is the Word of God a complete and perfect rule for man in reference to faith and practice, thereby implying that nothing needs to be, or may be, added?

Answer: Roman Catholicism denies that the Word of God provides us with such a perfect rule, insisting that unwritten traditions must be accepted and believed with the same veneration and faith as the written Word of God. We, on the contrary, maintain that the written Word of God is a perfect and complete rule, thereby rejecting as human inventions all unwritten traditions which pertain to doctrine or practice. This is verified by, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalms 19:7). David as prophet does not merely make mention of the perfection which is inherent in the minutest detail of the Word of God, but primarily how this Word functions in reference to man: it can infuse man with wisdom unto salvation, which in turn results in his conversion. Thus, the Word contains all that is essential for doctrine and practice. If such were not the case, then it would neither be capable of converting a man nor providing him with suitable wisdom. The written Word has been given for the express purpose that we might procure life by it. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20:31). Such an objective could not be attained if the written Word were neither sufficient nor a

perfect rule for doctrine and life. Thus, it must be concluded that the Word is perfect. The written Word is competent to teach the truth, to rebuke error, to correct evil, and to identify that which is good, so man may be made perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. In one word, it is able to make man wise unto salvation. More one need not desire, for to have this is to have all. Such is now the vitality and efficacy of Scripture that it is both perfect and sufficient. Observe this in 2 Timothy 3:15-17 : “The Holy Scriptures ... are able to make thee wise unto salvation. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Evasive Argument #1: The word used is “profitable,” not “sufficient.” Ink is both profitable and necessary for writing, but not sufficient by itself.

Answer: It is written that the Word can make us wise unto salvation, and whatever is profitable unto salvation is of necessity also sufficient. In consequence of this there can be no additional requirements. The sun is profitable for illumination, which is equivalent to being sufficient, as no other light is either necessary or profitable when we are illuminated by the sun.

Evasive Argument #2: The apostle refers to the Old Testament. If the Old Testament were sufficient unto salvation, then the New Testament is not necessary. Since it is indispensable, however, then profitable here is almost identical to advantageous but it is not the equivalent of being sufficient.

Answer: (1) The Old Testament was sufficient prior to the coming of Christ who had been promised in the Old Testament. The New Testament does not propose a doctrine and practice which differs from that which is presented in the Old Testament, but rather confirms and augments that which was promised, and thus gives an exposition of its fulfillment. If the Old Testament were profitable to such a degree that it was sufficient for that time, then, due to their sufficiency, the combination of Old and New Testaments are all the more profitable.

(2) When Paul wrote these words to Timothy, several New Testament Scriptures were already available and therefore were included as well.

Addition to or Deletion from the Holy Scriptures Prohibited

It is forbidden to add to or delete from the written Word. All the curses recorded in this Word relative to such a practice confirm this. Thus the Word of God is a complete rule for doctrine and practice. This can be observed, as we read, “Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it” (Deuteronomy 4:2); “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life” (Revelation 22:18-19); “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

Evasive Argument #1: Moses makes reference to that which he spoke and not to that which he wrote. John only referred to his book, Revelation, and not to the entire Bible.

Answer: That which Moses spoke, he, upon the Lord’s command, also recorded as a faithful servant of God. In writing the book of Revelation, John wrote the conclusion of the Word of God.

John placed his prohibition at the very end of Revelation as a seal upon the entire revealed and recorded will of God in His Word. The reason for this prohibition is identical for every book of Holy Writ, and thus for the entire Scripture, the reason being that God had inspired those writings and none other.

Evasive Argument #2: The prophets have added much to Moses, and the apostles have added to both. Answer: This is not true in reference to the rule for doctrine and practice, but is only true as far as exposition, augmentation, and application are concerned, and only upon the inspiration and command of God. Paul declared all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27), and yet did not go beyond Moses and the prophets (Acts 26:22).

Evasive Argument #3: The texts refer to an addition or deletion which would contradict and corrupt that which has been recorded, but not to something which conforms to and complements the text.

Answer: Whatever one adds to a perfect work has a corrupting effect. The texts do not merely refer to all that is contradictory, but to all exceptions, as well as whatever is composed beyond the written text (Galatians 1:8).

All traditions which are extra-biblical in nature are inventions and institutions of men. There are no traditions which have been handed down to us by Christ and the apostles. Never does Christ or an apostle direct us to unwritten traditions, but always to the Word (Isaiah 8:20, Luke 16:29, John 5:39, 2 Peter 1:19-20). God condemns all institutions of men. "But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). The institutions of Roman Catholicism are superstitious, erroneous, and contrary to God's written Word.

Objection #1: Many books of the Holy Scriptures have been lost, such as The Book of the Wars of the Lord, The Book of the Just, The Book of the Chronicles of Israel, The Book of the Prophets Nathan and Gad, The Letter to the Laodiceans. In addition, not all the words and deeds of Christ have been recorded. We may believe that the apostles also wrote additional letters which are not in our possession. Thus, we must conclude that the Bible is not complete.

Answer: (1) These books have never been regarded as a rule for doctrine and practice. Scripture mentions several other books which have been written by pagan authors (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12).

(2) We believe that Christ has spoken and done many things. Furthermore, we believe that the apostles have written many letters to the congregations, also by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Such particular congregations were obliged to receive these letters as being of divine origin. These were not in the possession of other congregations, however, and after the apostolic period were not preserved for the church of God. The Scriptures which we may now have are therefore not incomplete, but nevertheless are and remain nevertheless a perfect rule for doctrine and practice. The entire gospel is contained in them, and apart from Scripture nothing else has ever been said or written about Christ and the apostles which has been recognized as a rule for doctrine and practice for the congregation. Indeed, even if we had fewer books in number, we would nevertheless be in possession of a perfect rule. It is the Lord's goodness, however, to give us the same gospel by the agency of many persons, as well as by means of many amplifications, applications, and expositions -- all being abundantly sufficient for us. A distinction needs to be made between the essence of a matter and the details of it.

Objection #2: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). This indicates that many essential things have not been recorded. Thus, we must conclude that the Scriptures are not complete, and therefore need to be augmented by means of traditions.

Answer: After Christ's resurrection the apostles were stronger in faith and grace, and during the forty days of His presence among them He spoke about the things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Thus, Christ spoke to them about those things which they were previously not able to bear. They were moved by the Holy Spirit who guided them into all truth (John 16:13). This Spirit would teach them all things and bring to remembrance all things which the Lord Jesus had told them (John 14:26). Thus, tradition is eliminated and the Holy Scriptures are and remain perfect, the apostles having recorded "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1), which encompasses all that is essential unto salvation.

Objection #3: "Hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Here the apostle expressly makes mention of traditions which were taught verbally, thus distinguishing them from traditions taught by letter. Consequently, there are traditions which have not been recorded, but which nevertheless must be adhered to.

Answer: The apostle did not only write but he also engaged in live preaching. The substance of his preaching, however, did not differ from the substance of his writing, and vice versa. It was in essence the same gospel. Therefore "by word or by letter" merely refers to different manners of presentation and not to matters which differ essentially. Therefore this does not lend support to the use of tradition.

Objection #4: The Jewish church also instituted various practices -- passing them on to subsequent generations -- which nevertheless were not commanded, such as fasting in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth month (Zechariah 7:5 and Zechariah 8:19); the days of Purim (Esther 9:21-26); the feast of the dedication (John 10:22). In similar fashion the Reformed Church also has her traditions, which implies that also now we may and must uphold tradition.

Answer: The practice of fasting was commanded by God; the determination of necessity, time, and circumstances was left to the church (Joel 2:1-32). Special days of thanksgiving are also commanded, the occurrence and frequency of which are to be determined by the church. There is no basis in the Word, however, upon which the church may legislate the observation of such days for subsequent generations. Such practices should be denounced and the church should not observe them. This is true also for our so-called feast days which ought to be eliminated. Regarding feast days consult *Res Judicata* by D. Koelman, as well as his other scholarly and devotional writings. Other external religious ordinances and circumstances are principally commanded in the Word of God, the stipulations of which are left to each individual church, and consequently are alterable according to time and place. In doing so, however, all superstition must be avoided and such practices must not have an adverse effect upon doctrine and practice. Thus, the perfection of the rule of Scripture will not be violated, nor will the use of unwritten traditions be advocated. The Old Testament: Binding for New Testament Christians Question: Does the Old Testament continue to be a rule for doctrine and practice for Christians in the New Testament?

Answer: The Anabaptists reply negatively, whereas we reply in the affirmative. Our proof is as follows: First, the Old and New Testaments contain the same doctrines and the same gospel; thus

the Old and the New Testaments are one in essence, differing only in circumstances and the manner of administration. The church of the Old Testament anticipated the coming of Christ and therefore had a ministry of types and shadows. The New Testament church reflects upon Christ who has come and therefore has a ministry without shadows. The Old Testament is one in essence with the New Testament and therefore is as much a rule for us as is the New Testament. Subsequently we shall demonstrate more comprehensively that such is evident in both Testaments, which is the reason why the apostle, while preaching in the New Testament dispensation, said "none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" (Acts 26:22).

Secondly, there is but one church from the beginning of the world until the end of time. The books of the Old Testament were given to the church as its regulative principle, and such is therefore true for the New Testament church as well. Even the ceremonies, which were instituted to be practiced only for a period of time, are applicable to us in the New Testament -- not to be practiced as such, but for the purpose of discerning in them the truth and wisdom of God, and also for the attainment of a better knowledge of Christ from the details of these ceremonies.

Thirdly, the church of the New Testament is built upon the foundation of the prophets as well as of the apostles. "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2:20). Thus the writings of the prophets are as regulative for us as the writings of the apostles.

Evasive Argument: The word "prophets" should be interpreted as referring to the prophets of the New Testament, of whom we can read in 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 3:5, and Ephesians 4:11. This is indicated by the order in which they are mentioned, as the apostle first makes mention of the apostles and then of the prophets.

Answer: (1) The prophets of the New Testament, to whom reference is made in these texts, did not leave behind any writings. Consequently, the church cannot be built upon their writings.

(2) Whenever mention is made of prophets in the New Testament, the reference is generally to the prophets of the Old Testament (Luke 24:25; Luke 24:27).

(3) The fact that the apostles are mentioned before the prophets lends no support to such a sentiment. The prophets are placed before the evangelists in Ephesians 4:11, and yet evangelists are superior to prophets in the New Testament.

Fourthly, Christ and the apostles substantiated their doctrine by means of the Old Testament. They direct us to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, demonstrating the profitability of the Old Testament for us who are in the New Testament dispensation. "search the Scriptures; for ...they are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39); "For whatsoever things were written aforetime [that is, the books of the Old Testament] were written for our learning" (Romans 15:4); "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (Luke 16:29); "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed" (2 Peter 1:19); "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). All this demonstrates with exceptional clarity that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are regulative for us as well as those of the New Testament.

Objection #1: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:13). Since it then already was waxing old and ready to vanish away, at the present time it has vanished long ago. Thus, we conclude that the Old Testament is no longer regulative for us.

Answer: In this text the apostle is not referring to the books of the Old Testament, for he commends them, declaring them to be profitable for instruction, reproof, etc., (Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 3:15-17). Rather, his reference here is to the administration of the covenant, which will be demonstrated in more detail later. Even though the ceremonies relating to the administration of the covenant have ceased, the books of the Old Testament do not therefore cease to be regulative.

Objection #2: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied unto John" (Matthew 11:13); therefore the prophecies of necessity ceased at the time when John appeared on the scene.

Answer: The prophets and the ceremonial laws proclaimed that Christ would come, whereas John proclaimed that Jesus had come. The fulfillment implies the cessation of the promise; as such these promises must no longer be understood to be prophetic in nature. Their prophecies continued to be valid in other respects, however. They prophesied concerning the suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and of His return to judge the world. In this sense the prophecies could not cease with John, the reason being that they had not as yet been fulfilled. The Lord Jesus makes reference in this text to prophecies and their fulfillment, but not to the issue whether or not the prophetic Scriptures are regulative. The one terminated with the coming of Christ, and the other will always be valid.

Objection #3: "Christ is the end of the law" (Romans 10:4). Therefore, the Old Testament ceased to function at the coming of Christ.

Answer: The apostle does not refer to the termination of its enduring validity, for Christ states, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18). Rather, Paul refers to the objective in view, that is, that the function of the law is to lead to Christ, that through His fulfilling of the law by His life and passion one may become a partaker of justification. The External and Internal Composition of the Holy Scriptures The composition of the Holy Scriptures is both external and internal. To the external belong the orderliness, clarity, and suitability of the style of Scripture, most succinctly giving expression to each doctrine considered individually as well as conveying the internal harmony between the doctrines, and at the same time displaying the majesty of God by whose Spirit they have been recorded. A man of worldly wisdom seeks to use ornate vocabulary, but will rarely be able to adequately describe the wondrous fortitude, dignity, loftiness, and elegance of the style of Scripture. The language used in the most elegant speeches of orators is in comparison but the language of farmers and children. They are not learned enough, however, to perceive this. The internal composition of Scripture relates to the orderly and precise meaning which corresponds with the thoughts and objectives of the Speaker, that is, God. The meaning of each word, affection, or argument is not two, three, or fourfold, but rather singular in nature. It is an accepted fact that the essential meaning of something can only be singular, as there is in essence only one truth. Thus, the Scriptures are clear and comprehensible, for the sincerity of the Speaker makes it a requisite that He express His meaning in a singular and simple fashion so that His hearer be

neither confused nor mislead by ambiguous words.

Such a meaning is referred to as the literal meaning which is expressed in either singular or compound form. The singular meaning of the sentence is expressed either precisely or metaphorically. The precise meaning of the sentence is expressed when one articulates his thoughts by using vocabulary which immediately expresses the substance of the matter at hand, such as, "God is just and man is sinful." The literal meaning is expressed metaphorically when one expresses himself with words from which the original and precise meaning is deduced, in order to express one's view that much more clearly, graciously, and forcefully. Such a manner of speech is frequently used which in the discipline of oratory is often illustrated by examples such as, "Herod is a fox," that is, he is cunning and crafty. The compound meaning of the speaker is expressed when both type and antitype are placed side by side; the one part of the sentence contains the type and the other part the antitype. This is illustrated in the following text: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14). Each element of the sentence when viewed individually has a well-defined meaning of its own; however, the true intent of the sentence is only expressed by joining both clauses together. The meaning of Scripture which the Holy Spirit wishes to convey is always singular in nature. One may and must rely upon this truth without any distrust. One and the same matter can be viewed from various perspectives, and therefore also be expressed in various forms. Every expression, however, fits precisely in the context in which it is found and in which it is to be comprehended. The views and expressions of Scripture are therefore internally related to each other. They fit together and are by no means different, much less contradictory in nature. Therefore, the Scriptures do not permit various interpretations of the same matter or text.

Scripture is not Subject to Various Interpretations In order to facilitate the pope's placement upon the seat of judgment, Roman Catholicism maintains that one and the same text can have a fourfold meaning. First, there is the literal meaning which, incidentally, is the only meaning that we acknowledge. Secondly, there is the allegorical or figurative meaning, when matters of a temporal and physical nature symbolize those of a spiritual dimension, as in Galatians 4:24 where Hagar and Sarah are expressive of two covenants. Such is also the case when something from the realm of nature is used to instruct and motivate man to fulfil his obligation. This is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 9:9, where it is stated, "Doth God take care for oxen?", by which the congregation is exhorted to care for their ministers. Thirdly, there is an analogical or mystical meaning, such as when heaven is depicted by means of earthly objects. This is the case in Revelation 21:2 when "Jerusalem" refers to heaven. Fourthly, there is a tropological meaning which is established by an exchange of words, something which is resorted to when application is made to our daily walk or for the purpose of amending it.

If one were to maintain that in a particular text one meaning is evident, whereas in another text a different meaning must be advocated, we would readily submit to such a view. For then the literal intent of the Holy Spirit is taken into consideration, whether this is the case in a singular or a compound sense, primarily or metaphorically. The practice of assigning a fourfold meaning to every text however, must be considered absurd. We can tolerate the occasional use of one text to make several applications, and we can cope with someone who acts foolishly in this regard and exceeds the limits of reason. To maintain, however, that in every text the Holy Spirit has four interpretations in view, is to make the Holy Scriptures ludicrous. Even though God is infinite and

therefore capable of comprehending many matters of infinite dimension simultaneously, He nevertheless is not addressing Himself, but rather men who have but a puny and finite intellect. As He speaks, He is as desirous to be understood as clearly as man when he uses speech to express his thoughts to others. Man's ability to speak is not derived from the Bible; rather, the Bible is written in the language of man. It uses man's language in a more distinguishable, clear, and intelligible manner than the most brilliant lawyer is capable of, so that there is not the least reason for misunderstanding. Misunderstandings concerning Scripture are generated by the darkness and obstinacy of man. Several questions need to be dealt with relative to this issue.

Question: Do the words in Holy Writ always convey every possible meaning which may be assigned to them?

Answer: Who could have ever imagined that anyone would arise who would answer this question in the affirmative? Yet there are today many individuals who believe this to be true. We emphatically answer in the negative for the following reasons:

First, this is evident from the four reasons which we stated in a previous paragraph, rejecting the concept of the multiple interpretation of Scripture. Apply that principle to this situation.

Secondly, if this were true, then no certainties could be found in the entire Scriptures, and various opinions would simultaneously have to be accepted as truth. In such a situation a passage would have various meanings, one person accepting one and someone else another meaning, all being of equal value. We would then have to tolerate every opinion, since each person would be able to justify the meaning he selected for the words in question. It should be obvious to everyone that such is the logical consequence of this view. Whether there are some individuals who apply this concept in this fashion is known only to those who interact with them. Thus it would be possible to make the truth and the lie compatible.

Thirdly, the most denigrating and ludicrous expositions imaginable would have to be accepted as truth, as several persons have demonstrated with numerous texts in Scripture. Such expositions cannot be rejected by those who hold to this proposition, even if they themselves perceive that a given position is ludicrous. This notion is therefore a dreadful desecration of the Word and an affront to God. It would suggest that He would speak in an ambiguous manner or express many different and contradictory meanings in one and the same text.

Fourthly, we are not permitted to deal with human writings, such as wills, contracts, and financial receipts, in this manner. What a disgrace it would be to proceed in such a fashion! Much less may one deal in such a way with the Word of the living God, since He gives expression to every doctrine as well as His intent in a most fitting, orderly, clear, and forceful manner. Even if God were hypothetically (if I may speak of God in such a fashion) to express and aim at all that is true in one paragraph, He is nevertheless not addressing Himself, but men. Thus, He is speaking in a human fashion, in a way which men are best able to understand.

Evasive Argument: This principle applies only if the meaning of the text neither contradicts the rule of faith, is contrary to the Holy Spirit's sacred objectives, nor conflicts with the context.

Answer: (1) If we were to carry the true ramifications of this principle to their logical conclusion, it would constitute a *contradictio in adjecto*, for the latter assertion would refute the first. The

implication would be that no word in all of Scripture could mean what it truly should, since the meaning would always be dependent upon the manner in which this principle is applied.

(2) This principle is flawed as has been demonstrated by several individuals in reference to various texts, since by the use of this rule the meanings of words can be arbitrarily established, and thus the biblical parameters of faith be redefined. Everything is acceptable, one exposition as well as another. According to this principle they can and must also maintain that the Holy Spirit has all these various meanings of the Word in view, thus enabling one to create a context as it pleases him. These stipulations are essential to discern the correct meaning of each text, and are potent medicine for those who maintain that every word does not mean what it potentially can mean. The meaning of a word can only be such as is congruent with the requirements of the specific circumstances in which it occurs.

Objection #1: Many texts will permit a two or threefold interpretation. One can find this to be true by consulting various scholarly expositors, and by what one hears from the pulpits. This is even true for those who object to the aforementioned principle, suggesting that any given word can be understood to mean one thing as well as another. From this it is evident that even those who oppose principle agree that words are subject to various interpretations.

Answer: When expositors in writing or speaking make mention of a variety of meanings associated with a word, they are not admitting thereby that this text, or the word within this text, has various meanings. They are merely admitting that because of their darkened understanding they are not able to interpret this text absolutely and do not dare to say with certainty which meaning the Holy Spirit has in view. If emphasis is under consideration, one should compare the translation with the original text.

Objection #2: The aforementioned principle yields much light as one seeks to understand the Word of God; it enables one to perceive the full force and emphasis of the text.

Answer: (1) This principle will cause persons much darkness in understanding the Word, unless they dispense with love for the truth. Doing the latter would enable them to understand the Word readily. Then everything is acceptable and they cannot err, as the words mean what is most conveniently suitable at the moment.

(2) God's Word always speaks with emphasis, and all words are used in full effect, so that the meaning of a word or sentence is never diluted. Those who wish to introduce heresy, or who desire to maintain the viability of their heresies, will use the full force and emphasis of a word, as if that were capable of altering the true meaning of a given text. Scholars are conversant with such trickery, and the simple must be on guard when they hear words used in such a fashion.

Additional Objection: Everyone understands that words are sometimes taken in a narrow and a wider sense, thereby including a wide variety of meanings. Some words or sentences are viewed from such a broad perspective so as to include at once all the consequences which naturally flow out of them. From this it is evident that one can utilize words either with full force and emphasis or with less than full emphasis.

Answer: The issue at hand relates to the various meanings of words which have one meaning in one text and another in a different text. If a word has one meaning in one text, it does not

necessarily follow that it has the same meaning in other texts. The meaning is determined by that particular text. Some words have reference to a special and unique doctrine, whereas some words are general or common, and in their meaning embrace everything which is comprehended in that general word. Sometimes this comprehensive meaning finds full expression and sometimes the meaning must be deduced from that which immediately follows. This process will yield the literal meaning of those words, and neither determines the magnitude of the force or the emphasis of them.

Question: Must all doctrines relative to faith and practice be established on the basis of words expressly recorded in Scripture, and are they to be disqualified as being according to truth if such is not the case? Can the meaning of a text be determined by applying the logical principle of necessary consequence?

Answer: Anabaptists, in order to deny infant baptism, hold to the first principle. We hold to the second with this understanding -- that we do not accept what people deduce with their darkened and corrupt intellects, but that which is contained in the text and becomes evident by virtue of necessary consequence. This is verified as follows:

First, man is reasonable and his speech is reasonable. In all his interactions his verbal expression generally implies consequences. Since God speaks to man in a human fashion, His verbal expressions also imply consequences. Sometimes these consequences are verbalized, and at other times the matter is merely mentioned -- containing the consequence by implication. Among the innumerable consequences which are expressed consider this one: Christ, the Head of all believers, has risen from the dead. This proposition implies that all who are members of Christ must of necessity be spiritually alive. The latter is implied in the first and is consequently deduced from the first, "... that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Consider the following as an example of an implied consequence, "I am ...the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). This implies,

(1) that they who had been deceased long before the time of Moses are yet alive; (2) that there shall be a resurrection from the dead. This is confirmed in Matthew 22:31-32 : "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read ...I am the God of Abraham ...God is not a God of the dead, but of the living."

Secondly, the purpose of Scripture is to be profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, refutation of error, and for comfort (Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16). No one can make application towards himself or someone else except by way of deduction, which causes one to reason as follows: "since God has expressed such and such in His Word, I must refrain from doing this, and I must do the other; I am in error as far as this opinion is concerned; in this area I ought not to consider myself defeated, but I ought to be encouraged." Since our names are not recorded in the Bible, how would anyone be able to use the Bible in a profitable manner except by way of application? All application, however, is made by way of deduction.

Objection #1: If such were the case, then our faith would rest upon a fallible foundation, for in drawing conclusions one can be in error as human intellect often errs in the process. Whatever one claims to extract from a text by way of logical deduction may be refuted by someone else.

Answer: (1) It cannot be logically concluded that the potential for error will necessarily lead to error. Our eye can fail to perceive something correctly, even though such is generally not the case. That which one person cannot perceive clearly due to nearsightedness or failing vision, the other is able to perceive clearly.

(2) Our faith is not founded upon rational deduction extracted from a certain text, but upon the text itself. Our ability to reason is merely a means whereby one may perceive that a certain doctrine finds expression in the text. Such a conclusion cannot be drawn from the realm of nature, but only on the basis of revealed truth which is the foundation for faith. Our reasoning cannot deduce anything from the text which was not already inherent in it, but can extract and unveil what is contained in the text already. Thus, faith is not founded upon reason but upon the Word of God.

Objection #2: "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20). Thus, we must conclude that everything relative to faith must be based on actual words of Scripture itself, which makes private interpretation inappropriate.

Answer: Private interpretation is not the comprehension and knowledge of a given text acquired by reasoning. If such were the case then Scripture would not be profitable for doctrine, etc. (2 Timothy 3:16). Then the exhortations to search the Scriptures (John 5:39) and to compare spiritual things with spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:13) would be without purpose, and one neither could nor should heed them. It is evident that everyone in particular should and must exercise discriminatory judgment in dealing with Scripture. Private judgment, however, consists of the fabrication of a person's own views -- views which originate in his own intellect. It is the bringing of Scripture into subjection to such views and declaring as final authority on the matter, "I determine that such and such shall be the interpretation." Private interpretation is to assign a meaning to a text which is foreign to Scripture, is not extracted from Scripture, and is the product and conclusion of a person's own intellect.

Objection #3: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit; lest any man should beguile you with enticing words" (Colossians 2:8; Colossians 2:4). To engage in deductive reasoning is the practice of philosophy; we must refrain from making deductions which generate conclusions without substance.

Answer: The apostle warned against the abuse, not the lawful use of all things. Philosophy is the art of reasoning. It is innate in man to acquire knowledge about a certain issue by virtue of the process of reasoning, an ability which he utilizes in all his mental and verbal activities. The ability to reason improves by way of exercise. The desire to acquire wisdom by way of reasoning is denominated as philosophy, which in itself should not be labeled as vain deceit. Paul does not label philosophy as vain deceit but indicates that deceptive individuals by the use of reason can formulate that which has a semblance of being reasonable, which, however, very easily could beguile, deceive, and mislead the simple. One should be on guard for such people and their activity, and listen to Scripture rather than reason. All this, however, has nothing in common with the proper use of reason in attempting to understand Scripture -- to use it as a means to extract what is concealed in every text, which is but drawing conclusions on the basis of the Word.

Objection #4: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2

Corinthians 10:5). One must cast down imaginations and bring all thoughts into captivity. Thus, all conclusions drawn from the Word by way of thoughtful deliberation should be rejected.

Answer: (1) If man must cease to deliberate and to think, he would have to dehumanize himself. He would even have to reject that which has been expressly recorded in Scripture, as he would not be able to do this without deliberation and thought processes.

(2) This text explains itself, for it speaks of imaginations and high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. Such must obviously be cast down and be "brought into captivity." That is not true, however, concerning deliberations and thought processes by means of which one acquires knowledge about God and His Word, whereby one searches to discover what is contained in the Word and in every text, also by way of deduction to the conscience. The Perspicuity of the Holy Scriptures Question: Are the Scriptures perspicuous?

Answer: Roman Catholicism maintains that the Scriptures are so obscure that they cannot be comprehended except by the use of unwritten tradition and authoritative declarations of the church; that every text can only be understood in a manner which is congruent with the interpretation of the Roman Catholic Church, since she determines that such and such is the meaning of a given text.

We reply, (1) that some matters are beyond human comprehension, as for instance, the manner of God's existence, being one in essence yet three Persons. This is also true for His eternity, His infinity -- being without limitation, His unconditional goodness, the union of the two natures of Christ, and similar mysteries. These truths are presented to us and everyone can see with one glance that they are recorded in the Word. Since, however, these matters cannot be fully comprehended, they are believed.

(2) All men are not capable of understanding Scripture from a spiritual perspective, even though clearly expressed. Similarly, the sun cannot be seen by a blind person even though the sun is an illuminating body. One who is nearly blind sees only a glimmer of light and therefore is not able to distinguish things clearly. Even among those who are able to see there are degrees of clarity in the exercise of vision. This is not due to a flaw in the sun, but is to be attributed to man himself. Such is also the case with spiritual light. A natural man is capable of discerning words in a natural way, as well as the meaning and much of the internal harmony of Scripture; however, he is not able to understand its spiritual dimension, for such is foolishness to him. He is as ignorant in this matter as a blind heathen. God favors some with general enlightenment whereby they are able to perceive the glory and preciousness of divine truths. Those who may be recipients of grace are favored by the Lord with enlightened eyes of understanding while reading or listening. Also here there is a difference in degree; there are children, young men, and adults. The least of them perceive the purpose of Christ and as they attentively read the Word, they comprehend all that is necessary for them unto salvation. They discern the truth contained in the Word; they know and believe it precisely because it is found in the Word. Others make more progress and discern more doctrinal truths, perceiving their interrelatedness. Still others receive even more light but yet remain pupils; their light is not comparable to the knowledge of the saints in heaven.

(3) One must recognize that many texts of Scripture when considered individually may be clearly understood in reference to godliness and salvation even though one may not be cognizant of their

interrelatedness. Many texts no sooner become subject for consideration than more diligent study becomes necessary. Also the interrelatedness of many texts to other texts cannot be immediately discerned -- not because the text itself is neither clear, orderly, nor suitable, but due to the lack of light in the person studying.

(4) The knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is imperfect even in the most advanced, and in many is very limited. Such are in need of instruction, not due to any lack of clarity in the Word but in order that they might acquire the ability to see the light. Such instruction should not be given by conveying the judgment of the church, with the traditional arguments relative to the issue at hand, or by a resting in these, but it occurs when the issues are presented and explained in various ways so the recipient of this instruction may see for himself what Scripture has to say and thus come to an understanding of the issue itself.

Therefore we answer the question whether the Scripture is perspicuous enough to be understood in the affirmative. A regenerated person with the smallest measure of grace is able to understand that which is necessary unto salvation when he reads Scripture attentively. Not only is Scripture perspicuous as far as orderliness and manner of expression is concerned, but it is also intelligible for a converted person, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened (Ephesians 1:18). This is evident from the following:

First, from express declarations by God Himself, "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalms 19:8); "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105); "A light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19).

Secondly, God has given His Word to enlighten, govern, and comfort those who are His, as becomes evident from, "... enlightening the eyes" (Psalms 19:8); "... for our learning ...comfort of the Scriptures" (Romans 15:4); "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation ...and is profitable for instruction" (2 Timothy 3:15-16); "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word" (Psalms 119:9). This objective of Scripture could not be achieved unless the perspicuity of the Scriptures is such that they can be understood.

Thirdly, a writer is flawed if he cannot write in an intelligible manner. The more plain and clear his presentation of matters is, enabling the reader to discern the very marrow of the issue at hand, the more learned he is. One can then conclude that he thoroughly understands his subject matter and that the clearer he writes the better the result will be. God, however, is the Father of lights, an unapproachable Light, and He has given the Scriptures to make His mysteries known to man. It is therefore most certain that the Holy Scriptures incomparably surpass all other writings as far as clarity and perspicuity are concerned, and therefore are most supremely suitable for the instruction of mankind.

Fourthly, those who possess worldly wisdom, even though they are blind concerning the subject matter, shall be compelled to confess that many passages of the Holy Scriptures as far as style and manner of presentation are concerned, can be comprehended by men of limited understanding without instruction. This enables such individuals to understand the matters themselves. This is true, for example, in statements such as, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men" (1 Timothy 2:5); "Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:20); "But now is

Christ risen from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:20); "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Psalms 2:12); "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36); "There shall be a resurrection of the dead" (Acts 24:15). Is there obscurity in expressions such as these? Since he does not have spiritual eyes, however, the natural man is not able to understand these matters in a spiritual fashion. Converted persons, on the contrary, have enlightened eyes of understanding (Ephesians 1:18). They have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit who teaches them all things (1 John 2:27). They are taught of God (Isaiah 54:13). For these reasons the Scriptures are clear and intelligible for them.

Objection #1: "In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16). Something which is of such a nature and has such consequences cannot be deemed clear, and is obscure to our understanding.

Answer: (1) The apostle was referring to some rather than all matters in Paul's letters which he had penned with divine wisdom.

(2) He was referring to matters and not to style and manner of presentation. These matters were lofty and deep mysteries, but were nevertheless presented in a most clear and exact manner.

(3) He was not speaking of men unlearned in the things of nature, but rather to unlearned and unstable men who, in their natural state are void of the Spirit, are neither taught of God nor have spiritually enlightened eyes. He had unstable men in mind who do come to church and are somewhat acquainted with divine truths but who are without a spiritual foundation and are being tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. Such persons wrest not only the lofty doctrines expressed by Paul -- which they cannot understand -- but also wrest other Scriptures to their own destruction. "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves" (Jude 1:10).

Thus the text does not suggest that Scripture is obscure in the doctrines which must be known unto salvation. This is especially not true for those who are regenerated, which was the point of contention here.

Objection #2: "And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:30-31). Since Scripture cannot be understood without further instruction, it lacks the clarity necessary for it to be understood.

Answer: (1) Far be it from us to exclude the necessity of instruction. Those who are still unconverted are in need of instruction, as they are without knowledge concerning spiritual matters, however clearly they may be presented. Our reference here is not to what the Scriptures are for the unconverted. A blind person cannot read and therefore cannot become conversant with the contents of a book by means of reading. For everyone who has begun to receive spiritual eyesight and also for those who have made further progress -- each one at his own level as no one comes to perfection in this life -- instruction is a means whereby one may progressively advance. The necessity of instruction, however, does not imply obscurity in Scripture, but rather takes into account the loftiness of its doctrines and the incompetence of the person who is reading it.

(2) The purpose of instruction is not to make Scripture more clear but to make a person more capable of discerning the mysteries contained in Scripture.

Objection #3: "For now we see through a glass darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Answer: This text does not refer to Holy Scripture, but to the believer, declaring that the knowledge he may possess in this world is but a glimmer compared to the knowledge which he shall have in heaven. This text therefore is not relevant to the issue at hand, namely, whether the godly can understand the Holy Scriptures to their comfort, direction, faith, and salvation, or whether the Scriptures are so obscure that they can barely understand anything.

Objection #4: The Word of God cannot be understood apart from the illumination of the Spirit of God. Thus we conclude that it is too obscure to be understood, as is evident in the following texts: "He opened to us the Scriptures" (Luke 24:32); "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psalms 119:18).

Answer: (1) We readily admit that man needs to be enlightened by God's Spirit before he can understand Scripture in its spiritual sense. Apart from this illumination he cannot comprehend spiritual matters, as they are foolishness to him.

(2) The texts themselves indicate that the problem is not with the perspicuity of Scripture, but with man's intellect, which must be wrought upon by the Holy Spirit before he can understand the spiritual matters presented in Scripture. The Pope Not the Infallible Judge of Scripture

Question: Is there a superior and infallible judge upon earth who can rule in disputes concerning the Holy Scriptures, to whom every one, upon God's command, should submit? And if there is such a judge, would this be the church, an ecclesiastical assembly, or the pope of Rome?

Answer: Roman Catholicism claims that God has appointed such a judge, this judge being the pope of Rome. Even if they occasionally make references to churches or ecclesiastical assemblies, they nevertheless surrender to the pope in the end. They have appointed him to be the head of the church and have elevated him above ecclesiastical assemblies, for the majority views him to be infallible when he makes a declaration from his papal chair.

We reply, (1) that many doctrinal heresies have originated from man's corrupt intellect, the one being of more and the other being of less significance. "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Corinthians 11:19).

(2) Every individual church member, whether he, as a member, is a government official or an ordinary citizen, has the necessary discernment to understand Scripture.

(3) According to the rule of God's Word, the elders as representatives of the church and as servants of Christ, may render their judgment as office-bearers in an effort to settle disputes which concern external matters, and thus preserve peace and the unity of faith. According to Romans 16:17, they are also authorized to remove from the midst of the congregation those members who are unwilling to abdicating their heresies. It is not within the jurisdiction of the church, however, to judge concerning any member's conscience, neither can a person's faith be founded upon the judgment of the church. This is the jurisdiction of the Holy Spirit only. This Spirit speaks in and by means of the Word; and upon the Word alone may faith be founded.

(4) Thus, we deny that there is an infallible judge upon earth who rules in disputes and to whose judgment everyone must surrender. We deny even more emphatically that either the Roman Catholic Church, its ecclesiastical assembly, or the pope can be judge. We do so for the following reasons:

Firstly, there is not one jot or tittle in the Bible which makes reference to such a prominent, superior, and infallible judge who is to judge in disputes and who ascertains the meaning of the Holy Scriptures. Much less is there any reference that such authority is vested with assemblies of the Roman Catholic Church or with the pope. Let one proof text be produced! Paul in his letter to the Romans would certainly have made some mention of such a privilege, of such a weighty matter in which the very truth of Scripture is at stake. The apostle Peter also would have done or said something to indicate such a privilege and would have given some injunction that the pope of Rome should succeed him and have infallible authority to judge in disputes. He does not mention a word relative to this matter; in fact, Scripture tells us that Peter was rebuked by Paul (Galatians 2:11). At the first ecclesiastical assembly held in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13), Peter was not even the chairman, but the assembly acted according to the judgment of James. Thus, all the activity of the pope is nothing but a usurpation of authority. He presumptuously claims authority for himself which he has neither received nor can validate.

Secondly, the pope is not infallible in doctrine or in practice. Some have been exceptionally ungodly, having been fornicators, occultists, heretics, and atheists; this has been confirmed by papal chroniclers. How can such individuals function as infallible judges in disputes that relate to doctrinal issues? The secrets of the Lord are with those that fear Him (Psalms 25:14). Yes, also in our day the pope legislates in direct contradiction to Scripture. He forbids the use of foods which God has created and which are to be received with thanksgiving, and he also forbids marriage, both of which are contrary to 1 Timothy 4:3. He condones incestuous marriages which God has forbidden. He commands that a piece of bread be worshipped as God. He has instituted the religious worship of angels, deceased saints, and images -- all of which is directly contrary to Scripture. Can such a man be an infallible judge? How abominable!

Thirdly, Roman Catholicism itself does not acknowledge the pope to be infallible judge. To illustrate this we shall present a few small extracts from the public proclamation made at the Court of Parliament, the great Chamber of Tournelle, gathered by papal edict on January 23, 1688, in France. This proclamation was printed in The Hague in the German language by Barend Beek.

"We wish to make known in this commonwealth the new sentiments concerning the infallibility of the pope, which, in fact, is precipitated by his stubbornness." Who could have imagined that the pope, who is held before us an example of holiness and virtue, would be so attached to his sentiments and so jealously guard the illusion of vain authority? The injunctions of the pope, as unjust as they were, only served the purpose of investigating their unjust claims. The pope jealously strives for the excelling of his papal office in ostentatious novelties. Furthermore, the addition of vain threatenings of excommunication to this edict has not succeeded in causing even the most fearful souls and those who have a most principled conscience to be the least frightened. The pope's use of spiritual weapons in an entirely secular matter is an intolerable abuse, thus causing such a scandalous novelty to have the illusion of righteousness. When Pope Gregory IV threatened French bishops with excommunication, they replied boldly that they would not be

obedient to the will of the pope. Furthermore, if he would have come with the intention to excommunicate them, he in turn would be exiled. si excommunicaturus veniret, excommunicatus abiret. Can anything more unreasonable and unjust be imagined -- if not to say more abominable -- than the issuance of this proclamation? Even the entire world is convinced that, rather than the zeal of God's house, envy and spite engendered the publication of this proclamation. In these circumstances there is nothing to fear from this clap of thunder from the Vatican. How expedient it would be if all the ecclesiastical matters in this commonwealth could be dealt with without being under obligation to turn to Rome, and that the pope would be entirely subordinate to the ecclesiastical assemblies, who are authorized to correct him and to modify his proclamations. Does such conduct emulate the care and meekness of the apostles in their governing of the church? What a strange matter it is that the pope, after having sat in the chair of St. Peter, has not ceased to negotiate with the disciples of Jansenius, whose doctrine was condemned by his predecessors. He has showered them with favors, has praised them, etc.

Such is the esteem Roman Catholics have for their pope. Far be it therefore from us to acknowledge him as infallible! Fourthly, the objective is to have a tangible, infallible judge in order to effectively settle all disputes. This objective, however, is certainly not accomplished by the pope who elevates himself as an infallible judge. All Protestants refuse to acknowledge him as such. Whenever he pronounces his "anathema" upon them, they in turn pronounce it upon him. How can he, being one of the parties in the dispute, be the judge? And have the disputes between the squabbling factions of Dominicans and Jesuits, Jesuits and Jansenists, Quietists and Operatists, ever been settled? These sects are still alive and well within the pope's domain. From all this it becomes apparent that the pope is not, nor is he qualified to be, an infallible judge in disputes.

Fifthly, the Word of God teaches us that in reference to religion, doctrine, and practice one should not look to man, but only to the Word as the infallible rule, acknowledging it to function as judge in disputes and recognizing that Scripture is its own expositor. This logically follows since it is the Word of the only sovereign Judge of heaven and earth who is the most excellent Wisdom and lives to all eternity. No sovereign on earth would tolerate his subjects -- whether subject to him in pretense or in truth -- to presume, while the sovereign is still living, to be infallible interpreters of his commands, imposing their interpretation upon his subjects and requiring compliance with it. Much less shall the living God tolerate such presumption. He speaks with utmost clarity and does not refuse the illumination of His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him for it. He who refuses to be subject to God shall much less be subject to the declaration of a man who exalts himself against the Word of God, while he who wishes to subject himself to God only shall reject the heretical declarations of the pope with loathing.

Sixthly, it is God's will that everyone's doctrine and practice should be in accordance with His Word. This is evident from the following texts: "To the law and to the testimony" (Isaiah 8:20); "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39); "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures"

(Matthew 22:29); "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (Luke 16:29). For this reason the Lord Jesus, although very God, confirmed His doctrine from the Scriptures, which may generally be observed in the gospels. Such was also the practice of the apostles as is evidenced by their sermons recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and by their letters. Indeed, Peter does not recommend himself as being infallible but recommends the word of prophecy in 2 Peter 1:19. Luke

commended the Bereans who made the Word their standard of reference as they investigated whether the things spoken by Paul were truly so (Acts 17:11). Not one word in the Bible refers to an infallible earthly judge but Scripture itself is established as judge. To its declarations we are to give heed as being the oracles of God. Thus we conclude emphatically that neither the true church, much less the Roman Catholic Church, nor her ecclesiastical assemblies, nor the pope who is the focal point of her entire establishment, are to be the judge in disputes of doctrine or practice.

Seventhly, add to these reasons texts which emphatically establish the Word of God itself to be judge, "... the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48); "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses" (John 5:45); "All scripture ...is profitable for doctrine, for reproof" (2 Timothy 3:16); "The Word of God ...is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

Thus the Word itself is arbiter in the disputes which arise concerning the Word of God, for it is the sovereign, living God who speaks in it, has spoken in it, and speaks by means of it until this very moment. Thus, the Word must be viewed as if God were continually narrating it to us with an audible voice from heaven.

Objection #1: Moses, the high priest, the prophets, and all the priests functioned as judges in doctrinal disputes in the Old Testament. Therefore the pope, cardinals, bishops, and ecclesiastical assemblies function similarly in the New Testament. "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:7).

Answer: (1) Moses and the prophets received extraordinary revelations from God for the purpose of making these known and recording them. There was, however, no continuation of this practice in respect to common teachers, neither in the Old nor in the New Testament.

(2) None of them, much less the common teachers, had the authority to issue a superior judgment about that which had been recorded. They had ministerial and official discernment, however, enabling them to apply the truth of the Word to individual persons and issues. In this discernment they were not infallible, as is also the case today.

Objection #2: There must of necessity be an earthly, infallible judge to arbitrate disputes, for otherwise the truth could not continue to exist in the church; neither could the church continue to exist according to the truth, and no disputes would ever be resolved.

Answer: (1) The truth will always remain in the Word, and the Word within the church. (2) The church is preserved by means of the truth, just as the truth within the church is preserved by virtue of the ministerial discernment which the elders exercise on the basis of the Word of God. They are called to use the truth to combat heresies as well as to deal with persons who are in error, instructing them thereby, and if they persist in their error, to exclude them from the fellowship of the church. In order to accomplish this there is no need for a superior and infallible judgment.

(3) There will never be an absence of disputes; neither will heresies disappear. They would not be eliminated even if there were an infallible judge upon earth. Such disputes continue to surface even in the papal domain, albeit the pope and the ecclesiastical assemblies are presumed to be

infallible judges.

Objection #3: The Word is not capable of hearing the grievances of the opposing parties and therefore cannot function as arbiter in disputes. Consequently, there must of necessity be another judge.

Answer: Such can be true for human writings and of an individual who expresses himself inadequately, ambiguously, or obscurely. Such, however, is not true for the perfect law of the sovereign, omniscient, all-wise and everlasting God who joins His Spirit to His Word, declaring all truths plainly, clearly, and accurately, and thereby rejecting all errors which present themselves in opposition to it. The Holy Spirit has foreseen whatever errors might arise. Whoever lacks the ability to see and hear will be incapable of hearing the pronouncement of either a visible and audible judge, or of God in His Word. Even if the spirit of error concerns the spiritual realm, God nevertheless remains Judge, maintaining the truth by means of His Word and countering all error.

Objection #4: The dispute concerns the Word itself, referring to its meaning; therefore Scripture itself cannot make a pronouncement in this area but requires the services of an infallible judge.

Answer: If a dispute arises in reference to the laws of an earthly sovereign must there then be someone other than the sovereign who authoritatively declares what is the meaning of such a law? May a subject do this or should this be the responsibility of the sovereign if he is still alive at that moment? Everyone can understand that this is the responsibility of none other than the sovereign alone. Likewise, God is living and He speaks clearly and perspicuously in His Word, doing so by means of various ways, methods, and texts, so that if man is not able to understand the Word in one text, he may do so in another. For this purpose he must compare Scripture with Scripture which will lead him to the conclusion that God is the expositor of His own Word. Thus, Holy Scripture, or the Holy Spirit speaking by means of the Word, is the judge who renders a decision in the disputes which arise among men. To appoint another infallible judge is to elevate someone above God and His Word, which God will not tolerate.

Objection #5: One must hear the church, and whoever refuses to do so must be excommunicated (Matthew 18:17). Thus the church is capable of rendering infallible judgment in reference to disputes.

Answer: Such a conclusion does not necessarily follow from this. The elders [Note: à Brakel uses the word “opzieners” here. As used in 1 Timothy 3:1, this title relates to the office of elder--both teaching and ruling.] render a ministerial and applicatory judgment over particular circumstances, and only in harmony with the Word. In this context there is the obligation to hear them and whoever refuses to subject himself to the Word which the elders hold forth, must be excommunicated. The Function of Reason in the Exposition of Holy Writ

Question: Is not reason the expositor of Holy Writ? Answer: The Socinians, and whoever concurs with them, maintain that the entire Word of God as well as individual text must be examined in the light of reason, and that one should accept nothing as truth which is not congruent with reason. Whenever Scripture appears to contradict reason, then it must be understood as reason determines. In the event that Scripture does contradict reason, then, in opposition to Scripture, reason must be adhered to as an infallible principle.

We agree that intellect and reason are absolutely necessary to understand Scripture, and thereby to exercise faith. They are only the means, however, whereby we may know what God says in His Word, and this Word works faith and is the foundation of faith. Thus, intellect and reason may not be considered as a basis for, as a rule to go by, or as a touchstone, in determining whether that which God reveals in His Word is truth. We believe this solely because God declares it to be so. Reason must surrender itself to the Word; the Word must never surrender itself to reason. Reason is to Scripture what Hagar was to Sarah; it is the servant and not the master. This is evident

First, from a consideration of the condition of man's intellect. It has not merely been affected by sin relative to natural matters -- having a limited capability to perceive matters and much less to comprehend them -- but particularly relative to spiritual matters, being completely blind in that respect. "Having the understanding darkened" (Ephesians 4:18); "For ye were sometimes darkness" (Ephesians 5:8); "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Such is the nature of man that Scripture cannot deal with such a conceited and clumsy creature any differently from the way the organ grinder treats his donkey. He slanders that of which he is ignorant and he corrupts himself with that which he has in common with the dumb animal (Jude 1:10). Who would venture to elevate man's darkened intellect to exercise judgment regarding the lofty mysteries which it has pleased the only wise God to reveal? Each source of light has a limited environment in which it shines. This is true for a candle, a torch, as well as for the sun. This also applies to man's ability to see. One with excellent vision can distinguish matters in the distance which a nearsighted person cannot distinguish at all. This is also the case with man's knowledge. Should someone with an undeveloped intellect judge concerning the mysteries and particulars of physics, metaphysics, geometry, and astronomy? Thus it is with man's intellect and reason. They have too many limitations, and therefore are not capable of penetrating the lofty mysteries of the divine Word. Consequently, they cannot sit in judgment over God's Word.

Secondly, the mysteries which have been revealed are far beyond the reach of our intellect; hence reasoning cannot even approach to within a thousand miles of their meaning. How then can it be the judge regarding them and be the bench mark by which these mysteries should be evaluated? "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7); "such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain to it" (Psalms 139:6); "Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job 26:14). Whoever is to judge what the meaning of Scripture is, and determine what is to be accepted as truth and what should or should not be believed, must be able to understand all truth in absolute perfection. Man's intellect and his reason, however, are not capable of penetrating the lofty mysteries of God and thus are not qualified to render judgment in such matters. If we must reject all that our reason cannot comprehend, then we must reject the eternity of God and all His perfections such as His omnipresence, infinity, etc. We would also have to reject the Holy Trinity, so clearly revealed in God's Word, as well as the union of the two natures of Christ and the creation of the world itself. Reason cannot fathom how God created everything out of nothing; however, this is understood by faith. Indeed, would we not have to reject nearly everything?

Thirdly, that which can clearly be discerned and comprehended by way of reasoning for one person will appear to be contradictory to the reasoning of another, and a person will subsequently reject as false what he once considered to be true. Thus in many matters man cannot be certain. Whoever lies repeatedly no longer has any credibility. Our reason deceives us so frequently, however, that it cannot possibly function as either judge, bench mark, or expositor of Holy Writ.

Fourthly, faith and reason are totally different avenues by which one may determine the validity of something. If something is validated by reason, faith is necessarily excluded. If something is accepted as truth by faith, reason is necessarily excluded. Reason can only acknowledge that which has been stated by someone else, and then only if such a statement does not belong to the realm of the impossible. The truth of the matter, however, is validated by faith only. The divine mysteries of the Word of God must be accepted as certainty only by faith, by virtue of the fact that God has said it -- He who is true and cannot lie (Acts 26:17; Hebrews 11:1-40 :1,6; John 16:27). In this respect reason is useful only to determine whether a particular matter is to be found in the Word of God. If such has been determined, then there can be no suspicion or distrust as to whether it is true, for this would render God suspect -- as if He were capable of lying. Faith accepts the infallibility of the issue at hand and if it is beyond reason's ability to determine the validity of a certain matter, this does not mean that this matter is contrary to reason. In such a case reason must be silent and admit that this matter is beyond its reach and that faith alone acknowledges it as truth.

Fifthly, God's Spirit reveals the mysteries of the Word to the heart, testifies that the Word is truth, and gives faith to embrace it. Thus reason is excluded from functioning as judge and arbiter in determining whether a matter revealed in Scripture should be believed or not. This is confirmed in the following passages; "Flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee (that is, reason has not taught you this), but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17); "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45); "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6); "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psalms 119:18); "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6). Scripture testifies that reason must be brought into captivity (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Sixthly, if reason were the judge over Scripture and were to determine which portion of the Word of God should or should not be believed,

(1) God would be subject to the judgment of man, thereby summoning God before man's judgment seat to give an account of what He has said;

(2) all religion would function in the realm of the natural rather than the spiritual and would be void of faith; (3) the greatest philosophers and the most intelligent men would be the most enlightened divines, which is directly contrary to the word of Christ, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matthew 11:25). Such absurdities necessarily follow from these propositions. They are as absurd as that which now follows.

Objection #1: Religion is a reasonable service according to Romans 12:1. Thus reason must judge in all matters of religion in order to determine how each text of Holy Writ is to be interpreted.

Answer: In the Old Testament dumb animals were sacrificed as types which, when considered apart from the antitype, could not be pleasing to God. However, God being a Spirit demands that He be served in spirit and in truth, with intellect as well as with reason. Here reason is a means in determine what God has revealed. Irrespective of whether the matter which God has revealed can be fully understood and comprehended or if it can be comprehended to such a degree as it is necessary unto salvation, even though the matter itself transcends our comprehension -- it is sufficient for man as far as believing is concerned. It may not be concluded, however, that reason is to function as judge over every doctrine and text. Reason is the servant and not the master.

Objection #2: Many doctrines can be deduced from the realm of nature, as the Lord Jesus generally taught in the parables. Hence, in matters of nature reason is the judge and therefore also the judge in reference to the doctrines contained in Scripture.

Answer: It is incorrect to state that any of the doctrines relative to faith can be deduced from nature. That which belongs to the realm of nature is used only to further explain the doctrines of faith and to impress them more deeply upon the heart. Furthermore, God has a most perfect knowledge of natural matters.

Objection #3: Many doctrines are not expressly defined in Scripture, but are formulated by way of logical deduction. Reason alone determines whether such deductions are correct or not. Thus, reason judges as to what one should or should not believe.

Answer: Those doctrines, which by way of sound argumentation may be deduced from a text, are contained in the text itself and one accepts them as true simply because God states them to be so. Consequently, the matter which may be deduced from this text is true, and therefore reason cannot be involved. Reason is the vehicle, however, by which one comes to the conclusion that a particular doctrine is contained in a given text, and by necessary consequence may be deduced from the text. Reason judges whether the proper conclusion has been made, but not whether the doctrine which has been deduced from the text is true.

Objection #4: Scripture defines certain doctrines which reason determines to be contrary to proper judgment, knowing that such cannot be the case. Thus, reason should judge what is congruent with or contrary to the truth, and consequently should determine what one ought to believe.

Answer: It is not true that Scriptures proposes something which reason judges to be contrary to fact. Whatever God reveals in Scripture concerning the realm of nature is true and by virtue of His testimony is infallible.

Scripture does not Support the Erroneous Views of Men

Question: Does God's testimony in Holy Scripture concur with the erroneous opinions of men?

Answer: There are those who answer in the affirmative, but we emphatically deny this. It is $\pi\rho\tau\omicron\nu\ \psi\epsilon\delta\omicron\varsigma$, that is, the original lie, to maintain that the earth revolves and the sun is stationary. It should not be too surprising that heathen who are ignorant of God and His Word, or atheists who reject both, would speak in such a fashion. That those who know God and acknowledge the Holy Scriptures to be of divine origin speak in such a fashion, however, cannot but be heard with great

consternation by anyone who loves God. Is not God the God of truth and therefore truthful? Is He a man that He should lie? Is not He the God who cannot lie, and shall a holy and truthful God lie? If God were to say something contrary to truth and against better knowledge, thereby verbally making Himself like unto men who are of erroneous judgment -- would this not constitute lying and would He not, by speaking in like fashion, encourage men to adhere to their error? Is not the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth and does not He lead into all truth? All Scripture is inspired by God. Holy men of God have spoken, being moved by the Holy Ghost. The Word of God is true and far be it from the Almighty that He should pervert judgment (Job 34:10; Job 34:12).

I ask you, "Where in the Holy Scriptures does God adjust His testimony to the erroneous opinion of men? Where can even the semblance of such a thing be found?"

Objection #1: The Holy Scriptures state in many places that the earth stands still, is stationary, and that the sun circles it, as it appears to be this way to men, and they have that erroneous notion. Nevertheless it is undoubtedly true that either the world circles a stationary sun or that the one as well as the other revolves and circles in an established circuit.

Answer: Who would concern themselves about the fact that philosophers and astronomers discuss this matter? To bring God's Word into this discussion, however thereby generating the suspicion that God and His Word are guilty of erroneous statements, is something which cannot be tolerated. It is certain that God in His Word uses various and illustrious figures of speech. It is also true that God in His goodness condescends to the frail and limited comprehension of men, directing them by way of visible and natural things to the spiritual. To maintain, however, that God in His Word is guilty untruth is a statement that can only be heard with great consternation. Would he who loves God not vehemently protest against such a statement? The truth is that God states in many places in His Word that the sun is in motion, her circuit resulting in both day and night, and that the world remains both motionless and stationary. Nowhere does God speak to the contrary, as we will demonstrate in chapter 8. Since God states it to be so, it is truth and we are to embrace it as truth. Is not God the Creator, maintainer, and governor of all things, who is much better acquainted with His own work than is man with his limited and darkened understanding? Should men not subject their judgment to the very sayings of God? Or should one attempt to bend and twist the clear declarations of God in such a way that they agree with our erroneous thinking? Whatever God declares, also concerning things in the realm of nature, is true. God says that the world is motionless and stationary, being circled by the sun, and thus it is a certain and incontrovertible truth. [Note: It should be evident that this unequivocal conclusion of à Brakel must be viewed in its historical context.]

Objection #2: "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night" (Genesis 1:16). Here sun and moon are denominated as two great lights, even though some stars are much larger than the sun or moon. Thus, God speaks in harmony with the erroneous opinion of men who judge sun and moon to be the greatest lights due to their external appearance.

Answer: (1) God does not make a comparison here, but merely refers to sun and moon as viewed individually, stating that the sun is a greater light than the moon. God does not call them the greatest, but great lights. Where is error or an erroneous statement to be found there?

(2) God does not make mention of celestial bodies, nor does He state that the sun and moon are larger in size as bodies than some stars, thus being the largest bodies. Note, however, that God makes reference to lights. Are not sun and moon greater lights, if not the greatest lights, even though the text does not state this? Which stars generate more light? There are none, are there? To speak of lights as bodies is to speak erroneously and to be guilty of error, and by virtue of this error to be guilty of the dreadful practice of attributing error to God Himself. If one engages in such activity, then which truth cannot be distorted?

Objection #3: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon" (Joshua 10:12). The fact is that the sun was neither in Gibeon, nor the moon in the valley of Ajalon; rather, it merely appeared to be so. Thus, a statement is made which is congruent with erroneous opinion. This is also true for that which follows, that is, that the sun and moon stood still.

Answer: Were people at that time so naive to be of the opinion that the sun and moon were actually upon earth? Far be it from us to suggest such a thing! Therefore this is neither an example of an erroneous opinion nor of an erroneous statement. It merely indicates that to their perception the sun then appeared to be near Gibeon and the moon to be near Ajalon, and that they remained in those apparent locations. A miracle occurred here. This miracle did not occur in reference to the earth as if her circuit were interrupted, but it occurred in reference to the sun and the moon whose circuits were interrupted. All this clearly proves that sun and moon revolved around the earth. [Note: See the previous footnote.] There is neither the least indication of error, nor do we have a falsehood here.

Objection #4: "... about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country" (Acts 27:27). [The Statenvertaling de scheepslieden, dat hun enig land naderde," that is, "... about midnight the shipmen deemed that some country drew near to them.] This is an erroneous sentiment, for the country did not draw near to them; instead, the ship drew near to the country.

Answer: These men, had they been of the opinion that the ship was stationary and that the land drew near to them, would indeed have been ignorant mariners. They were, however, not that demented. This is but a common expression whereby it is indicated that the land is drawing near. Such an expression is still in daily use and is neither erroneous sentiment nor a falsehood. It thus remains incontrovertible that God in His Word does not adjust His testimony to the erroneous sentiments of men.

Thus far we have discussed the origin, substance, and structure of the Holy Scriptures, upon which follows the fourth subject, namely, the purpose of Scripture. The purpose of Scripture is to provide man with a steadfast and unchangeable rule for doctrine and practice in order to lead him in the way of salvation. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20:31); "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4); "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word" (Psalms 119:9). The highest and ultimate objective of all things, as well as of all that is recorded in the Word of God itself which contains the revelation of God's wondrous goodness, unsearchable wisdom, unchangeable truth, and omnipotent power. It particularly refers to the manner in which all these effect the conversion, the consolation, the joy, the wondrous light, and the salvation, of which the elect by means of this

Word become partakers. "Praise ye the Lord: ... (for) He sheweth His Word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel" (Psalms 147:1;Psalms 147:19); "seven times a day do I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgments" (Psalms 119:164). The Holy Scriptures: To be Read by Every Member of the Church The church is the recipient of the Word of God. "He hath not dealt so with any nation [as with Israel]: and as for His judgments, they have not know them" (Psalms 147:20); "Chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2); "... to whom pertaineth ... the covenants, and the giving of the law" (Romans 9:4); "... which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Question: May and must God's Word be read by everyone? Answer: Since the Word of God has been given to the church and thus to every member of the church, it follows that it must also be read by everyone. Roman Catholicism expends much energy to make Scripture obscure and to remove it out of the hands of the people. Their errors become clearly evident in this practice because they seek to make the people entirely dependent upon the pope, his cardinals, ecclesiastical assemblies, bishops, and priests. In fact, the Council of Trent expressly forbade the reading of the bible. We, on the contrary, consider this to be a dreadful act of ecclesiastical robbery, whereby the way to heaven is closed. We maintain therefore that every man, learned or unlearned, may and must read the Word of God. This becomes evident from the following:

First, since the reading of Scripture is nowhere forbidden, who would muster the courage to forbid this practice? The church has never forbidden this. This horrible edict finds its origin in the Council of Trent which was not an orthodox but an anti-Christian ecclesiastical assembly.

Secondly, from the time of Moses until Christ and from the time of Christ until this present day the Bible has always been read by every member of the church. Yes, some were so diligent in this practice that they were able to quote entire apostolic letters from memory.

Thirdly, God has expressly commanded the common man to read His Word. "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates? (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Observe to what extent they had to familiarize themselves with Scripture. "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39); "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16); "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren" (1 Thessalonians 5:27); "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed" (2 Peter 1:19). It is dreadful indeed to forbid what God has commanded!

Fourthly, those who read the Word are commended in Scripture, and a blessing is also pronounced upon them. "Blessed is the man ... (whose) delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalms 1:1-2); "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11); "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy" (Revelation 1:3).

Fifthly, the nature and purpose of Scripture are such that it must be read by everyone. (1) It is the testament or will of God; a will may and must be read by the heirs. (2) It contains letters addressed to everyone in the church, this being evident at the beginning of every letter; a letter may and must be read by everyone to whom it is addressed. (3) The Word is the sword with which every believer must defend himself against spiritual enemies (Ephesians 6:17). Would one then rob the spiritual warrior of his weapons? (4) It is the means unto conversion, the seed of regeneration (1 Peter 1:23), as well as the source of spiritual illumination (Psalms 19:8), instruction, comfort, and the means unto spiritual growth (Romans 15:4, 1 Peter 2:2). (5) It is written for the very purpose that everyone would read it. "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it" (Habakkuk 2:2). From all this it has been incontrovertibly demonstrated that every individual may and must read the Word of God.

Objection #1: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6). Thus it must be concluded that the Holy Word of God may not be given to everyone to read.

Answer: In this manner we might conclude that one ought not to preach to the unconverted. The reference here is not to the reading of Scripture, but rather to the instruction, exhortation, and reproof of those who become even more wicked in response to this, and might harm the one who is speaking. Such, however, is not applicable to believers and others who are desirous to hear the Word of God.

Objection #2: Many errors have been generated by common men who have read the Holy Scriptures. This has been to their own disadvantage as they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, as well as to the disadvantage of others who have been misled by these errors. Thus, it would be more beneficial to withhold the Holy Scriptures from them.

Answer: By means of the individual reading of Scripture, the errors of popery as well as other errors will be discovered and exposed. Errors are generally propagated by misguided scholars. Even though some abuse Scripture with their corrupt intellect, this does not negate the use of Scripture itself. Without the Word of God one will most certainly err.

Objection #3: If everyone is permitted to read the Word of God, preaching is unnecessary. Since preaching is a necessary practice, however, there is no need to read Scripture.

Answer: Reading and hearing function very well together. (Revelation 1:3; Acts 17:11). Both preaching and reading instruct, motivate, lead to repentance, and comfort every believer; hence, reading and hearing have identical results. It is the same Word received in a twofold manner. Though there is a distinction between reading and hearing, they are not contradictory in nature.

Objection #4: We do not forbid the reading of Scripture categorically, as we give many permission to read it, that is, those whom we trust will not create problems by doing so.

Answer: This is directly contrary to the Council of Trent. This statement is made in an effort to avoid embarrassment for those who live among Protestants. Neither pope nor priest have the authority to withhold from anyone the privilege of reading the Bible. The privilege to read Scripture is a divine gift for which we owe gratitude neither to pope nor priest. To withhold Scripture from anyone is an act of ecclesiastical robbery as well as spiritual murder. The Translation of the

Scriptures into Other Languages

Since Scripture has been given to the congregation, to every individual member and must be read by everyone, and since the church of the New Testament is to be found throughout the world among various nations and languages (Revelation 5:9), it becomes a necessity to translate the Holy Scriptures into every language. This will enable everyone both to read and hear the Word of God in his own language, as was the case when the apostles spoke in tongues (Acts 2:8). For this purpose the Bible has already been translated into a large variety of languages. Three hundred years prior to the birth of Christ the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek by seventy-two men who were very conversant with both languages. This occurred under the direction and with the financial support of Ptolomeus Philadelphus, king of Egypt. During the apostolic era the Old Testament was translated into Aramaic, by Jonathan Onkelos, and other unknown translators; afterward it was also translated into the Syrian language. Later, a number of individuals translated the entire Bible into Latin which, next to the Greek, was the most common language at that time. Among those Latin translations there is also one which is endorsed by the papacy as being valid. Subsequently, the Bible has been translated into almost as many languages as there are nations in which the church may be found. All translations, however, have not been derived from the original Hebrew and Greek languages in which holy men moved by the Holy Ghost have written. Such translations are derived from other Greek or Latin translations. They merely qualify as transcripts. Such is the case with various Dutch translations which are now referred to as the "old" translations. In compliance, however, with the decision of the National Synod held in AD 1618 and AD 1619 in Dordrecht, a number of carefully selected scholars, being commissioned by the most honorable gentlemen of the General Assembly, [Note: à Brakel refers to the Dutch legislature as "De Hoogmogende Heeren Staten-Generaal der Verenigde Nederlanden." Since these gentlemen of the "staten-Generaal" (comparable to a western legislative assembly such as the U.S. Congress) commissioned the translation of the Bible into the Dutch language, this translation became known by its still current and venerated name, the "statenvertaling" or the "statenbijbel."] faithfully translated the entire Bible into Dutch from the original Hebrew and Greek texts. In order to do this as accurately as possible additional scholars were commissioned to thoroughly inspect and verify the translation work of the initially selected scholars. Consequently, this translation greatly excels all other Dutch translations, including both the older and the newer. [Note: We may voice similar conclusions regarding our King James Version in the English language.] It is such an accurate and careful rendering of the original text that scholars, friends, and even enemies are all astonished. Those who wish to quarrel about this only convey how inadequate their knowledge of the original languages is, for if a word could have been translated differently, the translators have made note of this in the margin. Thanks be unto the Lord for this unspeakable gift! As accurate as a translation may be, it nevertheless is neither authentic nor infallible. The meaning of a given word can be inaccurate and therefore when there are differences of opinion, a careful comparison of each translation to the original text is a necessity. A faithful translation will convey all that is contained in the original text; however, since it is a different language, there will also be distinct linguistic differences as far as vocabulary is concerned. The original texts are directly inspired by God and originate with God -- both as to doctrinal content as well as the words. In translations, however, only the doctrinal content is divinely inspired, not the words. An unlearned person, being incapable of comparing translations with the original languages, can nevertheless be assured of the veracity of the doctrinal content of

the translation if he may perceive the internal doctrinal cohesiveness and harmony of a translation. There is also the witness of the Holy Spirit who in speaking through this Word bears witness to the veracity of God's Word in its translated form. In addition to the approbation of both scholars and the godly, the veracity of the translation is also confirmed by the powerful effect the Word has upon one's own heart, as well as the hearts of others. Yes, even the enemies of true religion who are conversant with both languages must attest to the veracity of this translation, agreeing that it is both faithful and accurate. If anyone understands one or another word differently, he may be convinced by comparing it with the original language.

Concerning the Greek translation of the Old Testament by seventy-two translators (that is, the Septuagint [LXX]), as well as the common Latin translation called the Vulgate, the following needs to be asked: Are these translations as authoritative as the original texts? Do they have the same credibility, so that the choice of vocabulary must likewise be deemed infallible, as the recorded text of the prophets, gospel writers, and apostles who were inspired by the Holy Spirit?

Answer: Roman Catholicism maintains that such is the case; however, we deny this as will be evident from the following:

First, these two translations are no more the result of the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit than are all other translations. They are the result of the work of fallible people in spite of all their efforts not to fail in this task. Therefore, neither these nor any other translations may be placed on equal footing with the original text as far as esteem and infallibility are concerned.

Secondly, it is very evident to all scholars -- even Roman Catholic scholars rendering their judgment in this matter -- that considerable errors are to be found in both translations. It is evident that the Septuagint was misguided in several places, as the translators used a Hebrew Bible without vowel markings, which God, however, caused to be written with vowel markings. Think for instance of a letter written in which vowels are absent. One might be able to discern the main issues, but could also easily come to erroneous conclusions. It can readily be discerned that the common Latin translation of the Old Testament was from the Greek rather than the Hebrew. Both translations contain serious errors. Since this fact was acknowledged by papal scholars, the pope had ordered that the common Latin translation be somewhat corrected. This explains why many in Roman Catholicism do not recognize any translation as being authentic.

Objection #1: Christ and His apostles always made use of the Septuagint when quoting texts from the Old Testament. Thus, they acknowledged the validity of this translation, thereby rendering it authentic.

Answer: Christ and the apostles were concerned with the meaning of a text rather than the words themselves. They did not always make use of this translation, but frequently used the Hebrew text itself. They made use of the Greek translation since it was better known among the people, the Greek language being in more common use than the Hebrew language. Therefore, the fact that texts were quoted from the translation of the LXX does not prove that it was on equal footing with the original text.

Objection #2: Since both the Hebrew church as well as the Greek church had an authentic Bible in their respective language, the Latin church should also have an authentic Bible in her language.

Answer: This conclusion has a dual flaw. The Hebrew church possessed the Word as immediately inspired by God in reference to both doctrine and vocabulary. They did not have the Scriptures of the New Testament. The Greek church did not possess the Old Testament in its authentic language; they used a translation instead. They did possess the New Testament in its authentic form, however, since it also had been immediately inspired by God. The Latin church, on the contrary, was in possession of only a translation -- not an original manuscript, such as both the Hebrew and Greek texts are. If this conclusion is correct, then each nationality, according to the same rule, ought to be in possession of an authentic translation.

Objection #3: Since both translations (LXX and the Vulgate) are the oldest translations and have been used over a long period of time, they should at least be viewed as authentic.

Answer: An error is not transformed into truth by virtue of the progression of time. As old as the Latin translation may be, there are many translations which are even older. The Necessity of Scripture Question: Is Scripture a necessity?

Answer: The last particular concerning the Word of God which must be considered is its necessity and profitability. The Word of God is necessary and profitable not only for beginners and little ones but also for the most advanced and spiritual believers here upon earth. It is a brook from which a lamb may drink and an ocean in which an elephant can drown. He who is of the opinion that he has advanced beyond Scripture is a fool. He gives evidence that he is ignorant of the spirituality of the Word as well as ignorant of himself. God by His omnipotence could have gathered and preserved His church and caused her to grow without the written Word. It is, however, according to the wisdom and goodness of God to care for His church in a most appropriate and steadfast manner, making His will known to her by means of a written document. In our day this is enhanced by the art of printing. Everyone can have God's Word in his home and thus be enabled daily to obtain guidance and nourishment from it. God has bound man to His Word to keep him from straying outside of its perimeter. Thus, the Word of God is necessary as well as profitable. This is evident from the following:

First, it is the only means instituted by God to faith and conversion. Without the Word none shall believe. "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:14; Romans 10:17). Apart from the Word no one can be regenerated. "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth" (James 1:18); "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23).

Secondly, the Word of God is the food which nurtures the spiritual life of the converted: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). Since many persons use the Word so infrequently, they are in darkness, unsteady, tossed to and fro by all winds of doctrine, live in sorrow, suffer from weak faith, and experience the hiding of God's countenance.

Thirdly, the Word of God is the only rule whereby the condition of our hearts, thoughts, words, and deeds should be governed. "And as many as walk according to this rule" (Galatians 6:16); "To the law and to the testimony" (Isaiah 8:20); "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments" (Psalms 119:6). If people neglect to retain the Word of God in mind and

heart, they will begin to elevate their own intellect as their Bible, and thus will mislead themselves and be a cause for concern to others. Such neglect will result in a sinful life as well as much backsliding. Yes, many who do not establish the Word of God as their rule of life “will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24).

Fourthly, the Word of God provides a steadfast comfort. “That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4); “Unless Thy law had been my delights; for they are the rejoicing of my heart” (Psalms 119:92;Psalms 119:111). This comfort which originates from the Word may come while reading or hearing it or during prayer and meditation. It may originate from a text of Scripture or when the soul, while engaged in sweet exercise, is directed to a text. Such comfort is generally of a much deeper and more fundamental nature, and more steadfast and durable than the comfort which the soul receives without any reflection upon the Word. One should refrain, however, from insisting upon the application of a specific text of Scripture at a specific moment of time, for such expectation will readily rob him of a sweet, spiritual frame. It is therefore desirable to read or hear the Bible read frequently so that one may have ready access to a supply of Scripture in time of need. Furthermore, while meditating, texts of Scripture may be impressed upon the heart to the comfort of the soul -- yes, even during dreams. Such often occurs with passages which previously had not arrested one’s attention, not even knowing where to find them in the Bible.

Fifthly, the Word is a special means for sanctification. “sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” (John 17:7). God’s Word does not only work sanctification by means of continual exhortation by which the soul is inclined towards obedience by the very voice of God. It also works sanctification through a continual dialogue with God Himself while hearing, reading, and meditating upon His Word as the believer seeks to regulate his life by means of the Word. In addition to this the soul will be more exercised in faith and will become more established in the truth by virtue of its consistent use of God’s Word. Faith then gives birth to love, and love in turn to sanctification. Yes, the soul is led further in this way into the mysteries of God’s Word and perceives many matters which it previously was not able to discern. Every new acquaintance with spiritual mysteries, however, as well as each mystery itself, has a sanctifying influence. Those who are remiss in reading and lax in acquainting themselves with God’s Word will be deprived to a considerable degree of these blessed fruits.

Sixthly, the Word of God is the spiritual sword which must be wielded at all times in our battle against the devil, heresies, and our flesh (Ephesians 6:17); “For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Those who stand ready with this sword stand firm, provide themselves protection, and are victorious over their enemies.

Seventhly, to state matters comprehensively, the Word of God is the only means whereby we can be saved. “It is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16); “The gospel of your salvation” (Ephesians 1:13); “The engrafted Word, which is able to save your soul” (James 1:21). Therefore, whoever desires salvation will esteem and acknowledge the Word of God as necessary and profitable and will be desirous for this Word. Our Obligations Toward the Holy Scriptures

Since we have shown the Word to have all these qualities, it obligates everyone to the following. First, man must acknowledge, value, believe, and view the Word of God in this manner. Apart from this, the Word shall not be profitable. "The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith" (Hebrews 4:2). At times our unbelieving heart, being incited by the devil, will cause us to doubt whether the Word of God is truly inspired by God. This at times can cause believers much grief and be very injurious to them. Even then they still perceive that the power of God's Word touches their heart, which no mere human manuscript can accomplish. And if human writings touch their heart, it is only insofar as it makes use of the Word and is taken from it. Even in this condition they readily perceive how the Word of God is a source of rest and comfort for the believer, how powerful a means it is unto the conversion of men, and that there is no purer, better, and more certain way unto salvation on earth. This ought to convince everyone to bring their thoughts into obedient captivity to the Word of God, nipping all wrong impulses in the bud, lest by permitting such thoughts to be multiplied the soul will become more distraught. This subject will be treated more comprehensively when considering the diseases of the soul in chapter ninety-three, "The Temptation whether God's Word is True."

Secondly, men ought to rejoice wholeheartedly in this most precious gift of God, embrace it with much love, and be joyful whenever they may either behold it or hold it in their very hands. Almost the entire world is deprived of the Word. Papacy deprives its people of it, burning the Bibles together with those who have read it. We, on the contrary, may have it in our possession and may hear and read it. How our hearts ought to rejoice over this fact! "I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. O how love I Thy law!" (Psalms 119:14;Psalms 119:97); "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalms 19:10).

Thirdly, we should thank and magnify the Lord, who has given it for this. "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments" (Psalms 119:62); "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel" (Psalms 147:12;Psalms 147:19).

Fourthly, make use of the Word of God in prosperity, adversity, darkness, seasons of doubt, times of perplexity, and your entire walk. Nothing can befall you, nor is there any duty in which you must engage where the Word of God would not provide you with comfort, peace, counsel, and direction. "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors; I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me; Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path; Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart" (Psalms 119:24;Psalms 119:30;Psalms 119:105;Psalms 119:111).

Fifthly, purchase this inestimable jewel, and be diligent in giving it a place in your home. One of the current customs which I consider most desirable and praiseworthy is that of many prominent citizens having a large, beautiful Bible, together with a Psalm book, on display in every room. If only they would use them more frequently! One of the most appropriate acts of mercy is to provide the poor with Bibles, and to question them frequently whether they are also reading them daily. Those of limited means who do not wish to receive anything as a gift, must be diligent in saving all their pennies for the purpose of purchasing a Bible. Those who are not able to read must exert every effort to learn, with the objective to be able to read the Word of God. A home without a Bible

is a ship without a rudder and a Christian without a Bible is a soldier without a weapon. When the Reformation initially took hold in the Netherlands, it was customary for some prosperous citizens to visit the poor with a New Testament in their pocket for the purpose of reading a portion to them, as most people were not able to read. After this, they would give a charitable donation to them. Sea captains would do similarly upon returning home from a journey. In doing so they met the needs of those who either did not possess a Bible or who were not able to read. In this way there was mutual edification and it caused the Reformation to take hold. How profitable it would be if this practice would still be in vogue as many lack the qualifications to express themselves relative to Scripture!

Sixthly, read, search, and meditate upon the Word of God with all diligence and persistence. This should even be the practice of kings. "And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life" (Deuteronomy 17:1-20; Deuteronomy 19:1-21). It is the duty of scholars as well. "Give attendance to reading" (1 Timothy 4:13). It is the privilege and obligation of the lowly and of every individual. "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39); "Have ye not read?" (Matthew 12:3). The eunuch read while riding in his chariot (Acts 8:28). The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). How everyone ought to practice this in private, prior to going to work, both by himself alone, and with his family! AT noon when one nourishes his body, he ought also to nourish his soul. In the evening after work, one must end the day by seeking some refreshment from the Word of God. In the meantime, while engaged to understand the spiritual meaning as well as experience the power of God's Word. This will cause the soul to grow in grace, prevent vain thoughts from arising, control the tongue, suppress corruptions, and direct man to fear God.

Guidelines for the Profitable Reading of Scripture For the reading of Scripture to be profitable, there must be preparation, practice, and reflection. First, the preparation for reading God's Word. Each time when one engages himself to read: (1) He must, with mental concentration, place himself in the presence of God. He must promote a reverent, spiritual frame, being conscious that the Lord shall speak to him. The consciousness of that reality should cause us to tremble with holy reverence. To promote such reverence, reflect upon Isaiah 1:2, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken."

(2) He must lift up his heart to the Lord, beseeching Him who is the Author of this Word for His Spirit, that He may cause us to perceive the truth expressed in God's Word and apply it to the heart. Our prayer ought to be wit Psalms 119:18, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

(3) He must also attentively incline the heart to obedience in order to exercise faith, be receptive to comfort, and comply with all that which the Lord shall proclaim, promise, and command, saying, "speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:9).

Secondly, the practice of reading God's Word. As you read, it is essential to do so calmly and attentively rather than to do it hastily with the objective of bringing the exercise of this duty to a conclusion. If there is a lack of time, it is better to read less but to be attentive in doing so. One can read God's Word in a twofold manner, that is either by personal study or by utilizing the research of others. This should be determined by both availability of time as well as ability. In order to read God's Word in a studious and scrutinizing manner, one must observe the context preceding and following a given text and take notice of both the manner of speech and the objective of the text.

The text must then be compared with other texts where the issue at hand is explained more comprehensively, and with texts which are similar in content. For this purpose it is advantageous to consult the excellent marginal notes, [Note: à Brakel here refers to the marginal notes or annotations of the Dutch "statenbijbel," which is a compilation of notes by the translators. These notes are brief annotations which indicate various shades of meaning deduced from the original text. These notes are indicative of the honesty, sincerity, and integrity of these men as they endeavored to translate God's sacred Word with painstaking accuracy. They were translated into English by Theodore Haak and published in two volumes as The Dutch Annotations upon the whole Bible (London: Henry Hills, 1657), but have never been reprinted. Of English commentaries currently in print, the Dutch annotations would be most akin to Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible, 3 volumes (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1962).] which will shed much light upon the text. In following this procedure one will be able to search for and ascertain the literal meaning of the text. We should not merely cleave to the literal meaning, however, as so many literalists do. This is being merely satisfied with the rind of the fruit which provides neither strength nor food for the soul. One must penetrate to the kernel itself, seeking to perceive the internal essence of the matter. For this the natural man is blind, regardless of how learned, proficient in the Word of God, and able he may be to understand the context and convey the literal meaning of the text to others. A godly person, on the contrary, immediately begins to view the unique clarity, nature, and power of spiritual matters contained in the text and his perception increases the more he engages himself in observing and meditating upon these matters. Regardless of how often he may read the same words and chapters he will always perceive something of which he has not been aware before. The truth he finds in the Word is always new again and becomes increasingly sweeter. It is true that the process of ascertaining the literal meaning of the text is sometimes not accompanied with many spiritual exercises, but it qualifies a person to better understand the Holy Scriptures and afterward to be wrought upon the more readily, and in a more thorough and powerful manner.

Four treacherous shoals must be avoided in this respect. Whoever runs aground on one of these will not be able to ascertain the correct meaning of the Word of God but will rather obscure the spirituality of the Word. The first practice that needs to be avoided is to assign every allowable meaning to a given word, in consequence of which any meaning of the Word of God is acceptable as long as it does not violate the regulative principle of faith and the circumstances surrounding the text. Whoever adheres to such a practice makes a fool of himself and wrests the Scriptures. The meaning of Scripture is simple, clear, straightforwardly, and concise, expressing matters in a more organized manner than any man would ever be capable of doing. This obligates us to search out carefully what the specific intent and objective of the Spirit is in every text. The second practice to avoid is that of forcing everything into a framework of seven dispensations, as the entire concept of seven dispensations is erroneous. It would be tolerable if this were limited to the Revelation of John; however, it would prevent one from ever ascertaining the correct meaning of the book of the Revelation. It is, unacceptable to search for seven dispensations throughout the entire Bible, subordinating every scriptural issue to a dispensation. That would take away the true meaning, spirituality, and power from the Word. The third practice to avoid is to regulate everything to the realm of prophecy, relating everything to a special era in the New Testament dispensation and considering it as fulfilled or as yet to be fulfilled. This means that hardly anything remains which is of contemporary relevance. There are those who relate everything to the church and the antichrist. Even the parables of the Lord Jesus as recorded in the gospels are denominated as

prophecies, and are considered to be references to the church and the antichrist. Whoever engages in such a practice wrests the Word of God, robbing it of its spirituality and power. It is true that all ceremonial procedures from Adam to Christ and all prophecies in the Old Testament are not explained in the New Testament, but nevertheless are certain and explained in the New Testament, but nevertheless are certain and infallible. In doing so one will often discover singular declarations concerning the nature of the Lord Jesus and His execution of His mediatorial office, as well as prophecies which indeed have been fulfilled. In this way our faith is increased and is greatly strengthened. In the pursuit of this, wisdom and moderation should be exercised, however, while refraining from making radical statements by insisting on specific meanings. How often have others, and also we ourselves, been in error in the exposition of prophecy, discovering subsequently our adherence to an erroneous view! Godly humility is essential when engaging in such a study. A fourth practice, insisting that no text in Scripture can be correctly understood unless viewed in its context, is also to be avoided. Apart from the fact that the context itself is usually obvious, it is generally easy to grasp even for an uneducated but godly reader -- easier than some are ready to admit. Where the context is not so readily perceived -- one interpreting the context differently from another -- it is due to man's darkened understanding. A godly person, when reading Scripture in all simplicity and being capable of perceiving its spiritual dimension, will often be more capable of perceiving its spiritual dimension, will often be more capable of understanding the context than others, even though he frequently will not be able to prove his case as would a scholarly person who is in the state of nature. An awareness of the context is not always essential, however, to the correct understanding of a text or a passage. There are thousands of expressions in God's Word which, when heard or read individually, have a precise meaning, give full expression to their doctrinal content, and are sufficiently penetrating to stimulate faith, render comfort, and be exhortative in nature. This is illustrated in the following examples, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36); "Ask, and ye shall receive" (Matthew 7:7-12). Yes, many of the proverbs of Scripture are presented without an apparent context; whoever would search for a context in such a situation would be guilty of obscuring the matter. This much we state about ascertaining meaning in reading Scripture.

One can also read Scripture without engaging in studious research for the meaning of the text. This could be referred to as a practical reading of Scripture. Such is the case when, with a humble, hungry, and submissive spiritual frame, one places himself before the Lord while reading slowly and thoughtfully as if hearing the voice of God, and subjecting himself to the Holy Spirit to operate upon the heart as he reads. If he encounters something which is not immediately understood, he will put such a passage aside for the time being and continue his reading. Whenever there is a passage which has a special power upon the heart, such a person pauses in order that this Scripture might have its effect in the heart. Then he prays, gives thanks, rejoices, and is filled with amazement -- all of which revive the soul and stimulate it to obedience. Upon concluding these exercises he will continue reading. After having read a chapter, he will meditate upon it, time permitting. When he encounters a remarkable text, he will mark or memorize it. In such a fashion both the learned and the unlearned should read the Word of God. In so doing, one will understand its spiritual meaning with increasing clarity and God's Word will increasingly become more precious to us. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John 7:17); "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). The reflection upon reading Scripture

consists in

(1) joyfully giving thanks that the Lord has permitted His Word to be recorded, that we may have it in our homes, that we can and were privileged to read it, and that it was applied to our heart;

(2) painstakingly striving to preserve this good spiritual frame which is obtained by reading God's Word;

(3) meditating while engaged in one's occupation upon that which one has read, repeatedly seeking to focus his thoughts upon it;

(4) sharing with others what was read, whenever possible, and discussing it;

(5) especially striving to comply with what was read by bringing it into practice. If the Holy Scriptures were used in such a fashion, what wondrous progress we would make in both knowledge and godliness! Children would soon become young men, and young men would soon become men in Christ Jesus.

004. Chapter 3: The Essence of God

----- CHAPTER THREE ----- The Essence of God

We considered in the previous chapter the two principal sources from which the knowledge of God may be derived: nature and the Holy Scriptures. We will now proceed with a consideration of God Himself. This is a task which we must undertake with trembling, so that on the one side we may avoid entertaining unbecoming thoughts about God, and on the other side we may be properly exercised in response to appropriate considerations of God. May the Lord guide me as I write and may He reveal Himself to everyone who reads this chapter or hears it read. May this chapter also be to the establishment of professors of the truth and be a rebuttal against Socinians, Arminians, [Note: The word "remonstranten" is here translated as "Arminians" since the latter word is used throughout the English-speaking world to refer to those who subscribe to the teachings of the father of the "remonstrance," Arminius.] and other proponents of error. Most importantly, may it guide us in the way of salvation. As we consider the doctrine of God, we will discuss His Names, His divine essence, His attributes, and His divine Persons. Additionally, we will also consider the works of God: His intrinsic and extrinsic works as well as His works in the realm of nature and the realm of grace. The Names of God In order to speak about God to others, it is necessary to have a word to indicate of whom we are speaking -- although it should be clear that such description is not needed to distinguish God from other gods as there is but one God. As it was sufficient for the first human to have but one name, "man," there being no other creature like him, and as the Savior had no need of any other name but "Jesus," that is, Savior, there being but one such Savior, likewise God has no need for any other name but "God." The Name JEHOVAH

Although a name cannot possibly express the infinite Being, it has pleased the Lord to give Himself a name by which He wishes to be called -- a name which would indicate His essence, the manner of His existence, and the plurality of divine Persons. The name which is indicative of His essence is Jehovah, it being abbreviated as Jah. The name which is indicative of the trinity of Persons is Elohim. Often there is a coalescence of these two words resulting in Jehovi. The consonants of this word constitute the name Jehovah, whereas the vowel marks produce the name Elohim. Very frequently these two names are placed side by side in the following manner: Jehovah Elohim, to reveal that God is one in essence and three in His Persons. The Jews do not pronounce the name Jehovah. This practice of not using the name Jehovah initially was perhaps an expression of reverence, but later became superstitious in nature. In its place they use the name Adonai, a name by which the Lord is frequently called in His Word. Its meaning is "Lord." When this word is used in reference to men, it is written with the letter patach, which is the short "a" vowel. When it is used in reference to the Lord, however, the letter kametz is used, which is the long "a" vowel. As a result all the vowels of the name Jehovah are present. To accomplish this the vowel "e" is changed into a chatef-patach which is the shortest "a" vowel, referred to as the guttural letter aleph. Our translators, to give expression to the name Jehovah, use the name Lord, which is similar to the Greek word κύριος (kurios), the latter being a translation of Adonai rather than Jehovah. In Revelation 1:4 and Revelation 16:5 the apostle John translates the name

Jehovah as follows: "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come." This one word has reference primarily to being or essence, while having the chronological connotation of past, present, and future. In this way this name refers to an eternal being, and therefore the translation of the name Jehovah in the French Bible is l'Eternel, that is, the Eternal One. The name Jehovah is not to be found at all in the New Testament, which certainly would have been the case if it had been a prerequisite to preserve the name Jehovah in all languages. To maintain that this name cannot be pronounced in Greek confirms our view rather than renders it ineffective. Even though the transliteration of Hebrew words would conflict with the common elegance of the Greek language, it is nevertheless not impossible. Since they can pronounce the names Jesus, Hosanna, Levi, Abraham, and Hallelujah, they are obviously capable of pronouncing the name Jehovah. I am not suggesting that the name Jehovah may not be used, but one may not make its use a prerequisite, as if its use were indicative of a higher level of spirituality and of superior wisdom. It is carnal to use this Name to draw attention to one's self, and thereby to display one's theological sentiments. Jehovah is not a common name, such as "angel" or "man" -- names which can be assigned to many by virtue of being of equal status. On the contrary, it is a proper Name which uniquely belongs to God and thus to no one else, as is true of the name of every creature, each of which has his own name.

Question: Does Scripture ever assign the name Jehovah to a creature, or is this name uniquely God's own? Answer: The Socinians, in order to avoid conceding that the Lord Jesus truly is God, maintain that others are also called by this name. We deny this, however; we maintain that this name uniquely belongs to God. Therefore no one but God alone may be called by this name. This becomes evident from the following:

First, it is evident when examining the composition of the word. Linguists maintain that this name has all the characteristics of a proper name. Therefore it never has anything in common with ordinary names. Since God is called by this name it is therefore of necessity the proper name of God.

Secondly, this name also cannot be applicable to anyone else but the Lord God, because it has reference to an eternal Being who is perpetually unchangeable and the origin of all beings.

Thirdly, the Lord appropriates this name as belonging exclusively to Him. "I am the Lord; that is My Name: and My glory will I not give to another" (Isaiah 42:8); "The Lord is His name" (Exodus 15:3); "... and they shall say to me, What is His Name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM ... I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:13-14).

These words express the meaning of Jehovah, since Jehovah is a derivative of the verbal expression "I am." "But by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them" (Exodus 6:3). This does not mean that the Lord was not known by the name Jehovah prior to this time, for even Eve already called Him by this name: "I have gotten a man from the Lord" (Genesis 4:1).

However, the Lord had not caused them to experience the meaning of this name -- that He remains the same and is immutable regarding His promises. They would now observe this as He would lead them out of Egypt and bring them into Canaan.

Objection #1. Created angels are also called by this name. "And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me" (Genesis 16:13). He who spoke to her was an angel, for

he is previously referred to as such.

Answer: (1) It is credible that Hagar was cognizant of the fact that either a prophet or an angel had been sent to her by God, and thus considered these words as having been spoken by God Himself. For similar reasons the shepherds of Bethlehem also stated, "Let us now ... see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us" (Luke 2:15). Thus Hagar was not of the opinion that the angel's name was "Thou God seest me," but attributed it to the Lord who by means of this servant spoke to her.

(2) It was, however, undoubtedly the very Son of God who prior to His incarnation frequently appeared in human form and who, in reference to His mediatorial office, is called the "Angel of the Lord," the "Angel of the Lord's presence," and the "Angel of the covenant." He states in Genesis 16:10, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly." This obviously cannot be accomplished by a created angel, but by God alone. Thus Hagar referred to Jehovah who spoke to her as "Thou God seest me," whether she perceived that this was Jehovah Himself or whether she identified Him as such by means of the messenger which spoke to her.

Objection #2. In Genesis 18:1-33 it is recorded that an angel came to Abraham, who nevertheless is referred to as Jehovah on several occasions.

Answer: It was the uncreated Angel, the Son of God Himself.

(1) He is expressly distinguished from the other two angels who are not called by the name Jehovah. This is true for Him alone.

(2) The Angel, being Jehovah, knew about Sarah's laughter in her tent (verse 13). He prophesied the birth of Isaac which from a natural perspective was impossible (verse 10). He knew that Abraham would command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord (verse 19). All these incidents can be attributed only to God.

(3) Abraham acknowledged Him to be the Judge of all the earth (verse 25) while worshipping and supplicating before Him with utmost humility (verse 27).

Objection #3. Moses called the altar which he built, Jehovah. "And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi" (Exodus 17:15).

Answer: Such an opinion is expressly contrary to the text. It is not stated that he called the altar Jehovah, for otherwise he would have terminated his statement at that point. Rather, he states, "Jehovahnissi," that is, "Jehovah is my banner." As impossible as it is that he called the altar "banner," so impossible is it that he called it Jehovah. It was a verbal symbol which he appropriated to the altar -- similar to the manner in which proverbs are placed over gateways and doors. By this he wished to indicate that the Lord, the God of the covenant, was their help, of which the altar, a type of the Lord Jesus, was tangible evidence.

Objection #4. The church is called by the name Jehovah. "... and the name of the city (that is, Jerusalem) from that day shall be" Jehovah Shamma, "The Lord is there" (Ezekiel 48:35).

Answer: It is an expression which is used in reference to the church and in view of this it is stated concerning her, "The Lord is there." God dwells among her with His protection and blessing. The

Name ELOHIM The name which refers to God's manner of existence or His divine personhood is Elohim, which is equivalent to the Greek word Theos, and the English word God. It is rarely encountered in its singular form Eloah, and never in a dual sense. It is generally encountered in its plural form, that is, referring to two or more. This word is generally used in conjunction with a singular verb, as is true in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning Elohim created," this being in reference to one God existing in three Persons (1 John 5:7). A verb, an adjective, or a noun, however, are frequently placed in apposition to the word Elohim when used in its plural form, to which an affixum pluralis numeri is added. This becomes evident in the following passages: And Elohim, that is, God said Na'aseh: "Let us make man" (Genesis 1:26); When Elohimhith'u, "caused me to wander" (Genesis 20:13); ElohimKedoshim, "is an holy God" (Joshua 24:19); Remember now Boreecha, "thy Creator" (Ecclesiastes 12:1); Bo'alaich 'osaich, "thy Maker is thine Husband" (Isaiah 54:5); "I am the Lord" Eloheka, "thy God" (Exodus 20:2). Elohim is not a common name to which others have equal claim, but it is a proper name exclusively belonging to

God. There is no one but the Lord who, as Elohim, exists in three Persons. In a metaphorical sense, however, it is also used in reference to others. Idols are called by the name Elohim due to the veneration and service which idolworshippers afford them. Angels are called by this name since they reflect the glory and power of God. Governments are called by this name due to the territory allotted them over which they bear rule and whereby they reflect God's supreme majesty.

Many other names, descriptive and expressive of God's perfections, are attributed to Him in Scripture such as the Almighty, the Most High, the Holy One, etc. The Essence of God From the names of God we now proceed to the essence of God -- His existence as God. But what shall I say concerning this? Jacob once asked the Lord His name, that is, to give expression to His essence, for in early history it was customary when assigning names to give expression to the essence of a matter. He received the following answer, however: "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name?" (Genesis 32:29). God did not wish him to penetrate any further into the mysteries of God. In responding to Manoah the Lord said, "Why askest thou thus after My name, seeing it is secret?" (Judges 13:18). In Isaiah 9:6 we read, "His name is Wonderful." You, who pretend to have some knowledge of God, tell me, "What is His name and what is His Son's name if thou canst tell?" (Proverbs 30:4). All I can say is that the essence of God is His eternal self-existence. When Moses asked what he should tell the children of

Israel if they asked him as to who had sent him, the Lord responded, Ehjeh Ascher Ehjeh: I AM THAT I AM. He added to this, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Ehjeh, I AM hath sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14). Job said concerning the Lord in chapter 12:16, "With Him is strength and wisdom" -- Toeschia or essence. This is a derivative of jashah, which in turn is derived from jeesch, and is expressive of steadfastness and continuity. In the New Testament this is expressed by means of the words theiotés, and theotés, both of which are translated as "Godhead" in Romans 1:20 and Colossians 2:9. Additionally there are phusis, which is translated as "nature" in Galatians 4:8, and morphé which is translated as "form" in Php 2:6.

Whoever wishes to know more concerning God's essence should join me in worship as we close our eyes before this unapproachable light. It is in some measure revealed to the soul; however, we can only perceive the uttermost fringes of His Being by reflecting upon the divine attributes. At this point we will digress from the customary manner in which we treat our subject matter. We will not

painstakingly deal with objections, lest we give someone the opportunity to entertain thoughts about God which are unbecoming, and thus imitate in this respect both the Socinian and heathen and their followers. We will nevertheless deal with and respond to objections in a very discreet manner by presenting the truth in an expository and affirmative manner. The Attributes of God Our gift of language belongs to the realm of the physical. Our words and expressions are derived from terrestrial objects. It is therefore a wondrous reality as well as a manifestation of divine goodness that man, in using sounds which are expressive of that which is tangible, is able to give an explanation about divine and spiritual matters by means of the vehicle of language. Our mind, being finite and having limited capacity, must function in the realm of concepts and ideas before comprehension can occur. It is the goodness of God that He adjusts Himself to our limited ability to comprehend. Since a harmonious concept of God -- which would include all that could be said and thought about Him -- is beyond our comprehension, it pleases God by means of various concepts and ideas to make Himself known to man. These concepts we describe and designate from a human perspective as God's essential attributes. This designation pertains to the various objects towards which God engages Himself and the deeds which He performs. We understand these attributes to be one from God's perspective, however, such that they can neither be divorced from the divine Being nor essentially and properly from each other as they exist in God, but are the simple, absolute Being of God Himself. We, however, relate these attributes as distinct entities by themselves. Justice and mercy are one in God, but we differentiate between them in reference to the objects towards which they are manifested, and the effects of these manifestations. Our God is inimitable and incomprehensible in His perfection, and consequently is simple and indivisible. In God there can be no differentiation between various matters, for whatever would be essentially distinct from God would render Him imperfect. Our limited comprehension must deal with each matter individually, however, and thus we assign distinct names to each attribute. Whatever we are capable of comprehending concerning God is according to truth and is consistent with His Being, but our finite understanding cannot penetrate its perfection and infinity. The attributes or perfections of God are generally distinguished as being communicable and incommunicable. All God's attributes, being His simple, essential Being itself, are equally incommunicable as far as their nature is concerned. This distinction is merely made for the purpose of comparison. God has created man in His image and likeness and again renews fallen, but elect, sinners according to that image, making them anew partakers of the divine nature. This does not imply that such a sinner becomes divine and is a partaker of the very being and attributes of God. From a divine perspective God is incommunicable, and finite man from his perspective cannot comprehend God's Being, the Godhead being infinite, simple, and thus indivisible. Therefore, if man in some measure were a partaker of the divine Being itself or of one of the divine attributes, he would consequently be a partaker of the entire Godhead itself, and thus man would be God. However, when we speak of the image and likeness of God in man, we are merely referring to a reflection of some of God's attributes, which are infinite, indivisible, and incommunicable in God Himself. There is some measure of congruency between these attributes and the image of God in man; however, not as if there were full equality, but merely by way of faint similitude.

Nevertheless, some attributes are such that not even the faintest reflection of them can be observed in a reasonable creature. This being true, they are denominated incommunicable attributes. Some of the attributes of God of which there is a reflection and faint resemblance in man are therefore denominated communicable attributes. The incommunicable attributes include

the following: perfection or all-sufficiency, eternity, infinity or omnipresence, simplicity, and immutability. The communicable attributes are those attributes which relate to intellect, will, and power. We shall discuss each of these individually in order to demonstrate what manner of God our God is, whom we serve. The Perfection of God The perfection of the creature consists in the possession of a measure of goodness which God has given and prescribed to all His creatures. All creatures, whatever the degree of their perfection may be, are dependent upon an external source for their being and well-being. God's perfection, however, excludes such a possibility, as He has no need of anything. No one can add to or subtract anything from His being, neither can anyone increase or decrease His felicity. His perfection consists in His self-sufficiency, His self-existence, and that He is the beginning -- the first (Revelation 1:8). His all-sufficiency is within and for Himself, the El Shaddai, the All-sufficient One (Genesis 17:1). "Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing" (Acts 17:25); "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" (Job 22:3). "My goodness extendeth not to Thee" (Psalms 16:2).

Thus there is no common ground between the perfection of God and of creatures -- except in name. That which is in man is contrary to the perfection of God, however, and thus the perfection of God is an incommunicable attribute of God. The salvation of man consists in knowing, honoring, and serving God. Such is our God, who not only is allsufficient in Himself but who with His all-sufficiency can fill and saturate the soul to such an overflowing measure that it has need of nothing else but to have God as its portion. The soul so favored is filled with such light, love, and happiness, that it desires nothing but this. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psalms 73:25). The Eternity of God

We insignificant human beings are of yesterday, have a beginning, and exist within the context of time which progresses in a sequential fashion. We cannot even begin to comprehend eternity. By way of negation, we seek to comprehend eternity by comparing it with time, stating that it is without beginning, continuation, and end. If we go beyond this in seeking to comprehend the "how" and the "why," we shall spoil it for ourselves and be in darkness. If we wish to consider the eternity of God within the context of our conception of time, then we will dishonor God and entertain erroneous notions concerning Him. All that relates to and resembles time, and all that we denominate as eternal in a figurative sense, must be totally excluded from our concept of God. We call something eternal which,

(1) continues until it has fulfilled its purpose. In this context circumcision is referred to as an eternal covenant. "... and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant" (Genesis 17:13). This means that it would last until the coming of the Lord Jesus who is the embodiment of all the ceremonies, in whom all shadows had their fulfillment and consequently no longer have a function. It can also be interpreted to mean that this covenant, being confirmed by circumcision, is an eternal covenant.

(2) The word eternity can also be expressive of the duration of a condition which is in force as long as man lives. "... he shall be thy servant for ever" (Deuteronomy 15:17).

(3) The word eternity can also refer to something that has stability and endures. In this context hills are referred to as being eternal (Deuteronomy 33:15; cf. Genesis 49:26). [Note: In the KJV these eternal hills are called "lasting hills" or "everlasting hills," which implies eternalness.]

(4) The word eternity is used in reference to that which will never end, such as felicity in the hereafter. "I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:28).

We use the word eternity in reference to all these things. There is, however, neither commonality nor resemblance with the absolute eternity of God. We cannot refer to it any differently than to define it as the existence of God which is without beginning, continuation, and ending, all of which are simultaneously true. This is expressed in the word Jehovah, which defines a being for whom the past, present, and future are a simultaneous and concurrent reality -- He is the One who is, who was, and who shall be. God's Being is eternity and eternity is God's Being. It is not fortuitous as time is in relation to the creature. There can be no chronology within the Being of God since His Being is simple and immutable. Such likewise cannot be true in reference to God's eternity; eternity is the very Being of God. The Holy Scriptures refer to God as the eternal God. "And Abraham ... called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God" (Genesis 21:33); "The eternal God is thy refuge" (Deuteronomy 33:27). It is stated concerning God that He is the beginning and the end (Revelation 1:8). Even though these are distinguished in God, they are a simultaneous reality. There is no intervening time nor anything that remotely resembles the progression of time. "... from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God" (Psalms 90:4); "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17); "They shall perish ... but Thou art the same" (Psalms 102:26-27); "For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past" (Psalms 90:4). Thus we conclude that God and time have nothing in common.

Even when years and days, or past and present time are attributed to God, and He is called the Ancient of Days and other similar expressions, such is merely done from man's viewpoint. The reason for this is that we, insignificant human beings incapable of thinking and speaking about eternity in a fitting manner, may by way of comparison -- which in reality is a very unequal comparison -- comprehend as much of eternity as is needful for us to know. Nevertheless, in doing so we must fully divorce God from the concept of time.

God unchangeably exists while time is in progression. God was yesterday, is today, and will be tomorrow. However, God does not measure time as the creature measures time, as He transcends time and is external to the concept of time. If He has wrought something in the past, will do it tomorrow, or is active at the present moment, this does not suggest that a change of time occurs in God. Such an apparent change merely relates to the objects of His activity and the purposes which He has accomplished.

Therefore, do not elevate yourself beyond the reach of your comprehension, and do not limit God by your human conceptions. Acknowledge and believe God to be the One who dwells in incomprehensible eternity; lose yourself in this eternity; worship that which you cannot comprehend; and with Abraham call upon the name of the eternal God. The Infinity and Omnipresence of God A being, be it of a spiritual or a corporal nature, is considered finite if its existence has well-defined parameters. Such is true for the entire structure of heaven and earth as well as of every individual creature. The world is finite, and even though there is no other celestial body by which the parameters of the earth are defined, preventing it from expanding itself beyond its current limits, these parameters are nevertheless determined by its own mass. The earth's measurement from its center to its circumference is well-defined, and beyond this circumference is nothing but space which itself has its own parameters. God's Being, however, is inherently with out

any parameters, neither are any imposed upon Him externally and thus God in His Being is infinite in the absolute sense of the word.

Occasionally, when referring to something of which the limits are not known, we refer to infinity in a hypothetical sense, as when we speak of the total number of grains of sand, blades of grass, or stars. We also define as infinite that to which something can always be added, which for instance is true of a number. Regardless of how long one counts, the ultimate sum will either be even or uneven, a reality which changes as soon as one number is added -- even if you were to count during your entire lifetime. When we define God to be infinite, however, we do so in the literal sense of the word, thereby conveying that His Being is truly without any parameters or limitations. His power is infinite, His knowledge is infinite, and His Being is infinite; and it is this latter truth which we are discussing here.

Eternity being an incomprehensible concept for us as creatures of time, as local and finite creatures we are equally incapable of understanding God's infinity. We relate to infinity by thinking of a vast expanse. God's infinity, however, excludes the concepts of quantity, dimension, and locality. In order to have any comprehension of the infinity of God's Being, we must, for instance, make a hypothetical comparison to a vast expanse while simultaneously denying such to be characteristic of God. The infinity of God's Being is a logical consequence of,

(1) the perfection of God's Being. Whatever is limited and finite is imperfect, since expansion of parameters implies the approximation of a higher degree of perfection. Consequently, something without limits is better and excels in perfection that which has limits.

(2) It being evident that God is infinite in power -- something which cannot be attributed to a finite being.

(3) God Himself bearing witness to this by His Spirit: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable" (Psalms 145:3); "the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee" (1 Kings 8:27).

One of the friends of Job expressed himself concerning God's infinity, both as to His knowledge and His Being. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea" (Job 11:7-9).

Infinity and omnipresence are identical in God. When we speak of His omnipresence, however, we are merely referring to the infinite God in regard to His presence at any given location. We are not defining His parameters as we would with corporal entities which have well-defined spacial limits. He is also not limited as other spiritual beings are who can be only at one place at one time. Rather, the reference is to the fact that with His Being He permeates everything, albeit not in a local, corporal, and dimensional sense.

God, by virtue of the hypostatic union in Christ, is in heaven with His glory, as well as in His church with His grace. He dwells in every believer with His life-giving Spirit, and is in hell with His just wrath. He is present everywhere in the created universe, not only by virtue of His power and knowledge -- also in His Being, such not being partial or dimensional -- but because His Being is infinite, simple, and indivisible. This is as incomprehensible for the creature as is God's eternity.

We must therefore close the eyes of our understanding as to the manner of His existence and believe that God is such as He has revealed Himself in nature and in Scripture.

Nature itself instructs every man in this regard, and especially those who apply themselves with some diligence to become acquainted with God and religion. Such persons will become conscious of the omnipresence of God so that everyone simultaneously, regardless of what his location may be at any given time upon earth, not only will acknowledge God to be omnipotent and omniscient but also that He is near him in His essential presence. Even intelligent men in the secular realm have expressed themselves forcefully in reference to this reality.

God states very clearly in His Word, "The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool" (Isaiah 66:1). When such a statement is made in reference to a king, it is indicative of his immediate and corporal presence. Consequently, this is also true when God refers to Himself in such human terms in order that we might understand and acknowledge the presence of the very essence of God both in heaven and on earth. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? ... Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (Jeremiah 23:23-24). "... though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27-28). Add to these the texts which indicate that God not only fills heaven and earth, but infinitely transcends both (1 Kings 8:27). When it is stated that God is in heaven, this does not exclude His omnipresence upon earth. Nowhere can God either be confined or excluded. God manifests His glorious presence in a far more evident manner in heaven -- it being His throne -- than upon earth, which is His footstool. By using this manner of speech the lofty and exalted glory by which God transcends all creatures is made known to us. This is acknowledged by man when he prayerfully lifts his heart and eye upward, acknowledging thereby that God also is invisible and alien to all that is upon earth. When it is stated that God was not present in the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire, but rather in a still small voice (1 Kings 19:11-12), the reference is not to His essential presence, but to the manner in which He addressed Elijah and revealed Himself to Him. When it is stated that God is not with someone or that He would not go up in the midst of Israel (Exodus 33:7), the reference is to the manifestation of His favor rather than to His essential presence. It is not unbecoming for God to be present in various vile and offensive places for His presence is not characterized by corporal involvement, but He is present as the energizing, preserving, and governing cause, just as He is in the ungodly and devils as an avenging Judge. The sun illuminates everything without being contaminated in the least. An object cannot contaminate a spirit, much less the infinite God. Whatever God deems suitable to be created and to be governed, He also deems suitable for His essential presence. God reveals Himself in the world by means of His works, not as a God who is afar off, but as a God who is invisibly present.

Believer, since the Lord is always present with you, compassing your pathway and your lying down, besetting you behind and before (Psalms 139:3-5), be careful to refrain yourself from doing anything that would be unbecoming of His presence. Set the Lord always before you. Acknowledge Him in all your ways. Fear Him. Humble yourself before Him. Walk in all reverence and humility before His countenance, for to sin in the presence of God greatly aggravates the sin committed. The presence of people serves as a restraint against the commission of many sins, and if the presence of God does not accomplish the same, one reveals himself as having more respect for people than for the majestic and holy God. What a despising and provoking of God this is! Therefore, let your reverence for the presence of God prevent your sinning against Him and let

it motivate you to live a life pleasing to the Lord. On the other side, believer, let the reality of God's presence be your continual support and comfort in all the vicissitudes of life. The Lord is at hand; He is a fiery wall roundabout you, and no one will be able to touch you contrary to His will. If something befalls you, seek refuge in Him and encourage yourself with His presence. How this revived David's soul! "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me" (Psalms 23:4). The Lord is pleased to comfort His children in this manner. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 43:2). The Simplicity of God As we can neither comprehend the eternity of God because we are creatures of time, nor the non-dimensional infinity and omnipresence of God because we are finite and local in nature, so we also, being composite creatures, are not able to comprehend the simplicity of God. Since we must recognize, however, that all composition implies imperfection, dependency, and divisibility, we may not think of God as being composite even in the remotest sense of the word. Thus, we acknowledge God in every respect to be perfect and of singular essence.

Philosophers recognize various types of composition, all of which we deny to be applicable to God. Among these are:

First, a logical composition, (*ex genere et differentia*), that is, in reference to gender, nature, and distinction. For example, both man and beast are animals as both have an animal nature in common and thus belong to the animal kingdom. [Note: The Dutch reads as follows: "De mens is een dier, en een beest is een dier; de dierlijkheid is hun gemeen, beide behoren ze tot het geslacht der dieren." In reading this statement one must bear its historical context in mind. Since evolutionary theory did not exist, no one would have suspected à Brakel of teaching that man is an animal in an evolutionary sense.] In addition to their animal nature, however, there is also something by which they are distinguished from each other. Man possesses reason in addition to his animal nature, whereas a beast is without reason and intelligence. However, God has nothing in common with any creature, and by virtue of His Being, transcends all His creatures while remaining distinct from them. Whenever God is referred to as a Spirit, the word "spirit" does not imply that God and angels have a common nature of which both God and angels would be equal partakers. The resemblance is one of nomenclature only. God is called a Spirit in order that we would perceive Him as being invisible.

Secondly, a physical or natural composition, consisting of three elements: substance and form, a subject and its incidentals, and individual parts.

(1) Substance and form. Everything which has been created with a tangible form has, in addition to the matter of which it consists, something which identifies such a created object to be gold, a tree, an animal, or a human being. Far be it from us to entertain such notions about God who is without a body and infinitely removed from every possible notion of any physical characteristics, no matter how he is viewed by man. In order to distinguish Him as such, He is referred to as a Spirit. Such a composition as to substance and form simply does not exist relative to God.

(2) A subject and its incidentals. An angel, for example, has the nature of an angel, and in addition to this nature has a mind, intelligence, a will, holiness, and power. These qualities are not the angel himself, but they are complementary to his being. His being is the subject of these qualities,

making him complete. Far be it from us to think of God in such a fashion. God is perfect in His Being and His perfection cannot be improved upon in any way. All that may be discerned in God is God Himself. His goodness, wisdom, and omnipotence is the good, only wise, and omnipotent God Himself.

(3) Individual parts. Parts by way of composition constitute a whole -- such as is true for objects. Such is clearly not the case with God for God is a Spirit who has nothing in common with a body. If such were the case, there would be something less than perfection in God, as the composite whole would be more nearly perfect than each individual part.

Thirdly, a metaphysical or supernatural composition. Three aspects must be considered.

(1) *Ex essentia et existentia*, that is, there is an essential distinction between the essence and the actual existence of something. It is possible to comprehend the one without the other. It is possible to describe a rose and to comprehend what it is, even during the winter when no roses are present. Thus, we distinguish between the essential nature of a rose and its actual existence. God's Being, however, is His actual existence, and His actual existence is His Being, a truth which is conveyed by His name Jehovah. One cannot be distinguished from the other and one cannot be comprehended without the other, for they are one.

(2) *Ex potentia et actu*, that is, there is a distinction between the potential and the actual deed. In discussing potential, we distinguish between active and passive potential. Active potential refers to the ability to accomplish something, even though one is not accomplishing it at the time. In the creature such potential is distinguished from the deed, and the excellence of a creature in action supersedes that of one who has the potential for such activity. Such, however, is not the case with God; in Him the potential for activity and the act itself are one. God is one singular, active force. Distinction and change in this realm can only be perceived in the creature which has been created, is maintained, and is governed. Such, however, is not true for God who is the Creator, Maintainer, and Governor. Latent potential -- or to express it in more intelligible language -- the possibility of existence, is to be found in creatures only, such being true in a threefold manner. In the first place it refers to something which as yet does not exist but which by virtue of the exertion of effort could be brought into existence. It also refers to something which already exists, but which by the exertion of effort can be changed. Thirdly, it refers to something that can be annihilated. It is obvious that all of this does not apply to God.

(3) *Ex essentia et subsistentia*, that is, there is a distinction between the nature or being and the existence or personhood. Subsistentia or the manner of existence is complementary to the existence of a being itself, by which it possesses something which makes it uniquely distinct from another being, having a unique existence of its own. Thus, we conclude the manner of existence to presuppose a being. Suppositum, or the existence itself, refers to that which can in nowise be communicated to someone else, nor can exist in someone else either in part or form. Something having such a distinct existence and being endowed with reason we refer to as a person. A person is an indivisible and independent entity endowed with a rational nature. A person is either a human being such as John, Peter, or Paul; or an angel such as Gabriel or Michael; or a divine Person, such as the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. In every created person there is a composition of essence, actual existence, and manner of existence. One is not the same as the other, but is distinguished from the other. Consider, for instance, the human nature of Christ, in which we can

discern both essence and actual existence, but not a human personality. As such it has its existence within the Person of the Son of God, for otherwise Christ would consist of two persons: a human and divine person. He is, however, one divine Person. In God there is no composition of being and personhood, as every form of composition implies imperfection. Each divine Person is not to be distinguished from either the divine Being or from the other Persons as we would distinguish between various matters, nor as between a matter and the manner in which it functions, such being distinct from the matter itself. We insignificant human beings, however, try to comprehend this by relating to or defining a manner of existence. This does not indicate that there is composition in His Being, but merely enables us to distinguish between various matters related to God's Being. Whatever we cannot comprehend of it, we believe and worship, as it pleases God to reveal Himself in such a fashion. Believers, being illuminated by the Spirit of God, know as much concerning this attribute as is necessary to cause them to adore and glorify God, as well as to experience joy, confidence, and sanctification.

Scripture makes reference to this simplicity when referring to God in an abstract manner such as when it speaks of the Godhead, divinity, or when it refers to God as light, "God is light" (1 John 1:5); truth, "God of truth" (Deuteronomy 32:4); and love, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). None of this can be stated concerning a creature. When man is referred to as having his origin in God, belonging to God's generation, being God's son, or being a partaker of the divine nature, and when God is said to be the Father of spirits, this does not imply that man is of the same essence as God, as this would mean that God's Being is communicable. In such cases the reference is to creation and regeneration by which man receives some resemblance to some of the attributes of God. This creative act does not bring about a change in God but in the creature.

Similarly, the decrees, when viewed internally in God, are the decreeing God Himself. Also the relationship which God establishes relative to His creatures does not imply a change or composition within God, as this relationship is merely external and adds nothing to the essence of God's Being. Whenever human limbs, hands, eyes, and a mouth are attributed to God, such human terminology occurs in order that we insignificant human beings may comprehend the operations of God by comparing them to the manner in which we use those limbs, etc. Whenever anger, love, and similar passions are attributed to God, we must have the consequences and results in view such as occur when we have similar passions. The Immutability of God

Mutability has reference either to a created entity, to incidents or circumstances, or to the will. Every creature in one way or another is subject to change and has within itself the potential for change or to be changed. The Lord our God, however, is absolutely, and in all respects, immutable in both His essence and His will. Yes, even the possibility of change is utterly foreign to God. This is evident from the following:

First, it is conveyed by the name of God, Jehovah, which means "eternal Being." By means of this name God shows Himself to be immutable. "... but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them" (Exodus 6:3), that is, I have made a promise to them concerning Canaan, which, however, I have not fulfilled in their time and have not shown to them in very deed that I am immutable, but I will now show to you that I am Jehovah, the immutable God, by fulfilling my promise to you, their seed.

Secondly, add to this these and similar texts. "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end" (Psalms 102:25-27); "For I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6); "The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17); "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath" (Hebrews 6:17); "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent" (1 Samuel 15:29); "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:27).

Thirdly, the following reasons also make the immutability of God evident. All change occurs either because the principle of change is inherent in us, or because our nature is such that someone else is capable of bringing about a change in us.

God, however, is eternal, transcendent, and the original cause of all things. All change is either the result of a lack of wisdom, the perception of which necessitates a response to the error one has made in consequence of this; or it is precipitated by a lack of foreknowledge, by which one could not anticipate what would be encountered and thus is confronted with the unexpected. God, however, is supreme Wisdom Himself, the only wise God, who has foreknowledge concerning all things. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). He is cognizant of all that man will do or refrain from doing by the exercise of his free will, as man in all his motions is dependent upon God. He knows our thoughts from afar, our downsitting and uprising, as well as our speaking and silence. Change can also occur when we lack the ability to carry out our intent, being unable to overcome a given obstacle. God, however, is the Almighty, wonderful in counsel and excellent in working; consequently, not even the minutest change can take place with God.

Additionally, it should be considered that if God were to change, He would improve Himself or gain in wisdom. Neither possibility can be entertained concerning God as He always is and remains the infinitely perfect One.

It is according to God's will that certain things will change. This, however, does not bring about a change in His will. When repentance is attributed to God, this does not suggest a change in God Himself, but rather a change in activity (in comparison to a prior moment) towards the objects of that activity, this change being according to His immutable decree. Whenever God issues a promise or a threat which He does not carry out, this merely indicates that there was a contingency, either expressly stated or implied, which would determine whether or not the circumstances would take place. This fact was already known to God by virtue of His omniscience and His counsel. The fact that God is Creator, Maintainer, Governor, and Reconciler, and is a Father, does not indicate that any change occurs in God, but rather in the creatures. It conveys the relationship which God thereby establishes with His creatures. This relationship, however, does not suggest a change in the parties involved in this relationship.

Since God is immutable, how you should fear, unconverted sinner! For all the threatenings and judgments, both temporal and eternal, with which you have been threatened, will certainly and unavoidably come upon you if you do not repent.

Believers, be comforted by the immutability of the Lord, for all promises of which you are the heirs will most certainly be fulfilled. Not one of them will fall upon the earth nor be disannulled, even though the circumstances appear to be strange and so contrary to them and, in your opinion, the fulfillment of the promises is postponed so much longer than ought to be the case. God leads His children in these ways to cause them to trust in His Word alone. He makes the promise obscure and causes the opposite to transpire in order to demonstrate subsequently the immutability of His counsel that much more clearly. "... in those is continuance, and we shall be saved" (Isaiah 64:5). This much for the incommunicable attributes. The Communicable Attributes of God The communicable attributes of God are not less infinite and are the simple. [Note: The Dutch reads as follows: "de eenvoudige God zelf," and thus the reference here is to the incommunicable attribute of God's simplicity.] God Himself, as is also true for the incommunicable attributes. They are neither denominated "communicable attributes" because God communicates these attributes themselves nor because there is any equivalence between the Creator and the creature. Rather, He has communicated a slight resemblance of these attributes to His rational creatures. These communicable attributes can be organized under three headings: intellect or knowledge, will, and power. The Knowledge of God

Though rational creatures possess a measure of knowledge, there is nevertheless an infinite difference between God's knowledge and the knowledge of His creatures, both in reference to the mode as well as to the objects of their knowledge.

First, let us consider the mode of God's knowledge.

Man acquires knowledge by means of deliberation and rational deduction, deducing and drawing conclusions by viewing one fact in reference to another. The initial knowledge concerning an object is acquired by way of species sensibiles, that is, sensible observations, which are made regarding physical objects through the agency of the five senses, and by means of species intelligibiles, that is, intellectual observations which are made through the agency of one's intellect regarding matters about which man reasons. The knowledge of God, on the contrary, neither has its origin in the creature nor does it flow from the creature to God; rather it flows from God Himself to the creature. God does not become acquainted with things after the fact by virtue of their existence and function; rather, He knows matters in advance so that they will exist and function according to His decree. God does not decree His workmanship by considering cause and effect. He does not acquire His knowledge concerning His creature through the process of research and rational deduction; rather, He knows them since He has decreed that they should exist and operate. His cognizance of everything is full and instantaneous in consequence of who He is. He views everything simultaneously, and each matter in particular; this pertains even to the minutest detail of its existence. Beyond this we cannot speculate about the mode of God's knowledge. We must confess, "such knowledge is too wonderful for me" (Psalms 139:6).

Secondly, The object of God's knowledge. Also here there is an infinite difference between the knowledge of men and the knowledge of God. Man is knowledgeable about only a few things, and that which he knows is only known superficially, as he lacks the capacity to uncover the most profound and essential substance of a matter. "For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing" (Job 8:9); "Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him?" (Job 26:14).

(1) On the contrary, God knows Himself, and that perfectly. "... the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11).

(2) God is cognizant of His omnipotence, knowing that He can fully perform all that He would desire to do. All that He would desire to do can indeed come to pass and be accomplished by Him. This we would refer to as the possibility of all things. The Lord Jesus refers to this when He states, "I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:9). This is generally referred to as *scientiam simplicis intelligentiae*, that is, knowledge in its most simple or essential form.

(3) God is also cognizant of all things which currently exist or will exist -- that is, prior to their existence. This is not merely true in a general sense, but it relates to each individual matter or action as if each were singular in its existence. This knowledge is generally referred to as *scientia visionis*, that is, visionary knowledge as it relates to the perception of things which shall be or currently exist.

God clearly testifies in His Word that He does not merely have a general knowledge concerning matters, but a specific knowledge of each individual matter. Such is not only confirmed by texts which refer to God's knowledge in a general sense, such as, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18); "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13); "God ... knoweth all things" (1 John 3:20) -- also by texts which refer to God's knowledge concerning each matter individually, such as, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight" (Hebrews 4:13); "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30); "He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names" (Psalms 147:4).

(1) The Lord observes and is cognizant of all things, both great and small. He knows the heart of kings (Proverbs 21:1) and takes notice of every sparrow (Matthew 10:29).

(2) He is cognizant of all good and evil things, "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance" (Psalms 90:8).

(3) The Lord is cognizant of all secret things, "Thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men" (1 Kings 8:39); "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man" (Psalms 94:11); "for He knew what was in man" (John 2:25).

(4) The Lord has an infallible knowledge of all future things which will transpire due to the exercise of man's free will, and therefore knows all things which will occur relative to man. God knows everything, for all His works are known to Him from eternity and are naked and open before Him. This becomes evident from the following:

First, the word "all" comprehends everything. It includes all future events, including those which occur as a result of the exercise of man's free will. If God were not cognizant of such events, He would be ignorant concerning many things. The contrary is true, however, for He knows everything.

Secondly, what is more frequent in occurrence and more dependent upon the exercise of man's free will than his sitting down and rising up, as well as the function of thought and speech? The Lord knows all this from afar, however, even before one thinks or speaks. "... for I knew that thou

wouldest deal very treacherously” (Isaiah 48:8; see also Psalms 139:1-2); “Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee” (Jeremiah 1:5); “For I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them” (Ezekiel 11:5).

Thirdly, this is true for all prophecies, even those which refer to such events which could only come about as a result of the exercise of man's free will. Examples of this are too numerous to mention here; the entire divine revelation exemplifies this. The Lord Jesus Himself says, “Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He” (John 13:19).

Fourthly, nothing exists or comes to pass apart from the operation of God. God sustains everything by His omnipotent and omnipresent power. Nothing can move without divine cooperation and thus everything transpires according to His decree, be it either by the Lord's initiation or permission, directing things in such a manner that they accomplish His purpose. Thus it becomes evident that the Lord has prior knowledge concerning all things. You will comprehend this with more clarity and be less confused if you keep in mind that God is omniscient and has decreed all that transpires. His knowledge is not derived from existing matters and secondary causes as is true for man. Keep in mind that from God's perspective, who is the first cause of all things, everything is an absolute certainty even though it appears to be uncertain when viewed from the perspective of secondary causes. From God's perspective there are no contingencies; such is only true from man's perspective. Thus, in defining the freedom of the will we must not think of it as functioning independently from God, on an equal plane with His will, or as a neutral entity; rather, this freedom is a function of necessity. Thus, the freedom of the will does not contradict the certain foreknowledge of God. Man, without coercion and by arbitrary choice, performs that which God has most certainly decreed, and of which He was cognizant that it would occur.

God speaks in the manner of men when it is recorded that He tries man in order to know what is in him, and also when He states, “... now I know that thou fearest God” (Genesis 22:12). He had knowledge of this already from eternity. He also speaks in the manner of men when it is recorded that He waits whether man will perform a particular duty. He does this in order to exhort and warn man that he must be aware that God takes notice of his actions; it is not that He does not know what will occur.

Jesuits, Arminians, and others who fanatically insist that man has a free will have concocted a scientiam mediam, that is, a mediate knowledge which would positionally be between the absolute, natural, and essential knowledge of God by which God is cognizant of the full potential of all things. His volitional, visionary knowledge would then be that knowledge whereby He has a particular and detailed knowledge of all things -- having decreed them -- as far as circumstances and occurrence are concerned. Such a will, being in a mediate position relative to both [essential and visionary knowledge], would be a means whereby God knows one thing by means of the other, that is, that which takes place by means of causes and circumstances.

They define this mediate knowledge to be the knowledge of God whereby He is cognizant of future events which are not yet considered as certain, since no determination has yet been made by presupposing in what manner these events will be shaped by the exercise of man's free will. Let me illustrate by way of hypothesis. God, in envisioning that man would be created in perfection and would be confronted with a particular temptation of Satan, could foresee that man in the

exercise of His free will would abuse His gifts. God further envisioned, after man had fallen, that the gospel would be proclaimed to him, urgently motivating him in various ways to believe it, this taking place at such a moment when man would be most pliable, attentive, and properly prepared. Thus, He would be enabled to foresee and know who would and who would not repent, believe, and persevere until the end of life. Such reasoning could also be applied to other situations in which angels or men would appear to exercise their free will in one way or another. The foolishness of such a hypothesis will be evident from the following:

First, if God had such a mediate knowledge, all knowledge of God relative to the actions of men would be fraught with uncertainty and mere assumptions. Even if every imaginable circumstance needed to induce man to a certain action would be brought into play, man, in their opinion, would still be free to do as he pleased. They reason that man would not be limited by a necessary cause, and thus it would be uncertain what he would do. Consequently, God's knowledge relative to such actions would be of a contingent nature. Far be it from us to entertain such a notion concerning an omniscient God!

Secondly, such mediate knowledge implies that God has no control over the voluntary actions of man. Such an assumption is an absurdity in reference to both the Creator and the creature. As far as the future is concerned, such voluntary actions would have no causal relationship to God at all, as there would neither be any decree concerning them, nor could they have been a contingent element of any decree. Then such actions would proceed entirely from man in the exercise of his free will. Indeed, in such instances God would be dependent upon the creature, unable to decree anything concerning man apart from the intervention of man's free will. Consequently, all decrees could only be executed upon the condition that it would please man to cooperate, he being lord over his free will and thus unable to be restricted by anyone but himself. Their view [the Jesuits and Arminians] implies that all that God has decreed is uncertain because man by the exercise of his free will is able to change it. To be Lord over man's volitional action, it is not sufficient that God have control over the circumstances which can sway the activity of man's will, either causing or not causing certain things to take place, or to be in a given condition. These circumstances must not be contingent upon the exercise of man's free will for then it would be in man's power to dictate the circumstances either verbally or physically relative to other individuals. Apart from such a consideration, it must be recognized that such power and control would only involve the circumstances and situations which would induce man to exercise his free will but would not extend to the will itself. It would remain free and thus, independent from God, maintain control over itself rather than being subject to His control. Even if they allow that both the will and its freedom have their origin in God, they nevertheless maintain that man remains his own master relative to the exercise of his free will. Thus, he is not dependent upon God, nor can be controlled by Him. Such are the absurdities which follow from holding to a view that God has a mediate knowledge of things. Having concluded this, it must also be posited that consistent with this view such divine knowledge is merely related to circumstances which occur to man; this would then have an effect upon his will. This in turn would result in a given event, in response to which God would subsequently establish His decree. Such reasoning changes the very nature of both God and man as it consequently removes the creature from the realm of God's control. Since all of this is nonsensical, we conclude the existence of such mediate knowledge to be an absurdity.

Objection #1: In 1 Samuel 23:11-12 we read that the Lord, in response to David's question, replied that "He [Saul] will come down," and they [the men of Keilah] "will deliver thee up." This was not according to God's decree, although He was cognizant of it by means of His mediate intervention relative to the exercise of man's free will.

Answer: This was not a prediction concerning a future event, but rather a revelation about a current reality which from a human perspective could have resulted in an event which as yet had not occurred. Since God had not decreed this event, however, He consequently knew that it would not occur. David inquires about that which is hidden from him so that he may decide whether to stay or flee. God revealed to him that Saul would come down to Keilah and that the hearts of the men of Keilah were not inclined towards him; therefore, they would determine to deliver David to Saul when he would come down. Saul had already prepared himself accordingly and the hearts of the men of Keilah were already set against him. God revealed this to David, and upon viewing this from a human perspective, he could conclude that it was in his best interest to flee. Since God decreed the ultimate outcome of the event, He also decreed the means which would lead to this outcome. Thus, if one views this text relative to the outcome of events, it follows that God's knowledge concerning the ultimate outcome of events is a result of essential omniscience. It is the result of God's singular and comprehensive knowledge, whereby He is cognizant of every possibility, rather than an imaginary, mediate knowledge by which He would decree in response to the activity of man.

Objection #2: "... and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things" (2 Samuel 12:8); "Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies" (Psalms 81:13-14). God had foreseen how David as well as Israel would conduct themselves, and thus concluded what would or would not occur to them even though He had not decreed it to be such. Consequently, there is such a thing as mediate knowledge.

Answer: It has pleased God to make conditional promises relative to the practice of godliness. He who lives godly will receive them and he who does not will not receive them. God makes the promise in order to incite man to action and man acquiesces and acknowledges it to be his duty. The obedience to such exhortations, however, is dependent upon the gift of divine grace which God either does or does not give according to His decree. David and Israel did not fulfil the necessary conditions, and thus the fulfillment of the promise was withheld from them. God had decreed that David would not receive beyond what had been given him and that He would not deliver Israel from its enemies. By virtue of this decree God knew that they would not receive blessings beyond those which were already theirs. This was according to His decree rather than in response to their behavior. God is cognizant of the result of all conditional promises by virtue of His decree, and not by virtue of man's exercise of his free will.

Objection #3: "And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice" (2 Kings 13:19). The frequency with which the Syrians would be smitten was dependent upon the frequency with which the earth was smitten. From the one event God concluded the other, which He evidently had not decreed.

Answer: Here is not even the slightest reference to mediate knowledge. What was the relationship between the smiting of the earth and the smiting of the Syrians? God had revealed to Elisha that Joash, the king of Israel, would defeat the Syrians just as often as he would smite the earth with arrows. He smote the earth three times in accordance with divine government, for God had decreed that Joash would defeat the Syrians three times. The prophet, being desirous of the total destruction of the Syrians who were the enemies of God's people, became angry that Joash had not smitten the earth five or six times. This does not suggest that the ultimate outcome was dependent upon the frequency with which the earth would be smitten. The prophet, not being cognizant of the counsel of God, merely had a general revelation that the Syrians would be defeated and that the frequency of these defeats would be revealed by the Lord by means of Joash's smiting of the earth. It was thus his wish that Joash would have smitten the earth more frequently so that the number of Syrian defeats would have exceeded three.

Objection #4: "... if the mighty works, ... which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago ..." (Matthew 11:21).

Answer: The manner of speaking here is hyperbolic, which, rather than being conclusive, merely underscores something by way of overstatement, as is true in the following text, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:40). It is as if Christ said, "They [the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon] are not as hardened as you are." This merely conveys that God in His omniscience acknowledged the possibility of their conversion.

Since God's omniscience extends to past, present, and future, and all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, how the ungodly ought to tremble! For,

(1) God perceives and knows your heart and its spiritual frame. He knows what is concealed in it as well as what can issue forth from it. He knows your thoughts, vain imaginations, and contemplation upon both habitual and spontaneous sins. He is cognizant of the motives of all your actions -- whether it is your objective to end in yourself, to get your own way, or to harm your neighbor. He is aware of the hatred and contempt you foster for your neighbor, your wrathful emotions, as well as your envy regarding your neighbor's prosperity. In sum, God truly perceives all that transpires in your heart even though you may neither discern it nor be conscious of it.

(2) God is cognizant of your immoral inclinations, adulterous eyes, licentious words, secret promiscuity, fornication, immoral conduct, as well as all the persons with whom you have engaged in such activity.

(3) God is cognizant of your inequitable behavior, deceptive business practices, trickery whereby you seek to make the belongings of your neighbor your own, dishonest billing practices, idleness, as well as all your other acts of thievery.

(4) God is cognizant of your gossiping, slandering of your neighbor, defamation of his character, and the delight you have in hearing and speaking about these things.

(5) He is cognizant of your pride, ostentatious behavior, promenading in front of the mirror, and how self-satisfied you are.

(6) The Lord is cognizant of your dancing and revelling, your gambling and card-playing.

(7) He is cognizant of your hypocrisy within as well as outside of the realm of religion. Be aware that,

(1) God records all the aforementioned much more accurately than if someone were to be continually in your presence recording with pen and ink all your thoughts, words, and deeds, along with the location, day, month, and hour when they occurred. As there is a book of remembrance before God's countenance on behalf of His elect (Malachi 3:16), there is likewise a book before the Lord's countenance in which the guilt of the ungodly is recorded. How conscious you ought to be of this!

(2) Be aware that the books will once be opened and you will be judged according to all that is recorded in them (Revelation 20:12). Be assured that the Lord will set all things in order before your eyes (Psalms 50:21).

(3) Consider it as an utmost certainty that God, the righteous Judge of heaven and earth who by no means will clear the guilty and whose judgment is according to truth, will punish you for all your sins (Psalms 7:12-13; Psalms 50:21). Not only will He pronounce the curse upon you with which He threatens transgressors of the law and say to you in the last day, "Depart from Me, ye cursed" (Matthew 25:41), but He will also assign you eternally to the lake of fire which burns with sulfur and brimstone if you do not make haste to repent. You are presently not concerned whether God sees you, as long as people do not see you, but how frightful it will be for you when the Lord Jesus shall appear as Judge and will summon you before His judgment seat, examining and reexamining you with His eyes which will be as flames of fire! How dreadful will that day be! "But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?" (Malachi 3:2); "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1).

Therefore, repent before it is too late. May you presently fear the all-seeing eye of God, so that in that day you will not be terrified before His flaming eyes.

You, however, who take your refuge in the Lord Jesus, choose Him as your Surety, receive Him by faith, find all your hope and comfort in Him, and fear and serve the Lord -- how the omniscience of God ought to be to your comfort! For,

(1) He is cognizant of your sincerity relative to Him and your desire to please Him. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9); "such as are upright in their way are His delight" (Proverbs 11:20); "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright" (Psalms 37:18).

(2) The Lord knows of your religious exercises in secret, prayers, supplications, wrestlings of faith, sighs, weeping, cleaving to Him, reading, meditation, holy intentions, fear of God, and godly walk. He saw the eunuch reading (Acts 8:28-29), and Paul praying (Acts 9:11). "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry" (Psalms 34:15); "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him" (Psalms 145:18).

(3) The Lord knows of your secret strife; of your wrestling against unbelief; of your sorrow over your sins, lack of light, and being afar from God; and of all your spiritual anxieties. "Lord, all my

desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee" (Psalms 38:9); "I dwell ... with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15); "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalms 34:18).

(4) The Lord perceives your bodily needs, adversities, poverty, and tribulations. He saw the need of the widow of Zarephath, and provided for her (1 Kings 17:1-24), as well as of another widow (2 Kings 4:1-44). He saw Hagar in her misery (Genesis 16:13) and the tribulation of Israel in Egypt. "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows" (Exodus 3:7); "Thou tellest my wanderings: put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?" (Psalms 56:8).

(5) The Lord is cognizant of your innocence when people with lies speak evil of you and slander you. May it be to your comfort that, "if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:21); "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience" (2 Corinthians 1:12). Oh, what strong consolation may believers derive from the omniscience of God, for He does not merely take note of their misery in an external sense, but He beholds them with compassion and is ready to help them in the time of His good pleasure!

If the Lord is omniscient and takes such careful notice of every matter and deed, then this ought to stir us up to engage ourselves as follows:

First, as Ezra, be ashamed, considering that the Lord has perceived all your sinful spiritual frames and has observed all your sinful deeds. "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee" (Ezra 9:6). Be as the publican who stood afar off, smiting upon his breast, and "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven" (Luke 18:13).

Secondly, beware of all arrogance and pride in your heart as you walk before God and man. Thus, seek to walk in all meekness and humility, for the Lord knows how despicable and abominable you are and how you have nothing of which you should be proud. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

Thirdly, commit all that you desire or fear into the hands of the Lord. "Thou hast seen it: for Thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with Thy hand" (Psalms 10:14).

Fourthly, repeatedly confess your sins openly and conceal none of them as Adam did, for the Lord is nevertheless cognizant of them. "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance" (Psalms 90:8).

Fifthly, fear the Lord and be disturbed when the least sin begins to make its presence felt, for the Lord sees you. How greatly it aggravates your sin if you have committed it in the presence of God! Who would dare to commit adultery in the presence of men? Should anyone then dare to sin before the very eyes of God? Such ought to be considered the height of wickedness. "And they were haughty, and committed abomination before Me: therefore I took them away as I saw good" (Ezekiel 16:50); "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me" (Jeremiah 2:22).

Sixthly, let the impression that God sees you continually accompany you in your walk, and by it be motivated to live in righteousness and humility before His countenance. Such is God's

requirement. "... walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1); "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6); "I have set the Lord always before me" (Psalms 16:8). The Will of God The will of God also belongs to the communicable attributes of God. The ability to elect or reject, love or hate, and be pleased or displeased is referred to as the will. This being one of the special perfections to be found in man as a rational creature, it is therefore infinitely true for God. The will of God is the willing God Himself. There is but one will of God; however, there is a distinction in the objects to which His will relates. Therefore in recognizing this distinction we differentiate between the will of His decree and the will of His command.

We understand the will of His decree, also referred to as the will of His good pleasure or His secret will, to be God's purpose and good pleasure which He will execute, either by Himself or by the agency of others. "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Daniel 4:35); "Having predestinated us ... according to the good pleasure of His will ... who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:5; Ephesians 1:11); "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matthew 11:26). This good pleasure God executes irresistibly, and thus He always accomplishes His will. "... our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psalms 115:3); "who hath resisted His will?" (Romans 9:19). This refers to the ultimate outcome of all things which will be according to God's decree which He either has not revealed at all to man or which He reveals only after a period of time. This will can frequently be perceived only in retrospect, or in special situations by way of prophecy when specific elements of this will are revealed in His Word. Such is true for instance in reference to prophecies as well as the distinctive marks whereby one may conclude his salvation, being assured of this by the veracity of the promises. The will of God's command is also referred to as His preceptive will or His revealed will. [Note: The Dutch reads as follows: "De gebiedende wil wordt ook genoemd de wil des bevels, des gebods." Since the words "bevel" and "gebod," as well as "gebiedende" of which "gebod" is a derivative, are all translated into English by the word "command," the entire phrase was translated by a single reference to the will of God's command.] This will has reference to the regulative principle of life as well as to the laws which God has made known and prescribed to man in order that his walk might be regulated accordingly. Inasmuch as God has decreed that it is His good pleasure to convey His will to man, this will could also be referred to as the will of His decree and good pleasure. As it is primarily descriptive of man's duty, however, it is associated with the will of God's command or His revealed will. Since God is holy, He has pleasure in, delights in, and approves of compliance with His precepts. He is displeased with and abhors deviation from His commandments. God commands obedience but also permits the violation of His commandments to demonstrate His justice in punishment and His mercy in being gracious. It is God's will to give to His elect His Holy Spirit who removes their heart of stone and causes them to walk and behave according to the commandments of the Lord. Herein God always infallibly and irresistibly accomplishes His purpose. Man, on the contrary, does not always conduct himself in a manner pleasing to God. The duty imposed by God is frequently not observed by man. God's purpose and good pleasure, however, will prosper since He commands that which is pleasing to Him and also because the decree of His good pleasure is accomplished. Thus the secret and the revealed will of God function side by side. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). Paul also refers to the will of His

command. "... doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6); "... that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). This is also stated in Psalms 143:10, where it reads, "Teach me to do Thy will." In making a distinction in the will of God, we are not suggesting that God has two wills. In God the act of the will is singular. The difference rather relates to the objects towards whom His will is exercised. Much less do we suggest that God has two wills which are incompatible, as if God with His revealed will would desire something and His secret will would be opposed. When we consider the will of God as being either secret or revealed, this distinction pertains to decidedly different matters, some of which are revealed whereas others are not. The secret and revealed will of God neither relate to one and the same matter, nor should they be viewed from the same perspective. Let me illustrate. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice and kill His son Isaac; nevertheless, it was not God's will that Isaac would die. This became evident from the outcome. There is a distinction here between the command and the result. God's command was His revealed or preceptive will, which was the basis for Abraham's behavior. He had to do everything which would contribute to the death of his son, which he also did. The result -- that the death of Isaac would not take place by Abraham's activity -- was another matter and belonged to the secret will of God's decree which Abraham perceived afterward when the voice of God prevented him. There should therefore be no concern as to what will should govern our behavior, as the Lord's secret will is solely His domain and against it we cannot sin. God will accomplish His good pleasure. Nevertheless, it is expressed in God's revealed will that we are to exercise confidence and subjection towards His secret will. It is His revealed will, however, which must be regulative for our behavior and it is in regard to the latter that we are guilty of sin.

We can define the exercising of the will of God as being either a necessary consequence or as being volitional in nature. This necessity, however, does not imply compulsion, for God freely loves Himself, for "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and "the Father loveth the Son" (John 5:20). By virtue of His immutability God necessarily wills that all which He has decreed shall come to pass. "My counsel shall stand" (Isaiah 46:10). A volitional act is either an act of arbitrary determination or of one's own pleasure whereby one can opt for the one thing as well as its opposite, that is, to do or not do a certain thing. All that God wills He wills by virtue of His own pleasure, also that which He necessarily wills. In God there is a freedom to exercise His pleasure relative to many matters. He had the freedom of will either to create or not create, or to elect or not elect men. If God has decreed something, however, He wills it of necessity because He has decreed it. That which was a matter of sovereign prerogative before, God now wills of necessity, albeit voluntarily and as a matter of course. The will of God issues forth from the very Being of God and is not caused by anything issuing forth from creatures. No creature can move God to will. All man's goodness cannot move God to will to do him good, for man's goodness rather has its origin in the will of God. If it is God's will to sanctify a person, he will become holy in consequence of this. God does not choose anyone unto salvation because of his good works, rather He chooses them unto good works.

Arminians and others who propose good works to be the moving cause of man's salvation, election, and reprobation, make the following distinctions relative to the will of God. They speak of an antecedent will and a will of consequence, of an efficacious and impotent will, and of an absolute and conditional will. To them the antecedent will is God's counsel concerning men

whereby He, considering man as prior to and apart from his works, has chosen all men unto salvation. In God's will of consequence He takes man's works into consideration, thus choosing believers and those who persevere in good works unto salvation. The aforementioned parties perceive God's impotent will to be similar to His antecedent will. They understand this to relate to God's desire and inclination which neither find expression nor are executed, but are opposed by man and thus rendered impotent. They relate God's efficacious will to His consequent will, this efficacy issuing forth from his faith and good works whereby God is enabled to make him a partaker of salvation. God's absolute will, in their view, is not contingent upon any condition; instead, it considers man as prior to and apart from his works, which, however, is rendered impotent and futile by man. The conditional will of God relates to such blessings which He promises upon condition of faith and obedience, it being dependent upon the exercise of man's free will whether or not he meets these conditions, and thus whether or not he becomes a partaker of that which is promised. For example, God decrees to save all men irrespective of their works; however, anticipating and presupposing their works, subsequently decrees not to save all men, but only those who believe. By virtue of His antecedent decree God willed to establish Saul in his kingdom; however, by virtue of His consequent decree He determined, in view of Saul's ungodly behavior, not to establish him but to reject him. God willed to save Judas if he believed; however, because of his unbelief He willed to damn him.

These distinctions are human inventions which are contrary to God's Word and replete with contradictions, as all this ascribes foolishness, impotence, and mutability to God. The suggestion that God truly, earnestly, and sincerely decrees to save all men, but subsequently changes His intent, is to maintain that this is the result of God not perceiving previously what He perceives subsequently. If prior cognizance would cause Him to change His decree, His decree could not have been true, earnest, and sincere. Or it suggests that His change of intent is due to His inability to execute His will either because man prevents Him from doing so, or because God's nature is mutable, thus causing Him to change His mind. Neither of the aforesaid can be true concerning God. He is the only wise God (1 Timothy 1:17) and the omnipotent One. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand. ... For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:24; Isaiah 14:27). He is also the immutable One in whom there is no change nor shadow of turning (James 1:17). He says concerning Himself, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6); "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10). God is truth, and all that He wills He wills truly, earnestly, and sincerely. He is perfect. Far be it from the Lord to will something and yet be insincere; to will something and then to change it; to decree something and subsequently to be in error in this area, being neither desirous nor able to execute the said decree; and to be desirous while simultaneously not being desirous. When the Lord states, "... for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever" (1 Samuel 13:13), He would have us understand that many of His promises are given conditionally. If a person does not meet these conditions which God certainly knows beforehand, God will consequently not grant that which He has promised. He also has prior knowledge when and to whom He will manifest His grace and enable to meet the conditions. Since Saul was disobedient towards God, it pleased God not to establish Saul in his kingdom. This was something the Lord would have done had he lived a godly life. Thus, there is no reference here to two wills in God, being an antecedent and a consequent will (for God had decreed to reject Saul and to

establish David in his place), but rather to the will of God rejecting him due to his sin. When the Lord Jesus says, "... how often would I have gathered thy children together ... and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37), it is neither suggested that there are two wills in God nor that He has an impotent will. Rather, Christ is here referring to His work which He executed according to His will, and to the opposition of the chief rulers of Jerusalem who were not desirous to enter in, and prevented the people from entering in as well. When God is said to desire something which does not occur, such as when He states, "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, ... that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29), or, "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river" (Isaiah 48:18), He is speaking in the manner of men. Strictly speaking, such can never be said concerning the omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, and most perfect God. Rather, it indicates God's displeasure toward sin and how He delights in holiness. It indicates that sin is the reason why those blessings are withheld from them -- blessings which they, according to His promise, would have received as a reward upon godliness. The promises are made upon condition of obedience which is granted to the elect according to God's immutable purpose. When God says, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that He should return from His ways, and live?" (Ezekiel 18:23), this does not suggest that God's will is impotent. Rather, it indicates that God has no pleasure in the destruction of men, inasmuch as they are His creatures. He has pleasure in the exercise of righteousness and godliness, and in blessing the godly. Our Conduct and God's Will

Thus we have considered what the will of God is. Now we will demonstrate how a person ought to behave himself relative to God's will as well as how he ought to make use of it. God's will is the foundation for quietness and peace within the heart in all circumstances. It is the foundation and substance of, and the most powerful motive for, a believer in the practice of true holiness. I am referring to a believer who receives Christ unto reconciliation and by grace commits Himself to the service of the Lord. An unconverted person neither loves the Lord nor delights in His will. Rather, he wishes to be independent and desires that God, and whatever else may be of use, might be subservient to the fulfilling of his own will. Believers, on the contrary, know God and delight in Him and therefore also love the will of God. Since they have but a small beginning of all this, however, they have need to be further instructed. Therefore in your meditations frequently pause to reflect upon, acknowledge, and delight in the will of God, extracting peace and godliness from it.

Let us first consider the will of God's decree. As God is sovereign Lord over all His creatures, His will is therefore also sovereign over all that happens to His creatures and extends to what they do and refrain from doing. Acknowledge then with your whole heart the supreme authority and absolute freedom of God's will. Approve of His will with delight and joy by saying: "Amen, yes Lord," Thy will is sovereign, being the primary, supreme, and only reason why everything must occur. It is Thy prerogative to deal with all Thy creatures, with all men, and with me and my household, according to Thy will. I rejoice in the fact that it is Thy prerogative to do with the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth according to Thy will, and that there is no one who can stay Thy hand or say, "What doest Thou?" It is Thy free will to make a vessel unto honor or unto dishonor from the same lump of humanity, and to show Thy wrath and power on the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, as well as the riches of Thy glory on the vessels of mercy which afore have been prepared unto glory (Romans 9:21-23). Thy will is sovereign to give kingdoms to whomsoever Thou wilt (Daniel 4:17), and to turn the hearts of kings whithersoever Thou wilt

(Proverbs 21:1). Thou art free and hast absolute power and jurisdiction, on the basis of Thy will, to exalt the one and abase the other, to fill one with joy by giving him the desire of his heart, while overwhelming others with various vicissitudes and sorrows and withholding the desire of their hearts from them. I rejoice in the fact that Thou art not accountable to anyone for the diversity of Thy actions. I rejoice in the fact that Thy will extends to other creatures, and even to me, and that therefore a creature, including myself in all that I encounter, may not end in anything else but Thy will only, finding delight in it. Should Thy will even be contrary to my natural desires, grant that in such circumstances I may persevere by focusing upon Thy will, recognizing it as Thine. May it be my confession, "Not my, but Thy will be done;" I desire to subject myself, just as I am, to Thy hand, bowing under Thy sovereign will. May Thy will be fully accomplished in me, whether it be according to my wishes or not. In all the turmoil of the world, in stormy winds, in the destruction and sinking of ships, in floods of water upon earth, in the burning of cities, in regional upheavals due to earthquakes, in destructive warfare, in victories and defeats, in the oppression and persecution of Thy church, in the poverty and tribulations of Thy children -- yes, in all of this I perceive the accomplishment of Thy will, and therefore I worship, bowing before Thee, and silently confessing, "Amen, so be it, for this is the Lord's will."

"With respect to the future," everything will also transpire according to Thy will. All the tumultuous activity of man, all their schemes and intents, will not transpire except it be according to Thy will, as Thou dost govern everything. This I acknowledge, this I desire, and in this I acquiesce. This I desire to do in reference to all things, particularly in reference to myself -- not because I feel that Thy will can be opposed, neither because I believe that all occurs due to an unavoidable fate, nor because I believe all things must work for good both for the church as well as for myself, but rather because it is Thy sovereign will. This suffices for me and therefore my confession is, "Amen, Thy will be fully done!" In regard to the future I shall be without concern; in prosperity and adversity I shall rejoice and be glad.

"If it pleases the Lord to avail Himself of means in the accomplishment of His will to enable me to discern His will that much more clearly in the final outcome, I shall evaluate and also use such means, since it is God's will that I use them, recognizing them to be merely means rather than the cause of things. I shall not depend upon them in such a way as if the final outcome were dependent upon them. Rather, I shall focus upon His will, and in retrospect, when the matter has come to a conclusion, and via the means which have served the accomplishment of Thy purpose, I shall ascend to Thy will by acknowledging that Thou hast accomplished the matter, and thus be satisfied."

"If it would please the Lord in His goodness to use me in the accomplishment of His good pleasure, then I offer myself willingly: "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8). Use me. For that purpose I am willing to sacrifice myself, my family, and all that belongs to me, as long as Thy will may be fully done by me and through me." In addition to the acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God's will, the believer has the insight that all which God wishes to accomplish will be to the magnification of His power, justice, and goodness. It will be perceived by angels and men who will rejoice in the revelation of God's perfections and give Him honor and glory, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). Such is the desire and delight of a believer which causes him to say all the more, "Thy will be done!"

Furthermore, the believer has the promise that all God intends to do and will do, however contradictory His ways may seem, will be for the best advantage of His church, of the elect, and of himself in particular. In spite of all that transpires he beholds the promise, believes it, embraces it, is satisfied with it, and entrusts its accomplishment to the goodness and wisdom of the Lord, saying, "Thy will be done!" In reference to the will of God's command, the believer acknowledges that all that God wills pertaining to his walk proceeds from the sovereign will of God, a will which has the holiness of God as its foundation. For God cannot command something which would be contrary to His holy character, but rather He commands man in a manner consistent with His holiness. God did not create man in the image of His will, but in the image of His holy character, and has given unto man a law which is consistent with this holy character. As far as we are concerned, however, the law of God is the rule of holiness. We need not ascertain whether something is consistent with the holy character of God in order to establish a basis for obedience. Rather, we ought to ascertain what God has been pleased to command us, and thus we must "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). We are obligated to do everything according to the will of God. "Doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6).

Having seen, upon considering His will, how His commandment is congruent with His holy character, this foundation for obedience also inherently obligates us towards God, in whose image we were created and are recreated, to follow Him and to manifest the presence of His image in us. Although our intellect is too limited to comprehend how every commandment is congruent with God's holy and righteous character as expressed in each commandment, the will of God is our regulative principle. If we are cognizant of this, we have a sufficient rule to live by. Even if the commandments of God did not issue forth from His holiness and justice, but merely from His majesty and sovereign prerogative to command -- as was true for many special and ceremonial commands which proceeded only from the will and good pleasure of God -- all creatures would still be obligated by the will of God. One need not search out whether all that God commands is just, for the will of God validates everything as just and good. God says, "I will," to which the believer responds, "Amen."

(1) Believers so love the will of God's command and consider it so sovereign that they esteem all His precepts to be right (Psalms 119:128). They join Paul in saying, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). The law of the Lord, being His will, is their joy, their delight, and the object of their love. "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalms 119:97).

(2) A believer, loving that law, does not merely acquiesce in the will of God's command, but the soul offers himself to the Lord to do His will, willingly submitting himself to the Lord's will. God's will is his will and his will is swallowed up in God's will.

(3) The soul is ready and prepared to walk in the pathway of the Lord's commandments. He delights in the law of God according to the inner man, confessing with his whole heart, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Psalms 40:8).

(4) In his entire walk he focuses upon the will of God in order to regulate everything according to this will.

(5) The will of God is not merely a regulative principle. It is simultaneously an urgent motive, prompting the soul to be diligent, sincere, and persevering in doing God's pleasure.

(6) Even though there is great reward in the keeping of God's commandments and one may and must be quickened by it to a godly walk, the will of God is nevertheless the loftiest, most influential, and endearing object of affection. Blessed is he who relates to the will of God in such a manner, submitting himself to it in his walk both in prosperity and adversity.

Several attributes of God are considered in relationship to the will of God, such as holiness, goodness, grace, love, mercy, long-suffering, and justice. The Holiness of God

Holiness is the pure essence of the character of God. Consequently, it relates to the brightness of all His perfections, for which reason He is called a "light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). The Lord continually reveals Himself as holy, in order that the heart of man may continually be filled with deep awe and reverence. "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord ... glorious in holiness, fearful in praises?" (Exodus 15:11). "Let them praise Thy great and terrible Name; for it is holy. Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool; for He is holy. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy" (Psalms 99:3; Psalms 99:5; Psalms 99:9); "Holy is His Name" (Luke 1:49). The Lord is not merely called holy but is holiness itself. "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (Psalms 97:12); "Once have I sworn by my holiness" (Psalms 89:35); "Glory ye in His holy Name" (Psalms 105:3). From the holy character of God proceeds the holiness of all His deeds. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4). From His holy character proceeds His hatred and contempt for sin. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Habakkuk 1:13); "For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psalms 5:4-5). From His holy character proceeds His delight in holiness. "For in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:24); "But such as are upright in their way are His delight" (Proverbs 11:20). The Goodness of God

Goodness is the very opposite of harshness, cruelty, gruffness, severity, mercilessness -- all of which are far removed from God. How unbecoming it is to have such thoughts about God! Such sinful emotions are found in man. The goodness of God, on the contrary, is the loveliness, benign character, sweetness, friendliness, kindness, and generosity of God. Goodness is the very essence of God's Being, even if there were no creature to whom this could be manifested. "The good Lord pardon every one" (2 Chronicles 30:18); "Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will He teach sinners in the way" (Psalms 25:8); "There is none good but one, that is, God" (Matthew 19:17). From this goodness issues forth lovingkindness and an inclination to bless His creatures. This is to the astonishment of all who take note of this, which explains why David exclaims twenty-six times in Psalms 136:1-26, "For His mercy [Note: The Statenvertaling uses "goedheid," which means "goodness."] endureth for ever." In the following texts we read likewise. "Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy" (Psalms 62:12); "All the paths of the Lord are mercy" (Psalms 25:10). From goodness and benevolence issues forth the doing of that which is good. "Thou art good, and doest good" (Psalms 119:68); "Rejoice the soul of Thy servant: and attend unto the voice of my supplications. For Thou Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee" (Psalms 86:4; Psalms 86:6; Psalms 86:5). This goodness is of a general nature in reference to all God's creatures, since they are His creatures. "The Lord is good

to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psalms 145:9); "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (Psalms 33:5); "For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). The goodness which is of a special or particular nature as it relates to God's children is thus expressed: "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart" (Psalms 73:1); "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lamentations 3:25). This goodness of God is the reason why a believer, even after many backslidings, is motivated by renewal to return unto the Lord. "The children of Israel shall return ... and shall fear the Lord and His goodness" (Hosea 3:5); "But I have trusted in Thy mercy" (Psalms 13:5). This is why they call the Lord "the God of my mercy" (Psalms 59:10; Psalms 59:17). In this goodness they rejoice and this goodness they magnify. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever" (Psalms 89:1); "Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever" (Psalms 106:1). The Love of God

Love is an essential attribute of God by which the Lord delights Himself in that which is good, it being wellpleasing to Him, and uniting Himself to it consistent with the nature of the object of His love. The love of God by definition is the loving God Himself, for which reason John states that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). When we view the love of God relative to its objects, however, several distinctions need to be made. We call this love natural when it refers to the manner in which God delights in Himself as the supreme manifestation of goodness. "For the Father loveth the Son" (John 5:20). We call this love volitional when it refers to the manner in which God delights in His creatures. And thus this love is either the love of benevolence or the love of His delight. The love of His benevolence is either general as it relates to the manner in which God delights in, desires to bless, maintains, and governs all His creatures by virtue of the fact that they are His creatures (Psalms 145:9), or it is special. This special love refers to God's eternal designation of the elect to be the objects of His special love and benevolence. This finds expression in the following texts, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16); "As Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). The love of God's delight has the elect as its object as they are viewed in Christ, being clothed with His satisfaction and holiness perfect and complete in Him (Colossians 2:10); "According as he hath chosen us in Him ... according to the good pleasure of His will ... wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:4-6). This also applies to the believer in his present state, having the principle of holiness within him. "For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God" (John 16:27). This love of benevolence precedes all good works of man, whereas the love of God's delight concerns itself with men who presently either are partakers of or perform that which is good. The Grace of God

Grace can be defined as being a perfection of God's character which has no relationship to an object -- that is, who God was and would be even if there were no creature; namely, a compassionate God who would be capable of manifesting His benevolence to creatures apart from any merit. Grace can also be considered relative to creatures in the manifestation of undeserved benevolence. Concerning the grace of God we distinguish between grace as a gracious gift, or grace as a gracious receipt.

Gratia gratis dans (grace as a gracious gift) relates to God's perfection as being the fountain from which all His benefits issue forth. "For unto you it is given [Note: The Statenvertaling reads as

follows, "U is uit genade gegeven," that is, for unto you it is graciously given.] in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Php 1:29)! "There is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works" (Romans 11:5-6); "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

Gratia gratis data (grace as a gracious receipt), relates to the received benefits themselves. This is true for common grace of which unconverted persons are the recipients to which Jude referred, "Ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 1:4). This is also true for saving grace which is frequently referred to as the gifts of grace (cf. Romans 5:15-16; Romans 6:23; Romans 11:29). The following texts speak of this: "Through the grace given unto me" (Romans 12:3); "That ye might have a second benefit" (2 Corinthians 1:15); [Note: The Statenvertaling reads as follows, "Opdat gij ene tweede genade zoudt hebben," that is, that ye might have a second grace.] "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Peter 2:19). [Note: The Statenvertaling reads as follows: "Dat is genade ... ," that is, for this is grace.] Both perspectives of grace, that is, grace as a gracious gift and grace as a gracious receipt, are often conjoined in the Pauline benedictions. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father" (Romans 1:7); "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (1 Corinthians 16:23). The Mercy of God In man mercy is related to grief, sorrow, and pity. Such, however, is not the case with respect to God. Mercy, being the merciful God Himself, is an essential attribute whereby God is inclined to come to the aid of a creature in his misery. Even though a miserable one is the object of the manifestation of divine mercy, misery is nevertheless not the motivating cause of God's mercy, but it issues forth from the goodness of God, which in its manifestation towards a miserable one is denominated as mercy. When God revealed Himself to Moses, He called Himself merciful (Exodus 34:6). The Lord Jesus refers to this mercy as an example worthy of imitation. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

Divine mercy is either general or special in nature. The general manifestation of mercy extends to all the works of God, unconverted persons inclusive. "His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psalms 145:9). The Lord Jesus showed compassion towards all sorts of miserable persons (Matthew 14:14; Mark 6:34). The special manifestation of mercy extends to the elect who therefore are called vessels of mercy (Romans 9:23). Since the manifestation of this mercy is purely volitional in nature -- "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (Romans 9:15) -- it is also inexpressibly great. This is not only because it extends from generation to generation (Luke 1:78), but also because of its intensity and magnitude. It therefore is emphatically referred to as great mercy: "According to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope" (1 Peter 1:3). It is further stated that God is rich in mercy, "But God, who is rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4). God is spoken of as a God of multiple mercies. "The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3). God's mercy is referred to as being tender. "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us" (Luke 1:78). The Long-suffering of God This is an essential attribute of God whereby He refrains Himself from initially pouring out His full wrath upon the sinner, thus postponing his punishment -- meanwhile bestowing benefits upon him. It is God's character to be long-suffering (Exodus 34:6). The Lord is long-suffering towards sinners in a general sense. "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). "What if God ... endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?"

(Romans 9:22).

God is longsuffering towards the elect prior to their conversion. "The Lord ... is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9); "To declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Romans 3:25).

God is longsuffering towards His children, as considered in their regenerate state, by not always chastising them for their sins (it being understood that the elect are not punished in the definitive sense of the word), but rather overlooking their failures and having much patience with them. "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Malachi 3:17); "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Psalms 103:13).

Such is the character of God, as we have extensively demonstrated to you. His character is holy, good, loving, gracious, merciful, and long-suffering.

You who are convinced of your miserable condition and are desirous to be reconciled with God, be not discouraged from coming to God. You need not be discouraged if your desire is to approach unto Him in truth, with sincerity, and in the right way, that is, only through Christ. Simply come: the Lord is not merciless, cruel, or pitiless. On the contrary, He is as He declares Himself to be in His Name: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6)! Just as the father of the prodigal son, the Lord runs to meet all who turn to Him from afar. He calls you, manifests Himself to you, and promises not to cast anyone out that comes to Him. Do not let fear restrain you from doing so, but come boldly to the Lord and His goodness. And believers, how you do injustice towards the Lord when you view Him as cruel, merciless, pitiless, and always angry, because He neither immediately delivers you from your threatening and pressing circumstances, nor grants you your desires, nor answers your prayers. You dishonor God with such thoughts. You imagine things about God that are unbecoming of Him. Humble yourself for entertaining such sinful and God-dishonoring conceptions. Refrain yourself from and be fearful of such thoughts. How detrimental it is to you when you dwell upon such thoughts. It will prevent you from praying believingly. You will rob yourself of a quiet confidence in God, frustrate the expression of your love towards God, and bring upon yourself darkness, restlessness, the hiding of God's countenance, and a vulnerability towards sin.

Please conduct yourself no longer thus, but condition yourself to view God always in such a fashion as we have described Him to be on the basis of His Word. Acknowledge Him to be such and magnify Him in these perfections. If you have sinned or are in the way of affliction, believe firmly and seek to maintain a lively impression that God's character is truly of such a nature. Therefore frequently humble yourself before Him as a child and be at liberty to go to God believing Him to be such, not only as far as His character is concerned but also that He is such a God in regard to you. Rejoice in this and without fear commit both yourself and your case to Him. You will experience that it will be to your comfort and joy as well as promote intimate communion with Him, strengthen your faith, and result in progress in the way of sanctification. Then the holiness of God will not discourage you but generate a childlike reverence in you; and it will become your delight to be holy, since He is holy. The Righteousness or Justice of God The righteousness of God can be considered either in and of itself as referring to the justness, perfection, and holiness of the character of God; or in view of its manifestation toward the creature. As such the righteousness or

justice of God consists in giving each his worthy due, either by punishment or reward.

Justice is executed either by way of mutual exchange or in a retributive fashion. Among men, the execution of justice by way of mutual exchange is practiced, as for instance when monetary remuneration is made according to an agreement. Such, however, is not true with regard to God, since none of our works, however perfect they may be, are by nature meritorious before God. Since none of our works are perfect, there can be no proportionate relationship between work and remuneration. God, always being independent, is not indebted to anyone. Man cannot take that which is his and bring it before God, for the good he performs originates in God. Since it is man's natural obligation to perform good works, he, having done so, can make no claims because of it. "so likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

Retributive justice must be ascribed to God, both in reference to reward as well as punishment. Whatever God does is just. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4). God is just when He acts according to either His promises or His threatenings. "That Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Psalms 51:4). God is just when He delivers and saves a person. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets: even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ" (Romans 3:21-22). God is just in damning sinners. "... the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to His deeds" (Romans 2:5-6); "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgments" (Psalms 119:137). The meting out of punishment is generally referred to as the avenging justice of God.

Question: In reference to the avenging justice of God, does God punish sin because it pleases Him, since He could refrain from doing so if He so desired, or is the punishment of sin a necessary consequence of the righteous character of God, so that He cannot but punish sin, that is, He cannot let sin remain unpunished?

Answer: The question is not whether God has the right and the authority to mete out punishment. Man is naturally cognizant of the fact that sin deserves punishment. The heathen know "that they which commit such things are worthy of death" (Romans 1:32). Neither is it a question of whether God punishes sin by constraint or whether the avenging justice of God is so natural to Him that, just as fire always burns, there is an immediate response in meting out punishment upon the commission of each sin. God, doing everything independently, also does that which is natural to Him to the superlative degree. The freeness with which God exercises His will should not be construed to mean that it is a matter of indifference to Him whether or not He punishes sin. Rather, it should be viewed as a necessary consequence. Thus, God by virtue of His perfect, holy, and righteous character is inclined as the only wise God to punish sin at a time and in a manner suitable to Him. However, the question at hand is: "Is righteousness or punishment as an exercise of justice such that punishment cannot be avoided, and whether as God He cannot acquit without punishing sin, since such an act would be unjust and contrary to His holy and just character?" Our answer is "yes," which is confirmed by Scripture. "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). God is a righteous Judge (Psalms 7:9); "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (Psalms 5:5-6); "The Lord revengeth; the Lord

revenge, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked" (Nahum 1:23). We will deal comprehensively with this subject in Chapter 17 which deals with the necessity of satisfaction.

Beware, oh sinner, whoever you are, for God is just! Do not imagine that you will be able to satisfy God by praying, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," or by doing your utmost to refrain from evil and to practice virtue. To imagine such is to be on the broad way to eternal destruction, and causes millions, who live under the ministry of the gospel, to perish. If you could be delivered from this foolish imagination, there would still be hope for you. As long as you foster such an imagination, however, you are in a hopeless condition. Please consider that there can be no hope of grace and salvation without satisfaction of the justice of God, that is, by the enduring of punishment.

You have heard that God is gracious, which is true. You are guilty, however, of distorting the essential meaning of the grace of God by interpreting it to refer to remission of sin and absolution from punishment apart from satisfaction. Such, however, is not grace. There is no contradiction in God. The justice of God, which cannot be compromised to the least degree, of necessity demands the punishment of the sinner. God cannot deny Himself, and thus grace does not negate His justice. Grace is not incompatible with justice, but confirms it. This is the grace of God so highly exalted in His Word -- that God, without finding anything in man, yes, contrary to his desert, gave His Son as a Surety. He transferred the sins of the elect from their account to His and by bearing the punishment justly due upon their sin, satisfied the justice of God on their behalf. This is grace, namely, that God offers Jesus as Surety in the gospel. It is grace when God grants faith to a sinner to receive Jesus and to entrust his soul to Jesus. It is grace when God converts a sinner, granting him spiritual life. It is grace when God permits a sinner to sensibly experience His favor. It is grace when God sanctifies a sinner, leading him in the way of holiness to salvation.

Please note how much the grace of God differs from your conception of grace. Put your erroneous conception aside and cease from trying to make all things well in the way of prayer and self-reformation. Perhaps you reply, "Then all my hope would be gone, and I would be given over to despair." My response is, "What can it profit you to flatter yourself a little with a false hope and thus perish forever?" Instead, give up all hope and despair of yourself; believe and acknowledge the righteousness of God who cannot forgive sin apart from satisfaction and the bearing of punishment. Keep your sins and the justice of God clearly in view, as well as your inability to satisfy this justice. Freely fear and tremble, but do not remain in such a condition nor end in it. Allow the terror of the Lord to move you to faith. Seek salvation in a way whereby God's justice is satisfied. Therefore, flee to the Lord Jesus as Surety, receiving Him to your justification and sanctification. That is the only way by which you can be saved. And believers, may you who know this way -- the way by which you go to God -- increasingly penetrate the truth of God's justice until you may perceive its purity, glory, and preciousness. Magnify God in His justice, and rejoice in the fact that God is just. Love His righteousness as you love His goodness and mercy, especially in that this righteousness has been satisfied on your behalf. Give thanks to God that the Lord leads you and all His elect along such a holy way unto salvation. Do not consider the justice of God to be against you, but as being for you -- to give you salvation and justly punish your enemies. The Power of God In the foregoing we divided the communicable attributes of God into three main

categories: intellect, will, and power. Having considered the first two, we shall now consider the attribute of power. The word power is ambiguous in our language, as it also refers to dominion, supremacy, and authority. Whenever it is attributed to God it refers to His omnipotence.

Power in its primary meaning is referred to in Greek as *Exusia*, and in Latin as *potestas*. Its meaning is to have a just claim upon someone, authority, and supreme jurisdiction. One can consider the power of God as an essential attribute, or use it in reference to the dispensation of grace. God is Lord and Master over all His creatures and has unrestricted, absolute power and jurisdiction over them. This necessarily follows from the fact that He is God and that the creature is dependent upon Him for existence and activity. In the exercise of this power He is not accountable to anyone; no one may demand a reason from Him by asking, "What doest Thou? Is this just?" We may often not be able to comprehend why God acts in a particular way; it should be sufficient for us that God is sovereign. This truth we are obligated to embrace. Consider the following texts: "Who will say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Job 9:12). "For He giveth not account of any of His matters" (Job 33:13).

Nebuchadnezzar expresses this forcefully when he states, "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4:35). Also consider the following passages. "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with mine own?" (Matthew 20:15); "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Romans 9:20-21). The Father has delegated His economical or executive power to the Mediator, Jesus Christ. Besides having given Him the church and all the elect in order to bring them unto salvation, He has also subjected all creatures unto Him so that He might use them to promote the salvation of the elect. This delegation of power, however, is not to the exclusion of the Father, so that the Father by virtue of this delegation would be deprived of power, for the Father executes all things by means of the Son. This power is referred to when it is stated, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). The power of God in its second meaning, *dunamis* in Greek, and *potentia* in Latin, refers to the power and strength of God whereby He is able to execute and accomplish everything which is in agreement with His character and His truth -- also to create whatever is conceivable and to do whatever He wishes to do. From stones He is able to raise up children unto Abraham (Matthew 3:9), that is, to create human beings from a lump of clay as He did in the beginning, and make such human beings partakers of both the faith and life of Abraham. God could even create thousands of worlds. In a word, God's power is unlimited. One could imagine the creation of many things which would be contrary to the nature and truth of God. One could speculate about imaginary things which bear no resemblance to a creature. To relate this to the omnipotence of God and to ask whether God would be able to perform such things, is to entertain thoughts about God which are void of reverence and godly fear. Whatever is contradictory to the nature and truth of God, as well as contrary to the essential nature of a creature, is no reflection upon the power of God. Far be it from us to attribute this to the omnipotent and holy God. "Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity" (Job 34:10).

God can neither deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13), nor can He lie or deceive (Titus 1:2). "It was impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:18). Even though God has eternally been capable of

creating a world, it does not follow that the world could have existed eternally. “Yes” and “no” are at all times opposites and cannot be simultaneous realities. One and the same body, one and the same man, cannot be simultaneously present at many places which are far removed from each other. These and a thousand-fold more things do not appertain to omnipotence. Nevertheless, we maintain that God by His omnipotence is able to accomplish whatever He will even beyond what He has willed, as well as whatever He would will. His arm is not shortened and therefore He is called the Almighty. “I am the Almighty God” (Genesis 17:1); “When the Almighty was yet with me” (Job 29:5); “... saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:18). The Lord has no need of any objects, means, or anything which creatures require in order to function. “God ... calleth those things which be not as though they were” (Romans 4:17); “For He spake and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalms 33:9); “There is nothing too hard for Thee” (Jeremiah 32:17); “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37). Whatever God wills, He shall accomplish irresistibly. “Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Psalms 115:3); “His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” (Isaiah 14:27).

Therefore, you who are ungodly should fear, for you have such an omnipotent God against you! You cannot prevail against Him. There is neither a hiding place or refuge, nor is there anyone who will be able to offer you protection against Him and deliver you out of His hand. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). “Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty” (Isaiah 13:6). And you, children of God, let the omnipotence of God encourage your hearts. If God is for you, who will be against you? Do you have any corporal needs and know not how to meet them? Even if there are no means available, God has the answer. He requires no means, and if the Lord desires to avail Himself of means, He will bring them about and make them available to you. Insignificant means are sufficient for Him for He is the Almighty One. He creates light out of darkness in order that the movement of His hand may be observed that much more clearly. In all your perplexities confess with Abraham, “The Lord shall provide.” Does your soul stand in need of light, comfort, a change of heart, and strength against sin? Even if you see no solution, He is able to give you the desire of your heart with one word. Seek to maintain a lively perception of the omnipotence of God. This will strengthen you in all things, causing you to take refuge with Him and be free from concern, fear, and terror. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalms 91:1). The Duty of the Christian to Reflect upon the Attributes of God

Thus we have sought to present to you both the Being and the perfections of God. Such a God is our God. He is the object of our religion. Consequently, it is the duty of all who practice religion to reflect continually upon God as He is, to live in contemplation of Him, and to walk before His countenance, for it is this which the Lord requires from those that are His. “I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (Genesis 17:1); “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:6); “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8). “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace” (Job 22:21).

Such has been the continual practice of the saints who are held before us in Scripture as examples to be emulated. Consider for example Enoch, Noah, Moses, David, and Asaph. “And Enoch walked with God” (Genesis 5:24); “Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9); “For he (Moses) endured, as seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27); “I (David) have set the Lord always

before me" (Psalms 16:8); "When I awake I am still with Thee" (Psalms 139:18); "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee; but it is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:23;Psalms 73:28). The most significant promise God makes to His people is when He promises that they will walk with Him, and He will walk with them. "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance" (Psalms 89:15); "and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23); "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Corinthians 6:16). This walking with God occurs,

(1) when the heart with holy determination separates and withdraws itself from all that is visible and tangible. "While we look not at the things which are seen" (2 Corinthians 4:18); "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17);

(2) in quietly turning toward God, while preparing oneself to be illuminated by His wondrous light. "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up" (Psalms 5:3); "Truly my soul waiteth upon God" (Psalms 62:1);

(3) when we focus upon the attributes of God that we might gain an increasingly deeper understanding of them and perceive their influence in the heart. "Therefore I will look unto the Lord" (Micah 7:7); "They looked unto Him, and were lightened" (Psalms 34:5). Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27);

(4) when we engage in all humility in intimate communion with God. One time this will consist in silently presenting ourselves before God, while at another time there will be a reverent bowing before Him in worship. Then there will be times of holy dialogue, prayer, humble submission, trusting, rejoicing and delighting in the Lord, as well as a willing surrender to the service of the Lord in order to live in a manner pleasing to Him. This is that sublime life; this is what constitutes a walking with God. It is the hidden way in which nothing but holiness and delight are experienced. In order to motivate you to become enamored [Note: à Brakel uses "verlieven," which most literally would be translated as "to fall in love."] with such a life, and to encourage you to stir yourself up to commence with such a walk and to persevere in it, you should be aware that walking with God engenders self-abasement and a spiritual frame which is pleasing to the Lord and desirable for yourself. It also engenders steadfast and abundant comfort, true joy and peace which pass all understanding, and genuine sanctification. For when the soul is privileged to reflect upon God as his God in Jesus Christ, such a soul will be conscious of the righteousness of God. He will magnify and delight in this righteousness no less than in God's goodness and love. He will perceive in this attribute only light, purity, and extraordinary glory. Such a soul rejoices the more in this righteousness, since by virtue of the merits of Christ it is no longer against him unto destruction, but rather for his help and salvation, and to the damnation of the ungodly. The soul beholding God's goodness and all-sufficiency, and tasting the power of these is so fully satisfied with this that all the goodness of the creature vanishes. It no longer has any appeal to him. He can do without it and confesses with Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee ... but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalms 73:25-26). The soul, irradiated by the love of God and ignited with reciprocal love, loses itself in this love and is silent in response to it. He stands in amazement of this love, and finds so much in it that all creature-love loses its appeal. He no longer perceives any desirability in the creature except where he perceives something of God in it. Therefore he no longer covets the love of

others and is readily weaned from all that appears to be desirable upon earth.

Viewing the holiness of God, the soul, not able to endure its brilliant splendor, covers her countenance, exclaiming with the angels, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!" He thus becomes enamored with this holiness and desires to be holy as He is holy who has called him. The soul perceives the sovereignty of the holy will of God, exalting, esteeming, and approving it as such. He rejoices in the full accomplishment of this will relative to all creatures as well as himself. He submits himself to this will which sweetens and makes all things well. He yields his own will to be swallowed up in the will of God. The Lord's will is his will both in what he endures and does, and he is thus ready to perform all that is according to God's will and is pleasing to Him.

Contemplating the magnificence and glory of God, the dignity and glory of all creatures vanish and are in comparison considered to be lowly, insignificant, and contemptible. He neither desires the splendor and glory of the world for himself, nor is he intimidated by the dignity of others who might cause him to act contrary to the will of His God. In that aspect he deems the dignified and honorable equal to the most insignificant and contemptible even though he will fully subject himself to all whom God has placed over him because God wills it. Rather, he bows in all humility before God the most High, rendering Him honor and glory. His heart and tongue are prepared and ready to speak of the honor and glory of His majesty.

Viewing the omnipotence of God in itself as well as in its manifestation in all creatures, the power of creatures which either is exercised for or against him vanishes. He will neither rely upon nor fear it, but dwelling in the secret place of the most High he abides under the shadow of the Almighty. In that shadow he rejoices over all his enemies, enjoys safety without fear, and is confident. In contemplating the multifaceted and unsearchable wisdom of God as it is manifested in all His works both in the realm of nature and of grace, he loses his own wisdom, considering it to be but foolishness, as well as all esteem for the wisdom of friend and enemy. Such a soul is quiet and satisfied with the all-wise government of God, be it in relation to the whole world, the church, his country of residence, times of peace and war, or its effect upon him and his loved ones. He yields in everything to the wisdom of God who knows both time and manner, even though the soul has no prior realization or perception thereof. The soul, viewing the infallible truth and faithfulness of God, refuses to rely upon human promises. They neither can cause him to rejoice nor can human threatenings terrify him, for he is aware of human mutability. However, He knows the Lord to be a God of truth who keepeth truth forever. He knows the promises and believes them, being so convinced of their certainty as if they were already fulfilled. He therefore rests in them and has a joyful hope in them.

Behold, is this not a joyful life -- a heaven upon earth -- to have such a God as your God who promotes both your welfare and your salvation? Can there be sorrow in such a soul? Does not He who has a God as the God of joy and gladness have every reason to experience immediate comfort? Does not such a walk with God cause the soul to manifest utmost meekness and humility, being cognizant of his own insignificance? This engenders in the soul a circumspect and unwavering spiritual frame, a quiet and humble submission in all things, and a fearless valor and courage in the performance of his duties, even when the Lord calls to a duty which is extraordinary in nature. There is a delighting in that which he may have done for the Lord, submissively leaving the outcome to be determined by His government. Such a spiritual frame engenders genuine

holiness. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

All virtue which does not issue forth from such a representation and contemplation of God in Christ is of little value for it lacks true essence. A view of God, as outlined above, elevates the soul above all creature activity and unites him with God and His will, which teaches him his duty as well as the manner in which he is to perform it. Such a view of God will bring forth the most effective and purest motives to stir up the soul. In this view of God the soul may find all sweetness and peace -- indeed, it brings heaven in the soul and the soul in heaven. It prevents sinful lusts from issuing forth; and if they emerge, it enables the soul to subdue them. This is the fear of God, love to God, submission to God, and obedience to God, which causes the soul to radiate holiness as the countenance of Moses was radiant when for forty days he had communion with God upon the mountain. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that He may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple" (Psalms 65:4). Oh, blessed eternity when we shall always be with the Lord, shall see Him face to face, and know Him as we are known! (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Directions for Reflecting upon the Attributes of God In order to be properly engaged in this contemplation of God, and thereby to increase in the knowledge and love of God, the following directions are to be observed.

First, maintain a lively impression that you are but an insignificant creature, and seek to persevere in such a spiritual frame. Realize that your soul's ability for comprehension is very limited and that a matter may readily exceed your understanding. Furthermore, our understanding having been darkened through sin, we are very unfit to comprehend anything about God who is an infinite Spirit. Can a small bottle contain an entire ocean? How then can a finite being comprehend an infinite Being? Can someone look directly into the sun without being blinded? How then will anyone view God who is an infinite light dwelling in the light unto which no man can approach (1 Timothy 6:16) and is clothed with the garment of light? Everyone therefore, when viewing himself from this perspective, must recognize himself to be but a great and foolish beast, not having a right human understanding because he has been so blinded by sin. Truly, to perceive that God is incomprehensible and to acquiesce in and lose one's self in this; to pause and reflect in holy amazement; to believe that the Lord infinitely transcends the capacity of our mind; to rejoice in the fact that God unveils to man that He exists and reveals something of Himself; and to be satisfied with that revelation -- that constitutes knowledge of God and is the best frame to increase in this knowledge.

Secondly, be more passive in your contemplation of God and allow yourself to be more illuminated with divine light. Quietly follow that light with your thoughts and permit yourself to be influenced by it rather than wearying your soul with rational deductions, so the soul may move beyond the illumination granted at that moment. The reality and intensity of such mental activity will cause our thoughts to be more carnal than godly and will bring darkness upon the soul.

Thirdly, in doing so it is essential that the soul in all simplicity approves of God's revelation of Himself to her and refrains from hankering to comprehend this revelation. If one seeks to penetrate the manner of God's existence intellectually -- that is, His eternity, infinity, omniscience, omnipotence, and internal motions -- it will of necessity bring the soul in darkness and various

temptations will emerge as a result, for the mind then contemplates things which are beyond its reach. Therefore, one should quickly resist any inclination to ponder about the “why” and the “how” of God's existence, nipping any temptations in the bud. Flee them by readily focusing upon your insignificance and darkness of understanding , and in all humility start again from the beginning.

Fourthly, in order for the soul to contemplate upon God in a manner which is becoming of Him, he must seek to be in a godly frame of mind and be emptied of sinful desires and world conformity, for “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him” (Psalms 25:14). “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8); “he that loveth me shall be loved of My Father, and I will ... manifest Myself to Him. And we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:21;John 14:23).

Fifthly, in doing so historical faith must be very active. This means that as we come to the Word, we will read what God says about Himself, without contradiction accept it as the truth, and conclude and confess that God is such as He reveals Himself to be. Our thinking will remain within the context of God's Word without agonizingly seeking to move beyond the Word. We will then in all simplicity follow the Lord, until it pleases Him to lead us to a higher level of understanding.

Sixthly, it is essential that one considers God to be His God in Christ. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is to be found in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Outside of Christ God is a terror, and can only be viewed as a consuming fire. In Christ, however, one may have liberty; and God reveals Himself to such who approach unto Him in that way. Then one will be able to better endure the light of God's countenance, rejoice in it, and therein glorify God. One ought to be cautious, however, of becoming too free and irreverent when considering God as Father in Christ and in the contemplation upon His perfections which are unveiled by means of the covenant of grace. The proper frame for contemplation upon God is to be humble, reverent, and to tremble with awe before the majesty of the Lord.

005. Chapter 4: The Divine Persons

----- CHAPTER FOUR ----- The Divine Persons The Holy Trinity

Having considered the name, the essence, and the attributes of God, we will now turn to the mystery of all mysteries, the Holy Trinity. Throughout history all parties opposed to the truth have vehemently assaulted this article of faith. The ancient church has always confessed this article and defended it as a steadfast pillar of the truth against Sabellians, Arians, and Valentians. However much they may disagree with one another concerning other points of doctrine, they are united in their attack upon the Holy Trinity. Today we must defend this article against Socinians, Anabaptists, Socinian Arminians, and other proponents of error. Thanks be unto God who has always caused the church to be faithful to this truth. The church stands firm in this truth until this very day, and God will enable her to stand firm in it until the day of Christ, in spite of all who regret this.

Before we proceed with our consideration of this doctrine and before you meditate upon it, the following must be clearly perceived.

First, it must be understood that God is incomprehensible in His essence and existence. It should further be understood that we human beings, to whom God has been pleased to reveal Himself in a manner sufficient to lead us unto salvation, only know in part and are but able to grasp a fragment or the external fringes of the doctrine at hand. Believers must not, nor do they desire to, proceed with their minds beyond its defined limitations, that is, beyond that which the Lord has been pleased to shed light upon. Whatever cannot be fully understood and perceived, they believe.

They worship the Invisible One who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto.

Secondly, the entire written Word of God, having been given to man, uses human language and words which relate to tangible objects. Such is the wondrous wisdom, goodness, and omnipotence of God, that man by means of earthly expressions understands spiritual matters. Thus, that which is stated anthropopathós, that is, in a human manner, can be understood theoprepós, that is, in its divine dimension. Such is the case with the language and vocabulary which are used to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Therefore one must be cautious not to cleave to the tangible matters from which the words have been derived, nor to bring divine matters down to the human level. Rather, we must ascend above tangible matters and expressions in order that, in a spiritual manner pleasing to God, we may understand what God states concerning Himself. May you thus maintain the spiritual frame which we have described in the previous chapter. Reread it attentively and apply it in this chapter.

Thirdly, it should be understood that the Holy Trinity cannot be known from nature, but has only been revealed in Scripture. Therefore one should refer only to Scripture and in all simplicity believe its testimony. One must not exalt his wisdom above that which has been written; he must set all human reasoning aside and avoid all imaginary comparisons to tangible objects. Such

comparisons, rather than shedding light upon the issue, result in more obscurity and tend to divert from, rather than promote, a proper understanding of this mystery. May the Lord sanctify and guide me in writing, and you in reading or hearing. The Singular Essence of God's Being

We maintain and state emphatically that there is but one, only God. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4); "For though there be that are called gods ... to us there is but one God" (1 Corinthians 8:5-6); "But God is one" (Galatians 3:20); "For there is one God" (1 Timothy 2:5). There can of necessity only be one eternal, omnipotent, and allsufficient Being. Even the most intelligent among the heathen have acknowledged this. The most barbaric heathen of our time, showing no external evidence of any religion, acknowledge but one God. The perception among the heathen that there are many gods seems to originate from the knowledge of the existence of angels, and perhaps also from an erroneous understanding concerning the Holy Trinity, and the plural name of God, Elohim.

Divine Personality Defined This one and only God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The divine Being has a threefold manner of existence, which expressed in intelligible language -- lest heretics find here a pretext -- is denominated in Scripture by the use of the word "person." In Hebrews 1:3 reference is made to "the express image of His person," or as it is stated in Greek, *Tés hypostasós autou*. Since the word hypostasis refers to an intelligent, independent being, the reference is consequently to a person. We understand this to refer to a living, intelligent, incommunicable being who is fully independent, sharing no part with any other being. Such is true of angels and men who consequently are referred to as persons. By application of this concept the divine entities are called persons, so that, in perceiving the divine dimension of the anthropomorphism, we should be able to comprehend something about that which is incomprehensible. We can consider one of the divine Persons in an abstract sense, that is, outside of the context of the divine Being, as is expressed for instance in Hebrews 1:3, where it is stated that Christ is the express image of His Father's Person. We can also consider the Person in a concrete sense, that is, as viewed in union with the divine Being, such as is expressed in Php 2:6, where it is said "Who being in the form of God." According to His divine nature Christ is said to be *en morphé Theou*, in the form, that is, having the being and nature of God so that He is equal to God. As the form of a servant includes personhood, essential being, and characteristics, the Word of God similarly includes personhood, essential being, and attributes as constituting the form of God. The manner in which attributes are ascribed to God has been discussed in the previous chapter. **The Divine Essence Consists of Three Persons** This one divine Being subsists in three Persons, not collaterally or side-by-side, but rather the one Person exists by virtue of the other Person either by way of generation or procession. The fact that there are three Persons in the one divine Being is so clearly revealed in the Word of God that it cannot be contradicted. It is evident in both the Old and New Testaments.

First, it is revealed in the name Elohim.

(1) Elohim is a plural form which does not refer to one or two persons, but always expresses a plurality which exceeds two. Since Scripture expressly refers to three, we ought to be convinced of its teaching that the one God subsists in three Persons. Elohim is rarely used in the singular, never in a dual sense, but generally in the plural. Since we know that there is but one God, who in reference to His Being cannot be given a name with a plural dimension, the name Elohim clearly indicates that there is a trinity of Persons.

(2) It should additionally be noted that the plural form of Elohim is also used in conjunction with a plural verbum (verb), adjectivum (adjective), or substantivum in appellatione (pronoun), and that a plural number is always affixed to it (an affixum pluralis numeri). Such is true in the following texts. "And Elohim (God) said, Na'aseh let us make man" (Genesis 1:26); "When Elohim (God) hith'u, caused me to wander" (Genesis 20:13). "ElohimKedoshim, He is an holy God" (Joshua 24:19); "Remember Boreecha Thy Creators" (Ecclesiastes 12:1); "Ba'alaich 'osaich, Thy Makers are Thy husbands" (Isaiah 54:5); "I am JehovahEloheka, Thy God" (Exodus 20:2). [Note: These quotations deviate somewhat from the KJV as à Brakel here gives a literal rendering of the original Hebrew.]

It should be noted that the names Jehovah and Elohim often coalesce into the one name Jehovah, and that quite frequently these two names are used in conjunction with each other, indicating the unity of Being as well as the subsistence in three Persons. Whenever the plural name of God, Elohim, is used in a singular sense, the Persons are considered as one Being. Only once, in Psalms 45:7, is the name Elohim used in reference to a Person, when it is stated Elohim Eloheka, that is, "Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee." This indicates periemchoresin, that is, the internal coexistence, and that the divine Persons, are inseparable from the divine Being and from each other. Secondly, the Trinity of Persons is also evident in texts,

(1) in which the Lord refers to Himself as being more than one or two. "Let us make man" (Genesis 1:26); "the man is become as one of us" (Genesis 3:22); "let us go down, and there confound their language" (Genesis 11:7). The reference here is not to angels, as they are not creators, nor has man having been made in the image of angels. Angels cannot be considered as being equal with God. The fact that the kings of the earth refer to themselves as "we" and "us" merely indicates their limitation, since they do not govern independently but in consultation with their senate and people (senatus populusque). God, however, is sovereign, and thus has no need to express Himself in such a fashion. His use of the plural relative to Himself reveals the Trinity of Persons, for which reason He is referred to in the original Hebrew as Creators in Ecclesiastes 12:1.

(2) It is also evident in texts wherein the Lord speaks about Himself as if He were referring to another person. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24). One of the three angels which spoke with Abraham was Jehovah, the Son of God. He who appeared on earth caused this rain to come down from the Lord in heaven. Both He who summoned this rain, as well as the One who caused it to rain, are referred to as Jehovah. As God is one in essence, the reference here cannot be to two different Beings, but rather to the Son and the Father, being the second and the first Persons of the Godhead. For it is the Father who works through the Son, and the Son works on behalf of His Father (John 5:19).

Thirdly, to further facilitate your inner conviction, consider with a believing heart those texts which expressly state that God is trinitarian, not in His essence but in Persons. In the blessing which the Lord enjoins to be pronounced upon His people the name Jehovah is repeated three times. "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). In each repetition the name Jehovah is conjoined to an activity which in the administration of the covenant of grace is specifically ascribed to either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. Safekeeping is ascribed to the Father, the manifestation of grace to the Son, and the bestowal of peace to the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul expressing this in his benediction mentions the three

Persons in 2 Corinthians 13:14, clearly proving that the repetition of the name Jehovah must be viewed as being indicative of the three Persons. This threefold repetition is also found in Isaiah 6:3, where it is stated, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord." In the New Testament this text is used to refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (cf. John 12:41; Acts 28:25). Furthermore, consider the following texts: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me" (Isaiah 61:1); "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord ... the angel of His presence (from Malachi 3:1 we know that this refers to the Son) saved them" (Isaiah 63:7; Isaiah 63:9); "But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit" (Isaiah 63:10); "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalms 33:6).

There is also clear evidence in the New Testament. "And, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17). "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19); "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14); "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 John 5:7).

We have thus observed that there are three Persons in the divine Being. This will become even more evident as we come to demonstrate that every Person is truly God, the Son being generated by the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. We shall first consider the divinity of the Son and His eternal and incomprehensible generation, and then the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His procession. The Divinity of Each Person of the Trinity That the Father is truly God is not disputed, which will become sufficiently evident as we progress. The indisputable proof that the Son as the second Person of the Trinity is also truly God, is to be found in His divine names, attributes, works, and the honor He receives.

First, let us consider His divine Names. He is called Jehovah, which is a name attributed to God alone, as has been previously demonstrated (cf. Jeremiah 23:6; Romans 9:5; 1 John 5:20).

Secondly, let us consider His divine attributes. Whoever is eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient, is the only true God. All of these are attributed to the second Person, the Son (cf. Revelation 1:8; Micah 5:2; Revelation 2:13).

Thirdly, let us consider His divine works. He who has created the world, maintains everything, and raises the dead, is truly God. All these works are attributed to the Son (cf. John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17; John 5:20-21).

Fourthly, let us consider His divine honor. He, who as the Father is to be honored, is to have baptism performed in His Name, is to be worshipped by men, and is to be believed in by them, is truly God. This honor is attributed to the Son (cf. John 5:23; Matthew 28:19; Php 2:10; Hebrews 1:6; John 14:1). We shall deal with this comprehensively in chapter eighteen. That the Holy Spirit is truly God will be shown later.

These three Persons are neither different nor separate from the divine essence, nor from each other -- so that the divine essence would be considered as one entity, a divine Person another; or that the Father would be one entity, the Son another, and the Holy Spirit yet another. This would constitute the existence of three or four gods. There is a distinction rather than an essential

difference between the divine persons. Each Person is coequal and the divine Being in the full sense of the word, existing in such a manner. Therefore whenever Scripture refers to the Persons of the Trinity it speaks of three, and whenever it refers to the divine essence existing in three Persons, it states that these three are one (1 John 5:7). The Greek church used three words by which it gave expression to the unity and harmony between the three Persons. In our language we are not capable of being as precise in expressing this; however, we will attempt to approximate this as much as possible. The first word is homoousia or coessence, which indicates that the three Persons have the same divine essence in common, one Person not being of a different essence from another Person, but one and the same. The Son is of the same divinity as the Father, and the Holy Spirit is of the same divinity as the Father and the Son. Of old, heretics have toyed with this word, and instead used the word homoiousia or co-similarity. They maintained that the Son and the Holy Ghost are of an essence which resembles the Father's essence, which nevertheless is not the same essence. They suggested that there is but little difference between the two concepts as the two words differ only in one letter. We maintain, however, that the three Persons are of the same essence. "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). The Son was en morphé Theou, that is, having the same form and nature as God (Php 2:6). The second word is isots or coequality. This expresses the fact that each Person is of the same divine essence in the full sense of the word. The divine essence is indivisible, that is, each Person possesses it in the full sense of the word -- one Person not more than the other. The three Persons possess the divine essence equally; they are equal as far as possessing the complete, indivisible divine essence. The third word is emperichsis, or coexistence. Thereby is indicated that since God is a simple Being, there being neither diversity nor composition -- that is, neither Essence and Person nor Person and Person constitute a composite entity -- the three Persons, though distinguished from each other, are not different. They coexist as one God, in simplicity of Being. The Father exists in the Son, the Son exists in the Father, and the Holy Spirit exists in the Father and in the Son. "And the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1); "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father ... the Father that dwelleth in Me ... I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (John 14:9-11).

Having established the equality of the Persons, we must nevertheless distinguish between the divine essence and the individual Persons -- lest we equate the divine essence with one of the Persons only, or view one Person as being another Person. The internal, natural distinction which exists within God, however, is incomprehensible. We only perceive the fringes of His Being -- as much as it has pleased the Lord to reveal to us in His Word. That revelation is sufficient for us unto adoration, worship, sanctified use, and salvation. It is most certain that unconverted persons, as learned as they may be, know very little about this mystery. An uneducated but godly person, however, believes and perceives much more of this mystery -- more than he can give verbal expression to -- than an unconverted person or one who is opposed to the truth would be able to believe.

Thus we must distinguish here between the divine essence and divine Persons.

(1) There is one essence and three Persons.

(2) We must view the divine essence as being entirely non-relational, [that is, not existing in an essential relationship with any other Being], whereas the divine Persons exist in an interpersonal relationship to each other and interact together.

(3) The same essence in its entirety is present in all three Persons; however, each Person has His own independent personality. As such we can say that the divine essence is communicable to the divine Persons in the manner just stated, whereas the personality of each divine Person is incommunicable. Thus, it is evident that we distinguish between the essence and the Persons, albeit not as if there were an actual and essential difference. Rather, we do so merely in reference to the manner of existence, which is a matter about which we can only stammer. The distinction between the Persons can neither be defined as a single, intellectual concept, nor be made in reference to the works of God -- as if God when He functions in one sense is called the Father; when He functions in a different sense is called the Son; and when He functions again in a different sense is called the Holy Spirit. This distinction also may not be perceived as if the three Persons function collaterally, that is, as if they function side by side without any interaction among each other, for then the Son could just as well be the Father, and the Father could just as well be the Holy Spirit. Their relationship and titles would then only have reference to the work of redemption. Rather, this distinction relates to the very nature of these Persons. It is God's eternal nature to exist as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Father not being able to be the Son, and the Holy Spirit not being able to be the Father. Scripture makes a distinction:

(1) in personal properties, as being foundational to the interpersonal relationship, and which are the basis for our distinction;

(2) in names, which are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;

(3) in order, as there is a first, second, and third Person;

(4) in manner of existence, as the Father is of Himself, the Son is of the Father, and the Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son;

(5) in the manner of operation, as the Father works of Himself, the Son is engaged on behalf of His Father, and the Holy Spirit on behalf of both. The personal properties of each Person are as follows: The Father generates; the Son is generated, and together with the Father sends forth the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, whose manner of operation is described in Scripture as "breathing." Nowhere in the Bible are the three Persons ever referred to in a manner of absolute detachment from each other. The references are always relational in nature, indicated by the names which they have: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even if in a given text reference is made to one, two, or three Persons, and even if the interpersonal relationship is not expressed therein -- something which to our knowledge occurs only two or three times -- then this relationship is expressed in other texts. Such is the case, for instance, when we compare Numbers 6:25-26 with 2 Corinthians 13:13, and Isaiah 6:3 with John 12:41 and Acts 28:25. To maintain that the three Names have no significance beyond the names themselves, or to maintain that these names merely refer to God's administration of the covenant of grace, is nothing less than a denial of the Holy Trinity. To maintain, however, that there are three entities which coexist simultaneously without the interpersonal relationship is to maintain that there are three Gods. It is thus necessary to examine the basis for this interpersonal relationship which is to be found in the eternal generation of the Son, as well as the procession of the Spirit. The Eternal Generation of the Son as the Second Person of the Trinity

It is a personal property of the first Person of the Godhead to generate the second Person, and of the second Person to be generated in a manner fully congruent with God's perfect character. Scripture uses the word "begotten" [Note: The Statenbijbel uses the verb "genereren," which means "to generate."] as it best expresses the manner of divine operation. This eternal and incomprehensible generation should not be compared to human generation, but human generation should be viewed as a reflection of divine generation. We must therefore remove any notion of human generation from our minds as we ascend to divine generation, and understand it to refer to such a generation of the second Person by the first Person, by virtue of which the first Person is Father and the second Person is Son. This is a truth which at all times has been acknowledged, believed, and defended by the church.

We shall demonstrate and confirm this eternal generation by presenting evidence in a twofold manner. The first proof will be derived from the terminology itself; the second, from the foundational concept that undergirds this terminology.

Proof #1: The only wise God, who in His Word reveals both Himself and the way of salvation with the clearest, most emphatic, and most suitable words, not only declares that He exists in a Trinity of Persons, but also calls the first Person Father, and the second Person Son "... in the name of the Father, and of the Son" (Matthew 28:19); "the Father loveth the Son" (John 5:20); "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father" (2 John 1:3).

"Father" and "son" are words which by definition are related to each other. In hearing these words we comprehend the nature of this relationship, apart from which these words are devoid of meaning. In encountering the word "Father" we immediately think of a person who has begotten another person in his likeness, and the word "Son" immediately causes us to think of someone who has been begotten with the likeness and character of someone else. We can at once comprehend the relationship which exists between these two persons. God has particularly and actually revealed Himself as the object of our faith by means of the names Father and Son. Whereas these words immediately convey a specific relationship, being so understood by everyone, it is therefore a certainty that the Father has generated the Son and that the Son has been generated by the Father, in consequence of which there is this relationship between them. Angels, Adam, and believers are also called the sons of God, expressing at once their relationship to Him, having been begotten in the image of God -- the first two by creation and the latter by regeneration. Christ's Sonship, however, is of a different nature and thus not comparable to this other sonship. In reference to this the apostle states, "For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have

I begotten thee?" (Hebrews 1:5). Christ is the Son by generation, who, transcending all creatures, is called *kat' exochén*, the Son of God *par excellence* (Hebrews 1:1; Hebrews 1:8). He is furthermore called God's own Son which excludes the notion that His Sonship is merely figurative in nature. "He that spared not His own Son" (Romans 8:32). "Own Son" is indicative of His Sonship by generation and thus of being equal with God, a truth which even the Jews understood. "But said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18). More particularly, He is called the only-begotten Son. "The glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14); "He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). He is also called the first-begotten Son. "Who is the

image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature" (Colossians 1:15). To remove all objection, it is stated that He is the first-begotten Son who was born from eternity. "I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water" (Proverbs 8:24). Thus, we conclude that He is the Son of the Father, His Sonship being infinitely different from angels and believers. He is the proper, only-begotten, first-begotten, and eternally begotten Son of God par excellence, who in His nature stands in a relationship to the Father by virtue of eternal generation. The second Person, however, is such that there is between the first and second Persons of the Godhead a relationship which has the eternal, incomprehensible generation of the Son as its basis.

Although this proof is fully convincing, Socinians and others, guided by corrupt intellects, attempt to conjure something whereby they may cast a shadow upon this truth. We shall seek to briefly expose their delusive tactics, defending the truth against all efforts to dilute it.

Evasive Argument #1: Relative to God, the words "Father" and "son" are used figuratively. Consequently, one should neither focus on this figurative expression regarding God, nor conclude thereby the existence of a Trinity of Persons, existing in an interpersonal relationship to each other.

Answer: It is an untruth to suggest that these words "Father," "son," etc., are used in a figurative sense in reference to God. These words are most emphatically used as properly referring to God Himself. In the most proper sense of the word the first Person is unequivocally the Father of the second Person, whereas the second Person most emphatically and in a most essential sense is the Son of the first Person. The eternal generation of the Son, being the basis for this relationship, is most emphatically and with utmost propriety consistent with the character of God. This expression, generation, is derived from human circumstances, as is done consistently in the entire Word of God, conveying spiritual matters by using vocabulary relating to aspects of human existence. This is done to facilitate the comprehension of insignificant human beings, knowing that whatever is stated from a human perspective must be understood from a divine perspective. No one would be so foolish to maintain that everything recorded in the Bible ought to be understood figuratively. God is said to have bodily parts such as eyes, ears, mouth, hands, etc., as well as to be subject to human emotions and engage in human activity. We know, however, that the mention of limbs and emotions are expressive of such attributes and activities in God as are manifested and performed by them. Who would maintain that these matters concerning God are only figurative? It is true with respect to God that they do not function in a human sense, even though these matters are expressed in a human manner. Nevertheless, they are most emphatically, and with utmost propriety, ascribed to God. Such is also the case here. "Father," "son," and "generation" are words derived from human circumstances. These words, however, in a manner consistent with the incomprehensible character of God, express most emphatically and with utmost propriety both this relationship and their basis for it in God.

Evasive Argument #2: The second Person is called the Son by virtue of being coessential with the Father. Answer: (1) This is stated nowhere in the Bible, and therefore we reject this as readily as it is stated. (2) Even though a son may have the same nature as his father (for otherwise he would be no son), such similarity of natures is not the basis upon which someone is called a son, for then a father could be the son and the son could be the father. Then father and son would be brothers; people who are not even related to each other in the hundredth degree would be father and son,

since they share the same human nature. This is convincing to all, and it is therefore evident that this argument has no plausibility. A father is someone who has begotten a person after his likeness; a son is someone who has been begotten after the likeness of his father -- all of which is applicable to this mystery. Being of the same nature does not constitute a father-son relationship; rather this relationship is the result of generation and being generated.

Evasive Argument #3: The second Person is called the Son because He agreed to assume the human nature in the Counsel of Peace, and for the accomplishing of the work of redemption was manifested in the flesh as the visible image of the invisible God.

Answer: (1) By referring to a first and a second Person, one of necessity is referring to a relationship, and therefore cannot maintain the coexistence of three non-relational entities. In seeking to establish a reason for calling the second Person "son," and the first Person "Father," we confess thereby that the words "Father" and "Son" are indicative of a relationship. Thus our proof derived from the relational terminology, "Father" and "son," cannot be contradicted. We must admit that the three Persons of the Trinity exist relationally, that is, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The only controversy remaining relates to the basis and reason for this relationship in consequence of which the first Person is called Father and the second Person Son. Scripture states that this is due to generation and birth. Not wishing to admit this, however, those advancing the argument relate this to the manifestation in the flesh, the assumption of the human nature -- all of which is without foundation in the Word of God.

(2) Christ's manifestation in the flesh cannot be the basis for His Sonship, for His incarnation renders the second Person neither divine nor the only-begotten, proper, and first-begotten Son of God -- He was already Son, the eternal Son of the eternal Father. He has been eternally begotten, thus prior to His manifestation in the flesh. Of necessity He had to be the Son of God; otherwise He could neither have assumed the human nature as the Son of God nor have manifested Himself in the flesh. "I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding" (Proverbs 8:24). Since He was then already the begotten Son of God, His Sonship did not commence at the moment of His incarnation. Agur, the son of Jakeh, in amazement over the incomprehensibility of God's existence, asks among other things, "What is His Name, and what is His Son's Name, if thou canst tell?" (Proverbs 30:4). Again, since He was already the Son of God at that time, He did not become the Son by His incarnation. "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). Since the Son was sent to assume the human nature, He of necessity had to be the Son of God prior to being sent and thus not as a result of the assumption of the human nature. When it is said of Christ that "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16), this expresses beyond the shadow of a doubt that He was God prior to that moment and that He did not become God by virtue of this manifestation. Since it is also stated that the Son has been manifested in the flesh, and that the Son has been sent and was made of a woman, this undoubtedly expresses that He was the Son of God prior to His incarnation -- not as a result of His incarnation.

(3) The Holy Spirit has also manifested Himself in the world when He descended as a dove (Matthew 3:16) at the baptism of Christ, when He was poured out in an extraordinary manner on the day of Pentecost, and later by way of His extraordinary gifts. Even now He manifests Himself daily in His gracious operations. No one will maintain, however, that the Holy Spirit is the Son of God in consequence of this. Thus, Christ's manifestation in the world is not the basis for His

Sonship. If one insists that the Holy Spirit was not incarnated, I reply that manifestation must be relinquished as a basis for Sonship. The remaining implication would be that one of the three Persons, it being a matter of indifference to them as to whether They would be Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, would have become the Son of God by virtue of His assumption of the human nature. Who would not detest such a conclusion? Does the human nature determine sonship? Or could we say that Christ's human nature is the image of the invisible God? Is not He the Son of God from eternity, being in the form of God? Is not He in His divine nature the express image of His Father's Person?

Additional Argument #1: To be born or to be revealed [or manifested] are equivalent in Scripture. Since someone becomes a son by birth, also being manifested renders someone to be a son. To be born and to be manifested are equivalent concepts, as may be seen in the following: "A brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17); "Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1); "There thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee" (Song of Solomon 8:5).

Answer: (1) "To be born" and "to be revealed" are not synonymous in meaning, so that they can be used interchangeably. One cannot state that whatever is manifested is born, nor can it be said that whatever is born is manifested, as this would have the most absurd consequences. If the same meaning is to be deduced from two words, then such words must be able to be used in the identical context, as well as interchangeably. Since this is not the case with these two words, the argument cannot support the proposed conclusion.

(2) If a word is used figuratively or comparatively in a given text, this does not mean that it should be understood figuratively in all other texts. In the subject under consideration, to be born is never viewed as being synonymous with manifestation, which consequently renders this argument futile.

(3) When manifestation is expressed by way of the verb "to be born," then the person who initiates this manifestation is never referred to as father, and that which is manifested is never referred to as son. Consequently this argument, by which one seeks to prove from the verb "to manifest" that Christ is called the Son in consequence of His manifestation, is not plausible. One should therefore not simply say that "to be born" is equivalent in meaning to "manifestation," for it must then be proven that someone is called a father due to initiating a manifestation, or that someone is called a son due to having been made manifest. Only if that were possible, would one be able to maintain that Christ is the Son due to being manifested in the flesh.

(4) Let us consider Proverbs 17:17. Adversity is not the father of him who behaves himself as a brother, and a faithful friend is not the son of adversity, which would have to be true in order for this argument to have a semblance of validity. The meaning of the text is that a faithful friend loves not only in prosperity, but especially in adversity. While behaving himself as a friend in days of prosperity, he will behave himself as a brother in days of adversity. Let us next consider the meaning of Proverbs 27:1 which relates to the fact that one cannot know what one will encounter during a given day. That which one encounters is not a son of the day, and the day is not the father of that which one encounters. The word day relates to the time rather than the cause.

Finally, let us consider Song of Solomon 8:5. This text is not applicable, as the verb "to bear" means to bring forth rather than to reveal. The church as a mother, in conjunction with the

ministers, labors painstakingly in order that Christ may be formed in the hearts of the people, this being achieved by the preaching of the gospel. This is the reason why the church bears the name of mother (Galatians 4:26). Faithful ministers are called the fathers of those who have been converted as a result of their ministry (1 Corinthians 4:15). Believers are called the children of the church and of the ministers under whose ministry they were converted (cf. Zechariah 9:9; Luke 13:34. Since by virtue of spiritual nurture and birth the church is called a mother and believers are called children of the church, this text opposes those who have presented it. For it states “to bear” to be equivalent to generation and bringing forth, this being the basis for the relationship between a mother and her children, as well as between a father and his sons.

Additional Argument #2: The third Person in the Trinity does not owe His name to a personal procession from the Father and the Son, but due to His execution of the divine economy relative to the work of redemption, at which time He revealed and proved His divinity. Without assigning a name, the Holy Spirit, one would not be able to distinguish between first and second Person, as they are a Spirit and a Holy Spirit in reference to the divine Being (cf. John 4:24; Isaiah 6:3; Isaiah 6:8; John 12:39-41; Acts 28:25; Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:45; Hebrews 9:14). However, if the third Person is called Holy Spirit only because He has revealed Himself as God in the ministry of grace, then the second Person is called the Son due to His manifestation in the flesh.

Answer: (1) We deny this conclusion, there being no logical connection. Truths are stated concerning each Person which cannot be said of the others. It can never be stated concerning the Father that He was born or that He was sent. Neither can it be said of the Holy Spirit that He was born or that He sent the Son.

(2) We also deny that either the first or second Person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. Nowhere, not even in the aforementioned texts is the Father or the Son called the Holy Spirit. It is true that God is a Spirit and that each of the Persons is holy, but the combination of “Holy” and “spirit” is never used in reference to the other Persons.

(3) When God is called a Spirit and the third Person of the Trinity is called the Holy Spirit, then the word “spirit” is not used in the same sense. The word “spirit” has numerous meanings. It is also used to refer to wind, the soul of man, and angels. When God is called a Spirit, it is to be understood negatively. It refers to such a Being who, in His simplicity, non-corporeality, and invisibility, is infinitely distinguished from all creatures. This cannot be expressed to us human beings any better than by means of the word “spirit.” The third Person of the Trinity is called the Holy Spirit, however, due to His manner of procession from the Father and from the Son, which cannot be expressed any better than by means of a word which is derived from “to breathe.” [Note: à Brakel here, as well as elsewhere in this chapter, uses the word “blazen” to convey the manner of the Spirit’s operation, this being an obvious derivative from the vocabulary of the Dutch Bible. The literal translation of this word would be “to blow.” However, since the KJV generally uses the verb “to breathe” in such passages (cf. John 20:22), and since the English word “spirit” is derived from the Latin noun “spiritus,” which means “breath,” we have consistently translated “blazen” as “to breathe.”] He is therefore called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, and the breath of His mouth -- and these have no reference to the work of redemption. This is confirmed in the following texts. “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2); “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life” (Job 33:4); “By the word of the

Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalms 33:6). From these texts it is evident that the third Person is distinguished from the first and the second Person of the Trinity; that He is the Spirit; and that although the first and second Persons are holy, He is the Holy Spirit (cf. Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:7). Whenever His activity manifests itself externally, He is operative in a manner congruent with His nature, which is by way of breathing (cf. John 3:8; John 20:22). This breathing therefore relates to His manner of operation rather than His relationship to the Father and the Son, or the basis for this relationship, which is His procession from both.

Evasive Argument #4: The words "son" and "Word," as well as "son" and "King of Israel," are used interchangeably, and identify one and the same. It is known that "Word" and "King of Israel" have reference to the execution of His mediatorial office and not to Christ's manner of existence. Consequently, the word "Son" also has reference to His mediatorial office and not the manner of His existence.

Answer: We deny emphatically that the words "son" and "King of Israel," as well as "Word" and "son" are one and the same. Both have reference to the same Person, but this does not mean that they have the same meaning. Therefore, the one is not a necessary consequence of the other. Many things are attributed to Christ, in consequence of which He has numerous names, such as Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Everlasting Father, Immanuel, the Lord our Righteousness. Who would maintain that all these names are synonymous in meaning because they refer to the identical Person? Even though the title "King of Israel" relates to His mediatorial office, it cannot be concluded that the title "Son" also relates to this, much less that He is denominated the Son by virtue of His mediatorial office. It is not the Greek word *rhema* which is used to denominate Christ as the Word, but instead the word *logos*, the meaning of which relates to reason, intellect, and wisdom. This is congruent with the fact that Christ is the eternal and supreme manifestation of Wisdom, who has eternally been begotten, whom the Lord has possessed in the beginning of His way, before His works of old (Proverbs 8:22), etc. Even though Christ is called the Word relative to the revelation of the gospel, it is neither the reason that He is the Son nor why He is called the Son. Rather, it refers to His work as the Son, consistent with His manner of existence.

Evasive Argument #5: The name "Son" encompasses the entire Person of the Mediator as consisting of both the divine and human natures. Since His mediatorial office is executed in reference to both natures, His Sonship therefore does not relate to His divine nature only. Also His title "the Son of Man" refers to the Person of the Mediator in its entirety, and not to His human nature only. Thus, His being called the Son is not due to His eternal generation. Rather, He is the essential Son of God, the firstborn and the only-begotten Son of God, the Branch, the Dayspring from on high, and the image of the Invisible, by virtue of His wondrous incarnation, words, miracles, ascension, as well as in reference to the outpouring of His Holy Spirit and His all-encompassing government.

Answer: (1) This is the old teaching of the Socinians, and it is peculiar that those who do not wish to be numbered with the Socinians must resort to Socinian proofs to prove their point. To such a degree one can be led astray by his prejudices. If you do not agree with the Socinians, why resort to argumentation which cannot but generate the suspicion that you are or ultimately must be in

agreement with them?

(2) The Godhead is bound up in the entire Person. The human nature is neither the Person nor part of the Person of Christ, but has only been assumed by the Person of the Son of God. Already prior to the assumption of the human nature the second Person was the eternal Son of the eternal Father, as has previously been proven. Thus He is not the Son of God by virtue of His wondrous conception, etc. All of this proves that He was the Son of God, but it is neither the basis for, nor the reason why He is and is called the Son of God. This is expressed by the apostle, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

(3) Christ has two natures, the one being divine and the other human. The names, attributes, and manner of operation of both natures are attributed to the same Person, all of which are an essential dimension of His Personhood, some relating to His divine and some to His human nature. Thus, in Luke 1:32 Christ is called the Son of the Highest and the Son of David, the first referring to His divine and the second to His human nature. The eternal Son of the eternal Father has assumed the human nature. Since it was the Son of God who assumed the human nature, He consequently was already the Son of God prior to this event; He did not become the Son in consequence of His assumption of the human nature. It does not necessarily follow from the fact that He is the Son of man that He is therefore the Son of God. Neither is He not called the Son of man due to the fact that He is the Son of God. The use of these titles is not arbitrary. The Son of God and the Son of man are not one and the same, even though this is said of one and the same Person. As we have proven, He is the Son of God only in reference to His divine nature by virtue of His eternal generation, and He is the Son of man only by virtue of His human nature, having been born of the seed of the woman.

Evasive Argument #6: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17), to which is added in Matthew 17:5, "Hear ye Him." Reference is made here to the entire Person of the Mediator, being God and man. In Him and in His sacrifice God the Father is well-pleased; He must be heard and obeyed as Prophet and King. It is when viewed from this perspective that He is called and is the Son of God.

Answer: We readily agree with all this, but it has no reference to the point of contention. The point of contention here is whether or not the second Person of the Godhead is called the Son of God because God delights in Him as God and man -- as Mediator -- is pleased with His sacrifice, and that we should obey Him as Prophet and King. This we deny. This text furnishes no proof whatsoever, nor does it advance a basis or reason why Christ is called the Son, but it merely indicates that the Father calls Him Son, because He was the eternal Son of the eternal Father by virtue of eternal generation. The statement, "Hear ye Him," does not suggest that Christ is therefore the Son of God. This is erroneous. In addition it should be noted that neither His human nature nor His office as Mediator is the basis for obedience to Him, but His Godhead only. His divine Sonship is a consequence of His Godhead, although He is united as such with the human nature.

Evasive Argument #7: The most significant reason why Scripture frequently ascribes the name Son of God to Christ is to teach us that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20:31). To conclude that He has truly been generated

because He so often is called the Son of God is a futile exercise.

Answer: How conclusive this text is! The objective of Scripture in calling Christ the Son of God is indeed to teach that Jesus is the Christ. If it were stated that Jesus is the Son of God due to His assumption of the human nature, this argument would be credible, but it merely states that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, whose Sonship is in consequence of His eternal generation rather than His incarnation, as has been proven. It is therefore not futile, but certain and irrefutable that the titles "son," "Only-begotten Son," "Own Son," "First-begotten Son of God" lead us to conclude that He was not begotten in the corporal sense of the word, but in a unique manner, agreeable with the nature of God. He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father, which is the reason why Scripture so frequently calls Him the Son. Even if it occurred only once in the Bible, it would be sufficient for us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have eternal life through His Name. The frequent repetition of this title should convince and unnerve those who contest this truth, and discourage them from doing so.

Proof #2: Thus far we have proven from the titles "son," "My Son," "Own Son," "Begotten, Only-begotten, and First-begotten Son," that the second Person of the Trinity has eternally existed in a Father-Son relationship to the first Person and that He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father. We will now proceed with the second proof, which relates to the basis or reason for this relationship: how and why the second Person is the eternal Son, which according to Scripture is by virtue of eternal generation. We shall verify this from various passages of Holy Writ, examining them individually as well as effectively eliminating all arguments against it.

First, we shall consider Psalms 2:7, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee." The first Person here addresses the second Person, calling Him His Son, which necessarily implies that the first Person is the Father of the second Person. The foundational phrase for maintaining that the first Person is the Father and the second Person the Son is expressed in these words, "This day have I begotten Thee." It must then be evident that the second Person is not called the Son simply because He is of the same essence, without any interpersonal relationship. We already have responded to this above in our rebuttal of argument #2. It is also equally and unquestionably certain from this that the second Person's being the Son and the first Person's being the Father are due to the second Person's assumption of the human nature, as the first Person did not generate the second Person in this. He was the second Person prior to His incarnation and thus the second Person was the Son from eternity. (This was dealt with above in our rebuttal to argument #3). In addition, Christ's human nature was created at the moment of His incarnation, which, however, is not true for His divine nature. The human nature would then be the Son of God rather than the divine nature; generation would not refer to the generation of a person according to the express image of His Father. It would refer to the generation or propagation of a nature which would infinitely differ from the nature of the Father. Such an argument is absurdity itself. This text makes it exceptionally clear that these two propositions -- the second Person is the Son because He is of the same essence as the first Person, or He is the Son due to His assumption of the human nature -- cannot be harmonized as they are contradictory to each other. Two untruths cannot produce one truth. This text, in expressing itself concerning the first and second Person, states that there exists a relationship of Father and Son between them, of which generation is the foundational concept. This generation establishes the Father as the first Person and the Son as the second Person, while it also establishes the second Person to be the Son and the first Person

to be the Father.

Secondly, there is frequent reference to the words of Paul, "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). From the argument of silence they wish to maintain that the reference is to the Son of God. They lack the courage to explain these words and apply them to the heart, the result of which would be most unclear. For the words, "God was manifest in the flesh," are not equivalent in meaning to "son of God." Rather, it conveys that He who is God from eternity assumed the human nature in hypostatic union with His Person, without there being the least reference to the relationship between the Father and the Son, nor the basis for this relationship, which the text clearly states to be generation. Why is no use made of the words of Paul, "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman?" (Galatians 4:4). Here expression is given to this relationship and to the divine and human natures of Christ, as well as to His incarnation. They will have to acknowledge that this text moves beyond the point which they wish to discuss, as it indicates that Christ already was the Son prior to His being sent and before He was made of a woman, and that He did not become the Son as a result of His assumption of the human nature.

Thus the second Person is the Son in consequence of being generated by the first Person. Here we must ascend from the human to the divine. We must reflect upon it in a manner which is becoming of God, even though it is an incomprehensible mystery to us. We must believe that the first Person has brought forth the second Person in a manner which can best be described by the word "generation." Any thought of human generation must be far removed from our minds. A chronological distinction between first and last is nonexistent here; neither is there any transition from nonexistence to existence; nor is this relationship one of dependency. This relationship is eternal in nature, characterized by coequality of being as well as essential existence, for the existence of the Son of the Father is a constituent element of God's character, as it belongs to the perfection of both the divine Being and the divine Persons.

Evasive Argument: This generation mentioned in Psalms 2:7 should not be understood to be eternal in nature, but rather to refer to His incarnation. This generation was to occur at a specified time: "this day." These are words which never denote eternity.

Answer: (1) The incarnation is never denominated as generation, and generation cannot signify incarnation, for then the Fatherhood of the first Person would relate to the human nature of Christ, of which He would consequently be called the Father. Then the human nature would be the son of the first Person, and thus be the image of God, the express image of the Father's Person. Such a conclusion is absurd and should be rejected with utter contempt.

(2) The generation referred to here is from eternity whereby the first Person is the Father of the second, and the second the Son of the first. The second Person is the Son from eternity, having been brought forth before the creation of the world (Proverbs 8:24), prior to which there was nothing but eternity. His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). If the second Person who is here denominated as Son is the Son from eternity, His generation is consequently also from eternity. Furthermore, since His generation is eternal, the words "this day" of necessity refer to eternity.

(3) It may be objected that this word never refers to eternity, to which I reply that generation never has reference to the assumption of the human nature, even though some would like to understand

it in this fashion. Let it be shown that the words "this day" cannot have reference to eternity, just as I have shown that generation cannot refer to the assumption of the human nature. Allow the fact that on no other occasion the words "this day" were to denote eternity, yet if they denote eternity in this text, then it suffices for our argument. I admit that when the words "this day" are used in reference to people, they are used to describe a specified period of time. Man is a creature who functions within the parameters of time. However, when the words "this day" are used, relative to God (who is without chronological dimensions) -- as is the case here, "This day have I begotten Thee" -- then it must be interpreted in a manner congruent with the nature of God for whom everything is simultaneously in the present and for whom a thousand years are but as yesterday (Psalms 90:4). God continually exists in the present. This Son, having been generated eternally, is ordained and sent forth to be the King of Zion. To Him the heathen have been given as a heritage. This Son would rule the people of God and punish His enemies. This Son we must honor, fear, and kiss with humility and love. All of this has been entrusted to Him as a consequence of His Sonship. He did not become the Son because He had all the aforementioned entrusted to Him.

Secondly, we shall consider Proverbs 8:22-25, "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth."

Since it is an incontrovertible fact that the title "Lord" refers to the first Person, and that the pronouns "I" and "My" refer to the second Person who is called Wisdom in this chapter, there is no need to prove this. The second Person states concerning the first Person that He possessed Him, and He [the second Person] states concerning Himself that He was set up and brought forth. It is therefore incontrovertible that there is an interpersonal relationship between them. The basis for this relationship, being brought forth, is essential to both the Father and the Son. "The

Lord possessed Me;" "I was brought forth." The Hebrew word *kanani*, does not refer to ordination here or elsewhere, but always refers to possession, ownership, attainment, purchase, or acquisition. Thus, from this the word "possess" is derived. The first Person is here said to possess the second Person, to be His Proprietor. This proprietorship was eternal: in the beginning of the way, before His works of old. The question is in what manner the first Person is the Proprietor of the second Person. The text itself answers the question by stating, "I was brought forth." This proprietorship was in consequence of being brought forth, for which reason the second Person is called God's own Son, the first-begotten Son, and the only-begotten Son, as the word *kana* means a receiving "by birth." When Eve brought forth Cain, she declared, "I have gotten a man from the Lord" (Genesis 4:1). The first Person is Proprietor of the second Person in consequence of being brought forth. The second Person states, "I was brought forth," however, not in this time state, for the text states expressly, "before His works of old; when there were no depths." The latter is convincing and incontrovertible. One cannot claim that being brought forth is the equivalent of being manifested in the flesh, for His being brought forth was from eternity, whereas this manifestation in the flesh did not occur until approximately four thousand years after creation. Neither can it be asserted that to possess and to be brought forth signify being ordained. This is not the meaning of these words -- neither as far as root meaning is concerned nor by way of usage. Furthermore, ordination does not imply ownership, but it presupposes ownership. In order to ordain someone, one must have legal authority over this person. The second Person, being

eternally possessed by the Father in consequence of being brought forth, is said to be “set up from everlasting”; that is, to be ordained in His mediatorial office in the Counsel of Peace, in which every Person consistent with His nature, manner of existence, and manner of operation is involved in the ordination of the Son and the work of redemption by Him. Each Person neither exists in an interpersonal relationship nor receives the relational name of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit in consequence of their relation to the work of redemption. Rather, it is the interpersonal relationship in which these Persons exist with one another in the Godhead, the basis for this relationship being either generation or procession. Since this is the very character of God Himself, each Person has involvement in the work of redemption. The scriptural discussion of various subjects is often intertwined with references to the work of redemption. Therefore, it must be recognized that everything in a given chapter is not to be related to the work of redemption. Rather, if such matters are discussed outside of that context, they are also to be interpreted as being outside of that context. Such is also the case here. The focus of this discussion is the interpersonal relationship between the first and second Persons, generation being the basis for it. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit conveys how, on the basis of this relationship, these Persons of the Trinity interact with one another in this relationship and in the work of redemption. This interaction consists of the first Person -- who possesses the second Person by bringing Him forth -- setting up (cf. Proverbs 8:23) the second Person; that is, ordaining Him to be Surety and Mediator.

Thirdly, we shall consider Micah 5:2 : “Out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Matthew 2:6 establishes beyond doubt that the reference is here to the Lord Jesus. This text speaks of two different “goings or comings forth.” The one would have its origin in Bethlehem by virtue of His birth from Mary according to His human nature, whereas the other would be “from of old, from everlasting,” that is, according to His divine nature. Both are defined by the same word in Hebrew, **■yatsa’**. This word means “to come forth by birth.” “All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which yots’ é came out of his loins” (Genesis 46:26; cf. Genesis 15:4; Genesis 17:6; Genesis 35:11, and numerous other texts). In a special sense this word is used in reference to the Messiah (cf. 2 Samuel 7:12; Isaiah 11:1; and others). As the Messiah came forth according to His human nature in this time state by birth from Mary in Bethlehem, so was His going forth by birth from everlasting. This identical word occurring in the identical simile has the same meaning. There is, however, one exception. The eternal going forth is expressed in the plural, which according to Hebraic style conveys a going forth par excellence, superseding all other goings forth -- as is true of the eternal, incomparable, and incomprehensible generation of the Son. In considering this text one cannot resort to coexistence, incarnation, or ordination, for the reference is to a going forth, a coming forth by birth, an eternal going forth, and an actual going forth. Thus the truth that the Son has eternally been generated by the Father remains incontrovertible.

Fourthly, we shall consider John 5:26, “For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” Both the first and the second Person of the divine Being are spoken of here. The one is called the Father and the other the Son; and it is in this regard that a relationship exists between them. It is stated that the Father has life in Himself, life being His all-sufficient activity and His singular energizing power. This life the Father has in Himself, He being the Fountain of that life and thus having received it from no one. As He is self-existent, likewise does His life originate from Himself. He is the living God, as He is frequently denominated

in Scripture. It is also written that the Son has life in Himself. This life is neither a similar life nor another life, but the same life, manifesting the same all-sufficient activity and the same singular, energizing power. As the Father has this life in Himself, the Son likewise has this life in Himself. Thus, the Father and Son are equal; identical life is in each of them and in this respect they are the same. The difference, however, consists in the manner in which they possess this life; the Father having life in Himself, has given to the Son likewise to have life in Himself. This He has done in a manner which is consistent with God's eternal nature, which excludes both the concepts of time and a transformation from nothing to something. From this it is evident that the Son's existence originates in the Father, this being the basis for both Fatherhood and Sonship.

Evasive Argument: As far as God is concerned, the reference to life here is not subjective in nature, but causal; that is, it refers to God as the origin of the spiritual life of the elect. The Lord can save whom He wills and He has also empowered the Son as Mediator, being God and man, to save and to impart spiritual life to whomever He wills. That it must thus be understood is evident from the circumstances of the text.

Answer: (1) It is first of all a certainty that the life which the Son has in Himself is not different from the life which the Father has in Himself. In this respect they are equal, being in possession of the same life which both have in themselves.

(2) It is a certain truth that the Son, being Mediator and having assumed the human nature, has life in Himself. We deny emphatically, however, that the Father has given Christ to have life in Himself in consequence of either the mediatorship itself or the manner in which He executes this mediatorship.

(3) If the first and second Person of the Godhead are coexistent in their divinity, without being dependent upon each other, then we must conclude that the one Person has life in Himself as much as the other Person, and thus when the second Person assumed the human nature, He already possessed life in Himself. Consequently, as Mediator He could not have received life in Himself from someone else for He already possessed it. The second Person already had life in Himself and this qualified Him to be the Mediator. The Father in having life in Himself does not have this as Mediator, in order to communicate life to the elect in the way of suffering and death. This must therefore be true for the Son as well, as both have the same life and have it in themselves. Both the Father and the Son have life in an identical fashion and whatever is not true for the Father is also not true of the Son.

(4) In order to be the cause of life in someone else, a person must first possess this life subjectively in himself. The results [that is, the manifestation of life] identify the energizing cause. Since the Father as well as the Son is the Author of life, it logically follows that they have life in themselves, which is the thrust of Christ's argument in this chapter. Christ demonstrates that the Father has life in Himself by virtue of the fact that He gives corporal and spiritual life to others. Since Christ also imparts both corporal and spiritual life to others, He demonstrates thereby that He also has life in Himself. He adds to this that as God He has life within Himself by virtue of the Father giving it to Him. He adds to this that the Father -- by virtue of the fact that the Son has life in Himself, thus qualifying Him to be Mediator -- had sent Him to execute the office of Mediator, enabling the Father, Christ Himself, and the Holy Spirit to impart life to dead and death-worthy sinners.

Fifthly, we shall consider Hebrews 1:3 : “Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.” It is the apostle’s objective in this chapter to prove both the divinity of Christ and the fact that He is the Son of God in an incomprehensibly more glorious manner than the most glorious creatures, the angels. “Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son” (Hebrews 1:5)? God did call them the sons of God, as He also did the regenerate. None of these were sons by generation, however; only Christ is Son by generation. “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee” (Hebrews 1:5). This is also conveyed by these two expressions, “the brightness of His glory,” and “the express image of His person.” This can be said of none other than He who is the natural Son of God. It cannot refer to the human nature of Christ, for, as we have previously shown, this nature and the first Person of the Godhead have nothing in common. There are also those who do not wish to associate this sonship with His divine nature and consider Him to be a separate, self-existent, non-relational, and non-generated Person. Then it would follow that the second Person in union with the human nature could also not be the Son, for whatever is absent in each nature individually cannot be present by virtue of their union. From this it would have to be concluded that the second Person, in manifesting Himself in the flesh, would reveal Himself in this world as the brightness of His own glory and the express image of His own Person. The Son, however, is the manifestation of His Father’s glory and Person, which consequently must be true relative to His divine nature. The Son is here described as existing in a relationship with the Father, which first of all is expressed by the phrase, “the brightness of His Father’s glory.” Brightness is a reflection generated by light. The Father is a light which no man can approach unto, and thus the Son, as far as His Personhood is concerned, eternally proceeds from that light. The Council of Nicea, held in AD 325, has expressed it very well when it calls Him “Light of Light.” The text further refers to this interpersonal relationship as “the express image of His Father’s Person.” In Greek the word hypostasis is used, which literally refers to an independent entity, but when used to refer to an intelligent being, expresses personhood. Thus, it is not the divine essence which is under discussion here, but rather the first Person of the Godhead, as the Son is here said to be the express image of His Father’s Person. Men generate sons after their image, and thus a son is the express image of his father. Fully removing the human element, it may therefore be stated that the second Person has been generated by the first Person. Both the relationship as well as the relational titles “Father” and “Son,” have their origin in this generation, in consequence of which the Son is called the express image of His Father. To be the express image of the Father necessarily implies natural Sonship by way of eternal generation. It is for this reason that the Lord Jesus is called “the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4), and “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15).

Thus we have described this great mystery which God has revealed in His Word, a truth which always has been and will be known, acknowledged, believed, confessed, and staunchly defended by the church, in spite of all who regret to see this truth upheld. The Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity

Thus far we have discussed the divinity and the interpersonal relationship of the Father and the Son. Now we shall proceed to consider the third Person, who in Scripture bears the title Holy Spirit. Of this Person we shall consider the following: 1) His Name; 2) His Personhood; 3) the veracity of His divinity and His divine Personhood; 4) the interpersonal relationship between His Person and the other divine Persons, as well as the basis for this relationship: the procession from

the Father and the Son.

Scripture calls the third person Holy Spirit by means of the Hebrew word *ruach*, and the Greek word *pneuma*. This word is used in a variety of contexts, such as in reference to wind (John 3:8), angels (Hebrews 1:14), the human soul (Ecclesiastes 12:7), and the motions of the soul (Galatians 6:1). To give expression to the spiritual dimension of God's character there is no more suitable word for us than the word "spirit." Sometimes this word is used in its essential sense, that is, in reference to the divine Being as it subsists in three Persons. "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24). Sometimes it is used in a personal sense, as in reference to the Son, "the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45), but most often the third Person is called by this name (cf. Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:7). Occasionally the word "spirit" refers to the operation of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word ... that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 10:44-45). When discussing the third Person of the divine Being, we do not merely refer to Him as "spirit," but as the Holy Spirit, which is in accordance with Scripture. The third Person is called the Spirit, (1) because it is His personal property as the third Person to proceed from the Father and the Son, which cannot be expressed any more clearly than by the use of the word "spirit" which means "to breathe." Therefore He is called "the breath of the Almighty" (Job 33:4), and "the breath of His mouth" (Psalms 33:6);

(2) due to His manner of operation which, as indicated above, is compared to breathing. When the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the entire house was filled with the sound "as of a rushing mighty wind" (Acts 2:2; Acts 2:4). When the Lord Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples, He breathed on them (John 20:22);

(3) in view of the consequences of His operation, which produce in His people a ready and diligent disposition towards the service of God. "Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire" (Psalms 104:4); "The wind bloweth where it listeth ... so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

He is called the Holy Spirit, not because He is holier than the Father and the Son -- Isaiah uses the word "holy" three times in reference to the three Persons of the divine Being (Isaiah 6:3) -- but,

(1) due to His manner of operation by virtue of His procession from the Father and the Son, from which His name is derived. Therefore He is called the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. When considering the three Persons of the Godhead comparatively, then the first Person by virtue of His personal property, is called Father; the second Person, also due to His personal property, Son; and likewise the third Person, Holy Spirit. Since their manner of operation is a necessary consequence of their manner of existence, they are also referred to by these names in their execution of the work of redemption;

(2) due to the manner of His operation in the elect. "... being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:16); "... through sanctification of the Spirit" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). The Holy Spirit is not merely a good influence in man nor a gracious gift of God, but He is a Person. Properties and operations are attributed to the Holy Spirit which can only be attributed to a Person.

First, intelligence is attributed to Him. "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in Him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). Here Scripture

compares the spirit of man to the Spirit of God, knowledge being attributed to both. The one knows the things which are of man, whereas the other knows the things which are of God. Men who have become partakers of the Spirit of God are distinguished from the Spirit which is in them. "searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify," etc. (1 Peter 1:11). 1 Corinthians 2:11 does not suggest that the spiritual man searches and knows the things of God, but rather the Spirit of God in contrast to the spirit of man.

Secondly, a will is attributed to Him. "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Corinthians 12:11). Apart from the fact that the Holy Spirit is distinguished from His gifts, He is said to be sovereign in the dispersion of these gifts. As such He is not accountable to anyone, but acts according to His sovereign good pleasure.

Thirdly, works are attributed to Him, such as the creation of the world (Psalms 33:6; Genesis 1:2), regeneration and the impartation of life (John 3:6; Galatians 5:25), and the commissioning of His servants (Acts 13:2). When activities are attributed to particular persons, and these are acknowledged by all to be well-done, it is immediately evident that the reference is not to the cause of such activity, but rather to the means by which such a person works. When mention is made of the Holy Spirit's works, however, the primary reference is to Him as being the cause of this activity, who, while thus engaged, avails Himself of means.

Fourthly, He is said to appear by means of a visible sign, denoting both His presence and manner of operation, as at the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:16) and on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). A person's existence manifests itself by way of incidents; however, incidents do not manifest themselves as persons.

Fifthly, the Holy Spirit is expressly distinguished from His gifts, as being the cause of that which transpires. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom," etc. (1 Corinthians 12:4; 1 Corinthians 12:8). Even though the Spirit is referred to as the power of God in Luke 24:49, Acts 10:38, and Luke 1:35, it is nevertheless clearly indicated that He is a Person rather than the contrary. Christ is also called the power of God in 1 Corinthians 1:24. Whoever has power and exercises this power is of necessity a person. When it is said that the Father and the Son work through the Holy Spirit, it indicates that the said Person works through the Person which proceeds from Him.

Objection: The Holy Spirit is referred to as a gift. Answer: This does not deny His Personhood, for Christ is also referred to as a gift (cf. Isaiah 9:6; John 3:16; John 4:10). Even when the Holy Spirit is referred to as a gift, He is described as a Person, the event being distinguished from the cause of the event. "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5). The Divinity of the Holy Spirit The Holy Spirit is not merely a Person, but He is a divine Person. He is the true, eternal God who has created the heavens and the earth. This becomes evident from the fact that divine names, attributes, works, and honor are attributed to Him.

First, we shall consider His Names. He who is called Jehovah is the true, eternal God, for no one else may bear this Name, nor is anyone else called by this Name (cf. chapter 3). In Isaiah 6:3; Isaiah 6:9 the Holy Spirit is referred to as Jehovah. He who in Isaiah 6:3 is called Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of Hosts, says in Isaiah 6:9, "Go, and tell this people," etc. This Jehovah was

the Holy Spirit according to the testimony of Paul. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say," etc. (Acts 28:25-26). In Psalms 95:3-9, He who is referred to as "a great God," "a great King above all gods," who is JEHOVAH in whose hands are the deep places of the earth, who must be worshipped, before whom we must bow -- of Him it is said, "Today if ye will hear His voice," etc. (verses 7-8), "your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work" (verse 9). This Person is the Holy Spirit, which is confirmed in the following passage, "But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit" (Isaiah 63:10). This is also confirmed by the apostle, "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear His voice" (Hebrews 3:7).

Add to this, "... to lie to the Holy Ghost, ... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:3-4). To lie to the Holy Ghost is to lie to God. In order to remove all excuses, the Holy Spirit is called God in contrast to creatures or men. Ananias and Sapphira did not lie to men, nor to Peter and all those who were present -- even though they were partakers of the gift of the Holy Spirit and were graced with special qualities -- but they lied to God, thus tempting the Spirit of the Lord (verse 9). This truth is also confirmed in the following texts, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). "Temple" and "God" are closely related to each other. A temple is designated for the service of God, and God dwelt in the temple in Jerusalem. Since God is the One who dwells in the temple and since the Holy Spirit dwells in us as in a temple, believers being temples of the Holy Ghost, it follows that the Holy Spirit is God (cf. Numbers 6:24-26 as compared to 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Secondly, we will consider His attributes. He who is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, is the true and eternal God. Such is true of the Holy Spirit.

(1) He is eternal, for He is the Creator of heaven and of earth, which we will prove shortly. The Creator is none other than the eternal God. Prior to creation there was only eternity in which God dwelt (Isaiah 57:15). At the very outset of creation the Holy Spirit was already present, and moved upon the face of waters (Genesis 1:2).

(2) He is omniscient. "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there" (Psalms 139:7-8). The psalmist confronts himself with the omnipresence of God, declaring that no one can hide himself from God as in His Being He is everywhere, whether it be in heaven, upon earth, or in hell. Since, according to the psalmist, the Holy Spirit in His being is omnipresent, He of necessity is truly God.

(3) He is omniscient. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). The Spirit Himself, in contrast with the spirit of man, searches and knows all things in an all-inclusive manner (1 Corinthians 2:11), doing so in relation to the deep things of God -- the most hidden things concerning God, His Being, His manner of existence, His perfections, and His secret counsel.

(4) He is omnipotent. He is the Spirit of might (Isaiah 11:2), and the power of the highest (Luke 1:35). This omnipotence becomes evident in His works, which we shall presently demonstrate.

Thirdly, we shall consider His works. He who has created the world, regenerates the elect, imparts spiritual life, is the dispenser of all spiritual gifts, teaches the elect to pray and leads them, and raises the dead -- He is the true and eternal God. Since the Holy Spirit does all this He is of necessity truly God.

(1) He creates. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2); "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13); "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalms 33:6).

(2) He regenerates and imparts life. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:5); "The Spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

(3) He dispenses spiritual gifts. "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:11).

(4) He teaches how to pray. "The Spirit of grace and of supplications" (Zechariah 12:10); "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

(5) He leads believers to glory in the way of sanctification. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

(6) He raises the dead. "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

Fourthly, we shall consider His honor. He is the true God, in whose name we must be baptized, from whom we must ask all things, and whom we must obey. Since we must be baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, and must request all gifts from Him, the Holy Spirit must of necessity be truly God.

(1) The requirement of baptism in His name is expressed in Matthew 28:19, "... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Baptism is a seal of the covenant of grace, the latter being established only between the true God and believers. In baptism we surrender ourselves to God as the all-sufficient One who possesses all that is needful unto man's salvation; we surrender ourselves to the Most High in order to honor, fear, trust, and obey Him. In baptism we entrust our soul to God, desiring that He who is true to Himself would make us partakers of all the benefits of the covenant. In baptism we surrender ourselves to God, desiring to love and serve Him. Since all of this is comprehended in baptism, it necessarily follows that He in whose name we are baptized is truly God. This explains why the apostle so adamantly rejected the idea of anyone being baptized in his name (1 Corinthians 1:14-15). Whereas the three Persons of the divine Being are actively engaged in the covenant -- the Holy Spirit leading a believer to the Son, and by the Son to the Father, and the Father, through the Son and by the agency of the Holy Spirit works in believers -- it therefore follows that these three Persons are expressly mentioned at baptism. In it the Holy Spirit receives the same honor as the Father and the Son, and thus He is the very same God, coequal with the Father and the Son.

(2) It is evident from 2 Corinthians 13:14 that we should petition the Holy Spirit for all gifts. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." Here the Holy Spirit is afforded the same honor as the Son and the Father, as the same act of worship is expressed in identical fashion to the three Persons of the Godhead. Consider

also the worship expressed towards the Holy Spirit in the following passage: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne" (Revelation 1:4). Again the eternal God and the Holy Spirit are worshipped in identical fashion. If one wishes to view the latter part of this text as being explanatory of the first part -- which frequently occurs -- the text would read as follows: from Him which is, etc., which are the seven Spirits. This would then identify the Spirit as the One who applies all that is of Christ to believers. In this capacity the Holy Spirit would also be worshipped as the eternal God, for He is the selfsame eternal God. One should not understand the seven Spirits to be angels, as they ought not to be worshipped (Matthew 4:10), but rather the third Person of the divine Being who is referred to in this manner in view of His operation, imparting to the congregation numerous sufficient and perfect gifts.

(3) The obligation to serve and obey the Holy Spirit becomes evident from the fact that it is possible to sin against the Holy Ghost. We are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). The ungodly Israelites rebelled and vexed the Holy Spirit, and thus grieved Him (Isaiah 63:10). Yes, the sin against the Holy Ghost -- because He is the One who directly deals with and manifests Himself to the soul -- is declared to be the greatest as well as an unforgivable sin (cf. Matthew 12:31-32; 1 John 5:16).

All these considerations, viewed individually as well as collectively, ought to convince the conscience that the Holy Spirit is truly God, being of the same essence as the Father and the Son. The Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son

Thus far we have proved that the Holy Spirit is a Person, and more particularly, that He is a divine Person, and of the same essence as the Father and the Son. We will now consider the interpersonal relationship which exists between the third Person and the other Persons of the Godhead. As the Son is a different Person from the Father, likewise the Spirit is a different Person from the Father and the Son.

(1) He is expressly called "another Comforter" (John 14:16).

(2) He is also described in such a way that He can be neither the Father nor the Son, but must necessarily be another (John 15:26). He who has been sent by the Father and by the Son, proceeds from the Father and testifies of the Son; He is another Person from the one who sends Him, from whom He proceeds and of whom He testifies.

(3) He is therefore referred to as a distinct Person in those texts in which mention is also made of the Father and the Son. (cf. Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 5:7).

(4) It is also stated that the Holy Spirit works as well as the Father and the Son, and that in regard to both. "He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for he shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-14). The Holy Spirit is not a coexistent Being, which implies that He exists simultaneously, is of the same essence, and is not in an interpersonal relationship with the Father. Rather, He is a divine Person, the nature of whose Personhood is to exist in an interpersonal relationship to the Father and the Son. The eternal procession from the Father and the Son is the basis for this relationship. The Son proceeds from the Father by way of eternal generation, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son

in a manner which can best be described by “to breathe.”

(1) The word “spirit” as it occurs in Hebrew and Greek conveys this idea.

(2) For this reason He is called the “breath of the Almighty” (Job 33:4), and “the breath of His mouth” (Psalms 33:6).

(3) This manner of operation is congruent with His manner of existence. The third Person works by way of breathing, and it is also the manner of His existence. “The wind bloweth where it listeth ... so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). For this reason Jesus also availed Himself of such symbolism when He promised the Spirit to His disciples. “He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). In like manner also the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, an event which was accompanied with the sound of a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:2). The third Person proceeds from both the first and second Persons. This truth resulted in an intense and lengthy controversy between the Greek and Latin churches. The Greek church held the viewpoint that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father. The Latin church opposed this position, defending the truth which had always been believed and confessed: the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Father and the Son. In the Lord’s goodness we may still believe and confess this truth which will always be believed and confessed by the church. Scripture confirms this.

First, it is confirmed by those texts in which the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of the Son and the Spirit of Christ. “God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6); “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9); “searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify” (1 Peter 1:11).

Secondly, it is confirmed by those texts in which the Son is said to send the Holy Spirit. “...I will send unto you from the Father” (John 15:26); “But if I depart, I will send Him unto you” (John 16:7). What is true for His manner of operation is also true for His manner of existence. The manner of His operation is a necessary consequence of His manner of existence.

Thirdly, it is confirmed in such texts in which it is stated that the Holy Spirit imparts to the elect that which He receives from the Son. “But whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak ... He shall take of Mine, and shew it unto you” (John 16:13-15). The operations of both the Father and the Son relative to the procession of the Holy Spirit should not be viewed as proceeding from two distinctly different origins, for it is one and the same operation and power. Both the Father and the Son ought rather to be viewed as the primary cause of all that transpires, rather than viewing the Son as a primary cause of lesser importance, implying that the Father would cause the Holy Spirit to proceed by means of the Son. If, however, we consider manner and order of both existence and operation, then the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son, as well as from the Father through the Son.

Objections to the Doctrine of the Trinity Refuted From all the aforementioned it has been proven incontrovertibly to all who believe the Scriptures that the one divine Being subsists in three Persons, and also how they exist in an interpersonal relationship to each other.

All the objections which the corrupt intellect of man may present relative to this doctrine, such as is done by Socinians and all who sympathize with them, are merely the result of reasoning from a human and temporal perspective. Such reasoning cannot be associated with the eternal God and

is thus easily refuted.

First, when God is said to be one in essence, and yet to subsist in three Persons, this is not a contradictory statement. Both elements of this statement are not equivalent in meaning, for God is one in essence subsisting in three Persons; not three in essence and not one Person.

Secondly, there are three Persons which are eternal, infinite, and omnipotent, and not three eternals, infinities, and omnipotents. Rather, there is but one eternal, infinite, and omnipotent Being.

Thirdly, when it is stated "... that they might know Thee the only true God" (John 17:3), this does not suggest that only the Father is truly God to the exclusion of the Son and the Holy Spirit, but rather that the Father is the only true God. The word "only" does not modify Father, but it modifies the word God. Both the Son and the Holy Spirit are the identical and only true God, a truth which has been proven above.

Fourthly, the words "generate" and "proceed" neither suggest superiority or inferiority nor the transformation from nothing to something, for all this is an eternal reality. It is consistent with God's eternal nature that the divine Being exists in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father generates, the Son is generated, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both.

Fifthly, it does not suggest imperfection if that which is the unique property of one Person cannot be attributed to another Person. Rather, it is a perfection of each Person and of the Godhead to subsist in these Persons, each Person having its personal properties.

Sixthly, when Christ acknowledges His Father to be greater than He (John 14:28), the reference is not to His divinity, for as such He is equal to the Father (Php 2:6) and one with the Father (1 John 5:7). This has reference to His office as Mediator, in respect to which the Father calls Him His Servant (Isaiah 53:11).

Seventhly, when the Holy Spirit is said to be a gift, to be sent, to be poured out, and when believers are said to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, reference is being made to both His extraordinary and ordinary operations. The Son is also called a gift (cf. Isaiah 9:5; John 3:16; John 4:10), and is also said to be sent (John 5:36). Furthermore, in the human realm men of equal status are commissioned or sent forth, which is true for instance when an official body delegates someone from its membership. Individual persons can also be viewed as gifts, as when a father gives his daughter to a man in marriage or when masters give their slaves to others.

Eighthly, when the Spirit is said to be not yet given (John 7:39), the reference is not to the Person of the Holy Spirit. He already existed as can be observed in the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:16). This rather refers to the abundant gifts of the Spirit which believers would receive according to promise.

Ninthly, dependency is a reality among men, but not in God. The Son has life in Himself as the Father has life in Himself (John 5:26). The attribute of eternity excludes all possibility of dependency. In the execution of the covenant of grace each Person operates according to the manner of His existence. Thus, the Father's operation proceeds from Himself, the Son's from the Father, and the Holy Spirit's from the Father and the Son -- all of which occur without dependency as this would suggest imperfection. This is the meaning of John 5:19 where it is stated that the

Son can do nothing of Himself. Since as Son His existence originates in the Father and not in Himself, He cannot be operative as Father, but operates as the Son of the Father. Further, it is to be understood that as Mediator He receives everything from the Father and in that capacity does nothing by Himself.

If someone were to say, "This is far beyond me; I cannot comprehend it," I would respond that God is incomprehensible. There are things of much less importance which you cannot comprehend. What causes low and high tides? How does your soul affect your body? How are members of your body set in motion by the exercise of your will, etc. Would you, insignificant "ant," comprehend the incomprehensible God? Believe what you cannot comprehend simply because God declares it to be so, and worship the incomprehensible. If you were a believer, you would already have more insight into these mysteries than you can presently imagine or would then be able to express. The Profitableness of Reflecting upon the Mystery of the Trinity

Thus far we have expressed the truth concerning these great mysteries, namely, that the one divine Being subsists in three Persons, and that each Person is the eternal, true, and only God. We have also shown that these Persons are distinguished from each other, (1) in their names: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;

(2) in their personal properties: the Father as generating, the Son as being generated, and the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father and the Son;

(3) in their order of existence: the Father as the first Person exists of Himself, the Son as the second Person exists of the Father, and the Holy Spirit as the third Person exists of the Father and the Son;

(4) in their manner of operation: the Father operates from within Himself, the Son out of the Father, and the Holy Spirit out of the Father and the Son. All of this is with the understanding that all the works of God in their external manifestation are common to all three Persons. Beyond all this we did not wish to penetrate any further into this mystery.

We now wish to proceed to the practical application, which is both wonderful and profitable -- yes, the entire spiritual life of a Christian consists in being exercised concerning this mystery, and is thus distinguished from the practice of civil virtue and natural religion. A godly person will never deny this mystery, even though all believers do not perceive this mystery with equal clarity. They may neither be equally capable of reflecting upon their knowledge concerning this doctrine nor be able to express in words what they understand about it. The believer believes it and is much more knowledgeable in this mystery than the most learned but unregenerate divine, although the latter may be able to express himself more eloquently about it. The believer in all his religious exercises operates from this principle. Guided by the Holy Spirit he goes to the Son, and through the Son to the Father. The oneness of the divine Being will thus shine round about him as he is exercised concerning the Trinity.

Even though Arminians make no effort to deny the Trinity, they nevertheless seek to curtail the significance of this doctrine by suggesting that it is not profitable for edification. The Word of God, however, bears witness to the contrary.

First, this becomes evident in texts which show that the knowledge and acknowledgement of God as being Triune in Persons is prerequisite unto salvation. "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee (the Father, verse 1) the only true God, and Jesus Christ (the Son, verse 1), whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3); "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" (John 14:1; John 14:9-10). "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2:23); "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20:31).

Secondly, this is also evident from our baptism which is performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19). To these three Persons we are surrendered in holy baptism, and in their name the covenant of grace is confirmed to us. Baptism obligates everyone to trust in their Names, to acknowledge them, to love and to serve them, and to allow ourselves to be governed, comforted, and wrought upon by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism also obligates us to worship these three Persons and to seek to be blessed by each of them. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Thirdly, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit reveal themselves, interact with, and exercise believers in an individual and distinct manner. "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). The Holy Spirit dwells in the godly as in a temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). From all this it should be evident that God cannot be served except as being Triune in Persons, and that those who honor and serve Him as such are the truly godly in this life and will experience salvation hereafter. Thus, this truth is most profitable and essential. As we seek to demonstrate how one may profit from this mystery, we shall follow the order of the divine Persons. First, God the Father is viewed by believers as the origin of all things, and thus also of their salvation. They may perceive that He has chosen them from eternity to become the objects of His eternal love, to exalt them, and to make them partakers of an eternal and incomprehensible salvation; and that all is of Him, through Him, and unto Him. Secondly, they perceive how the Father has appointed His only-begotten and beloved Son to be Surety for the elect in order to make known to men and angels His perfect righteousness, incomprehensible mercy, wisdom, freeness in the dispensing of grace, and wondrous benevolence -- the purpose of this revelation being to enhance their experience of salvation. Thirdly, they perceive that the Father in order to accomplish that purpose has created the world, and has decreed that man, due to his own fault, would fall into sin. By His providence He maintains and governs everything for the benefit and profit of His elect, whom He has appointed to be the inheritors or possessors of the entire world. Fourthly, they perceive that the Father, according to the Counsel of Peace, has sent His Son into the world to assume the human nature, to suffer and die as Surety, to place Him under the law in order to satisfy the Father's justice by His Son's perfect obedience, and thus deliver the elect from guilt and punishment, granting them a right unto eternal life. Fifthly, they perceive that the Father sends forth His Holy Spirit into the hearts of the elect to illuminate and regenerate them, to lead them to Christ, unite them to Christ by faith, and in the way of holiness lead them to glory. Sixthly, they perceive that the Father receives them as His children and heirs, and consequently loves and cares for them as His children.

Such reflection produces in the believer a childlike frame which causes the soul to sink away in humility. How the soul then rejoices and receives liberty to exclaim, "Abba, Father"! The soul will commit himself and his entire case into the hands of the Father, entrusting all to Him, living out of His hand, bringing all his needs to Him as his Father, making all his desires known to Him, being willing to obey his Father and to serve Him according to His will. We will deal with this more comprehensively in chapter 35, on "The Adoption of Children." In considering God the Son, first, believers perceive Him to be the only qualified Surety to make the elect sons and daughters, and children of the Father, while in amazement they reflect upon the unsearchable wisdom of God in appointing such a qualified Person to be Surety. Secondly, they perceive the wondrous love of the Son towards man, who gave Himself in the eternal Counsel of Peace to be Surety in order to accomplish the great work of redemption. Thirdly, they perceive how He humbled Himself in the fullness of time, taking upon Himself the form of a servant and assuming their nature, not being ashamed to call them brethren, in order that they might enjoy communion and fellowship with Him. Fourthly, they perceive how He out of pure and voluntary love has taken their sins upon Himself, doing so as if He had personally committed them. They perceive how He Himself, with all willingness, bore the punishment which they deserved, thereby fully satisfying divine justice and reconciling them to God. Fifthly, they perceive that He has united them to Himself as members of a spiritual body, He being the Head and they the members, He being the Bridegroom and they His bride, so that in Him, the Son, they are sons and daughters. Sixthly, they perceive that He thus brings them to God, presenting them to the Father, saying, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me." Here is the fountain of salvation and here all the perfections of God manifest themselves in an entirely different and more glorious manner than in the work of creation and providential maintenance. Believers, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, will be changed accordingly, and thus, through the Son, may go to the Father. We shall subsequently deal with this in a more comprehensive manner.

God the Holy Spirit is for believers the One who, in a manifold and merciful manner, applies and makes them partakers of all that the Father has eternally decreed for their benefit, as well as all that which the Son has merited for them. We wish to deal with this somewhat more comprehensively, as there will be little opportunity to do so subsequent to this chapter. The Father and the Son send forth the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers, and the Holy Spirit dwells in them as in a temple. Prior to their regeneration the elect are by nature as all other men, "sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 1:19). As it is only the Spirit who makes alive, they are dead in sins and trespasses, living in total separation from God, having neither perception of their sinfulness and damnable state nor of salvation and spiritual life, and having no desire for these things. That which is of the earth is the focus of all their soul's activity and of all the members of their body. All their religious activity is of a mechanical nature, in order to quiet their conscience. They rest in what they have done, and hate all that which resembles light, spirituality, and true godliness -- especially when their encounter with them is too close for comfort.

However, when the moment of God's good pleasure [Note: à Brakel frequently uses the expression, "Als der uitverkorenen tijd daar is." The literal translation of this phrase is, "When the time of the elect is there," which, however, is more commonly referred to as "the moment of God's good pleasure." To enhance clarity, we opted to use the latter expression.] arrives for the elect, God grants them the Holy Spirit, who illuminates and regenerates them and by faith makes them

partakers of Christ and all His benefits. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6); "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15); "Now we have received the Spirit which is of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). At this point we must consider in what manner or in what regard believers receive the Holy Spirit.

Question: Do believers receive the gifts of the Spirit, or is the Person Himself communicated to them?

Answer: (1) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer is not just a mere presence, such as is true for the omnipresence of His Godhead.

(2) Neither is it an external relationship, viewing them as children of God and the objects of His operation.

(3) Nor is it a communication of His gifts, such as faith, hope, and charity, etc.

(4) Rather, it is the Person Himself who is given to believers, dwelling in them in a manner which is incomprehensible and inexpressible to us. This presence infinitely exceeds the limits of their person, and yet is in an extraordinary manner within them.

First, this becomes evident in those texts where the Holy Spirit is expressly said not only to be given to them, but also to dwell in them. "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17); "... the Spirit of Christ which was in them ..." (1 Peter 1:11); "Know ye not ... that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Evasive Argument: The gifts of the Holy Spirit are identified as being the Holy Spirit Himself (Acts 10:44-45).

Answer: (1) In those places where the Holy Spirit is mentioned, it is not always and everywhere to be understood as being the same as His gifts. Thus, this argument has no clout, for it must then be shown that in the aforementioned and similar texts the reference is to gifts and not to the Person Himself.

(2) A clear distinction is made between the Spirit Himself, who is given to God's children, and His gifts. These gifts neither teach, lead, comfort, bear witness, regenerate, nor work faith, but it is the Person, the Holy Spirit Himself who works and imparts these things to each person as is pleasing to Him.

(3) The gifts of the Spirit are also given to reprobates (Hebrews 6:4). Nevertheless these gifts do not make the person a partaker of Christ, as does the indwelling of the Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:9). Thus, it is confirmed that the Person of the Holy Spirit Himself dwells in the believer in a manner which is inexpressible and yet consistent with God's Being.

Secondly, this indwelling is confirmed by such texts where believers are called the temples of the Holy Ghost. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in

you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). God Himself, and not His gifts, dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem. "And I will dwell among the children of Israel" (Exodus 29:45); "In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion" (Psalms 76:2); "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims" (Psalms 80:1). Since the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer as He formerly did in the temple, He Himself likewise, rather than His gifts only, personally dwells in the believer.

Thirdly, believers have an infinite desire which can only be satisfied with the Infinite One. The gifts of God are not infinite, and thus a believer cannot be satisfied with them. God Himself must be and is their portion, and they are united to God in Christ and are made perfect in one (John 17:23). Thus the believer does not merely have the gifts of the Spirit, but he has the Spirit Himself.

Objection #1: Since the Holy Spirit is infinite, He consequently cannot dwell in finite man.

Answer: The fact that God dwells in a place or a person does not imply that He is limited to that location, as if He could not simultaneously be elsewhere. We rather understand that He who is infinite and omnipresent truly resides within an individual -- neither physically nor as is true for His omnipresence, but in an extraordinary manner. The second Person, the Son of God, is personally united to the human nature of Christ, and yet exists infinitely beyond the limitations of this nature. We do not advance the latter argument as if to suggest that the Holy Spirit is personally united with man in a manner identical to the union between the Godhead and the human nature of Christ. Far be it from us to entertain such thoughts. We rather advance it to render the objection to no avail, as God can be said to be present at a given location while yet not being confined within its limits, since He exists infinitely beyond these limitations. Therefore, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit indicates the incomprehensible and extraordinary manner of presence of the omnipresent Spirit.

Objection #2: As God is incommunicable and cannot communicate Himself to man, He rather communicates all His gifts. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit is said to dwell in someone, it must be understood to refer to the gifts of the Spirit.

Answer: We are not suggesting that the Holy Spirit communicates His Being and Person, as this would deify man and make him equal to God. With contempt we reject such an abominable thought. We are also not suggesting that the Holy Spirit essentially or personally is united to believers as the divine nature of Christ is united to His human nature, or as the soul of man is united to the body. Nor are we suggesting that the Holy Spirit is the actual cause of man's deeds, as if it were the Holy Spirit rather than man who believes, hopes, and prays. To hold to such an idea is foolishness. We do maintain, however, that the Holy Spirit is truly present in believers in an extraordinary manner of presence, which, though inexpressible and incomprehensible for us, is nevertheless personal and real. He dwells in them as He formerly dwelt in the temple, where He revealed His presence by His gracious operations. Angels upon assumption of a human body, or a pilot directing a ship, are present -- not as formoe informantes, sed assistentes, that is, not in an animating fashion, but in such a manner which enables them to mobilize such bodies or the ship. Although the comparison is inadequate, the Holy Spirit dwells similarly in the believer and causes him to be active. The Holy Spirit's Saving Operation Within the Believer The Holy Spirit, having been given to the children of God, is not idle but works in them various spiritual gifts and graces. These are faith and regeneration, making believers partakers of Christ and all His benefits. He also teaches them how to pray, guides them, comforts them, seals them, and abides with them to

all eternity.

First, the Holy Spirit works faith in them. "For by grace are ye saved through faith ... it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Therefore the Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of faith. "We having the same Spirit of faith" (2 Corinthians 4:13); "To another faith by the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:9). The Holy Spirit illuminates those whose understanding is darkened and who are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, giving them enlightened eyes of understanding, whereby they begin to see their misery, the filthiness and sinfulness of their hearts, and the abominable emotions and thoughts which proceed from their heart. At once they perceive the abhorrent, hateful, and damnable nature of sin, which fills them with alarm and fear. This brings forth a desire in them to supplicate God for His grace. The Spirit, however, confronts them with the righteousness of God which will not permit the least sin to remain unpunished, but requires that it most certainly be punished with eternal damnation. This realization impedes those who seek for refuge with God, causing discouragement and despair. Having been brought to this place, the Holy Spirit reveals the necessity of a Surety if they would be saved -- One who might pay for their sins, satisfy the justice of God, and merit for them the right to eternal life. He then immediately reveals that God Himself has found and sent forth such a Surety into the world, His only-begotten Son the Lord Jesus, revealing both the benefits of the covenant which are found in Him as well as their desirability. How this causes them lovingly to esteem this salvation and this Surety, being desirous to become a partaker of both! Along with this the Holy Spirit convinces them that salvation by this Surety is personally offered to them in the gospel, subsequent to which He generates in them a strong desire for this Surety. This causes Him to become the choice of their hearts, resulting in a yearning, longing, waiting, and praying for Him. While thus engaged, there is hope one moment, and then it again becomes dark and hopeless. Yet, they cannot but resume this sacred activity, and while struggling in this fashion they receive liberty to receive this offered Surety. With all their heart they acquiesce in the offer of this Surety; and without any reservation or delay, just as they are, they fully and irrevocably surrender themselves to Him to be justified, sanctified, and brought to salvation. Encouraged by the Word of God, they personally appropriate this Surety, rely upon His faithfulness and power, lean upon Him, and entrust themselves to Jesus -- be it at one time with light and assurance, and then again with darkness and much strife. For since the day that they received Jesus, the activity of their soul continues to be focused on Him, making use of Him to obtain peace and holiness.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is the Author of regeneration. Man by nature is spiritually dead and separated from God, being completely immersed in the things of the flesh. He is as full of sin as a dead body is full of worms. When the moment of good pleasure arrives for each of the elect, however, the Holy Spirit quickens and grants him spiritual life, this being the consequence of the soul's union with God in Christ. As a result of this, Christ is formed in them and the spiritual frame of their soul inclines towards Jesus. That which previously was so desirable to their eye has now become despicable. That in which they previously delighted now causes sorrow. Those activities they formerly sought out, they now flee. Their mind, will, and affections have been changed. They have become new creatures, and in consequence of this change wrought within the soul, thoughts concerning God and reflections upon heavenly things become prevalent. All this results in a different manner of speech, in godly conversation, in holiness of life, in having a delight in the godly, in dignified behavior, as well as in modest dress. In a word, this change can be compared to

a dead person arising from the grave. In its initial manifestation, however, this new life has many imperfections. In its beginning it is feeble and grows slowly, which is also true for its external manifestation. It is all only in part, but nevertheless in truth. It is this life which the Holy Spirit works, "the Spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6); "and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5); "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Even though the Holy Spirit could accomplish this without means, it pleases Him to use the Word as a means. Nevertheless He immediately (that is, without means) touches the soul in a manner not known to us, exerting a creative power similar as at the time of creation when He moved upon the face of the waters. The Hebrew uses the word *Merachepeth*, which is indicative of motion that forms and brings forth. As I stated, the Spirit uses the Word in regeneration. "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth" (James 1:18); "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23).

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit makes believers partakers of Christ and His benefits. Prior to regeneration, they were not in possession of these benefits; although they were elected, salvation had been merited, and the ransom had been paid for them. When the Holy Spirit conquers them, however, He brings them to Christ, and gives them that faith whereby Christ dwells in their hearts (Ephesians 3:17). Cleaving to Him, they become one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). They are united to Him as members are to a body, as a graft to the stem, and as a bride to her bridegroom, love being naturally inclined towards unity. This union results in the mutual use of possessive pronouns. "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16).

Union with Christ results in union with His benefits.

(1) The first benefit is His satisfaction resulting in reconciliation with God. "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20); "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God" (Romans 5:10).

(2) A second benefit is His holiness. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21); "And ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10).

(3) A third benefit is His intercession. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

(4) A fourth benefit is His glory. "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17).

(5) A fifth benefit is related to the covenant of grace and all that is promised in it, such as redemption and restoration. "How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). Fourthly, the Holy Spirit teaches believers how to pray; therefore He is called the Spirit of prayer. "And I will pour upon [them] ... the Spirit of grace and of supplications" (Zechariah 12:10); "But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). The Spirit shows them what they are lacking, and makes them sensibly conscious of it. He holds before them the desirability of that which is spiritual, causing them to esteem it highly. He prompts them to request these things from God by way of prayer, assuring them that God will hear them and grant them their desire according to His good pleasure. He produces in them a prayerful

frame which manifests itself in a humble and believing frame of mind. He takes them by the hand and leads them to the throne of grace. He generates strong spiritual desires in them, putting the words in their mouth. If the matters for which they pray are too lofty, the desires too strong, or their heart so oppressed that they cannot speak one word, then the Spirit will help in their infirmities, causing them to utter their desires with groanings, which contain more than could be expressed with words, though they cannot be uttered.

Fifthly, the Holy Spirit leads believers. The way is narrow, and one step out of the way will cause the believer to stumble. It is a steep and ascending way which necessitates climbing. It is a slippery way, not in and of itself but to those that walk upon it, as their feet so easily slide from this pathway. It is a way in which they are encompassed by many enemies, refusing to let them advance; yet they proceed with much difficulty while continually doing battle. Furthermore, they are so often in the dark, hardly knowing the way. They are weak, ready to stumble, tired, and discouraged. They are so easily overcome by the enemy and know not how to persevere. The Holy Spirit, however, leads them along this way as one would lead a blind person. As one would lead an ignorant person along the way he must go, the Holy Spirit leads them in a way which they have not known (Isaiah 42:16). He shows them this way, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isaiah 30:21). He inclines their will, making them willing to walk in this way. He encourages them, repeatedly stirring them up to walk in this way. Time and again He gives new strength. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:29). Thus, in His light they travel through darkness.

Sixthly, the Holy Spirit comforts them; He is called the Comforter (cf. John 14:16; John 15:26; John 16:7). The life of believers is one of many vicissitudes. At one time or another a troublesome darkness comes upon them, their corrupt flesh overwhelms them, Satan assaults with His fiery darts, or unbelief gains the upper hand. It can also be that God hides His countenance from them, while appearing to reject and to be angry with them. Moreover, one trial follows the other so that perseverance seems impossible. Then again they live in fear of death and the king of terror attacks them. In these and similar circumstances which potentially can overwhelm their souls, it pleases the Holy Spirit to sustain them with His comfort. He does so in a variety of ways.

(1) He shows them that the cross they must bear is so light that it is not worthy of being downcast over. This becomes especially evident when He focuses their attention upon the future glory which will be their portion. With this in view they are in agreement with Paul, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

(2) He shows them the brevity of cross-bearing, as being but for a moment. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment" (2 Corinthians 4:17). That which occurred yesterday is no more, and what will be tomorrow we do not know. We merely have the present which passes by as rapidly as the progression of time. What is our life when compared to eternity?

(3) He shows them the advantages concealed in their affliction. He shows them how it humbles them, makes them submissive, weans them from the world, teaches them to depend on God and to trust in Him, and how they increase in holiness according to the apostle's testimony, "For they [the fathers of our flesh, vs. 9] verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness ... nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the

peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:10-11).

(4) He shows them that their way is God's way by which He leads all His children to heaven. He shows them that it is God's sovereign will, which He exercises with pure wisdom and goodness, to deal with them in such a fashion. Along with this He gives them love for the will of God so that they agree with His will, causing them to pray, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. ... Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39; Matthew 26:42).

(5) He assures them of the love and grace of God towards them and that they have found grace in His eyes. Such testimony is sufficient to cause them to consider their cross to be but insignificant. This is expressed by Paul: "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

(6) He shows them that the ultimate outcome of their trial will be consistent with what they have experienced so frequently already. He shows them that the rod of the wicked will not always rest upon the lot of the righteous (Psalms 125:3), and that their cross will neither be too heavy nor will they be required to bear it any longer than necessary. It will not overwhelm them, for He will be with them even when they must pass through water and fire. Then the rivers will neither overflow them nor the fire burn them. They will come forth as gold tried in the furnace and will thank the Lord that He has dealt with them thus, having afflicted them in faithfulness. Consider therefore this promise, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Upon having these matters presented to us, it makes a considerable difference whether we meditate upon them as such, or whether it pleases the Holy Spirit to reveal them to us with clarity, powerfully impressing them upon the heart. Only then will these truths become effectual, yielding comfort to the heart. Only then will the believer bear his cross joyfully.

Seventhly, the Holy Spirit seals believers.

(1) In the process of sealing a transmission of the image found on the seal occurs, which in this context is the image of God.

(2) As the image is imprinted in wax, so the image of God is imprinted upon the heart of man, who is re-created in this image.

(3) The transmission of this image occurs by the operation of the Spirit of God, who imprints the image of God upon man, causing Christ to be formed in them. The process of sealing occurs for various reasons:

(1) A seal is applied to conceal something from the eyes of others. Letters are sealed for this purpose. In like manner a believer is sealed and thus hidden from the eyes of the world which cannot receive the Spirit of truth (John 14:17). "Therefore the world knoweth us not" (1 John 3:1).

(2) A seal is applied to preserve something in its inviolate form. Upon the occurrence of death crates and cupboards in a home are sealed for this purpose. Believers are in like manner "a garden enclosed ... a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (Song of Solomon 4:12).

(3) A seal is applied to identify the ownership of an object, thereby distinguishing it from other similar objects. Merchandise is sealed for this purpose. In this manner God also seals His children, thus acknowledging them to be His. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19). Others also recognize them by virtue of this seal. "All that see them shall acknowledge them" (Isaiah 61:9); "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples" (John 13:35); "and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). By this seal believers also recognize themselves. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3); "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you?" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

(4) A seal is applied for the purpose of confirmation. Business letters and contracts are sealed in this manner. In like manner the Holy Spirit seals believers, confirming to them the covenant of grace and assuring them that they are partakers of the same. "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:22). This sealing, which confirms believers and assures them that they are partakers of the covenant of grace, occurs in various ways.

First, this occurs when the Spirit reveals to believers that He dwells in them as in a temple. The bride requested, "set me as a seal upon Thine heart" (Song of Solomon 8:6); that is, let me thus be imprinted upon Thy heart, that Thou wouldest continually think upon me and that my appearance would continually be before Thy eyes. In like manner the Holy Spirit sets Himself as a seal upon the heart of believers, making them conscious of His presence and indwelling, whereby He assures them as clearly and powerfully that they are partakers of the covenant of grace as if they were sealed with a seal. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13). The Spirit Himself has been given them as a pledge that God will make them partakers of all promised benefits. They cannot be sealed and assured in a more excellent manner than this, for God Himself is their pledge, and as such is of infinitely more value than salvation itself. "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13); "... the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

Secondly, the Holy Spirit seals them by imprinting the image of God upon them, as well as by showing and revealing to them that the image of God is in them. He convinces them of the genuineness of their initial change, of their being ingrafted into Christ, of their faith whereby they truly received Christ and still do so daily both unto justification and sanctification. He convinces them of the genuineness of their insatiable desire to continually enjoy communion with God, of their spiritual life which, though feeble, is nevertheless genuine, and of their hatred for sin. He makes them aware how it wounds and grieves them when they perceive internal sin, imperfection in their performance of duty, as well as their failure to perform that which is good. He shows them that it is not only all their desire to be holy, but that their utmost effort is to do everything in faith, to be motivated by the love and fear of God, to live in childlike obedience, etc. The Spirit makes them conscious of all this, so that they perceive it in such a manner that they can neither deny it nor be deprived of its inherent comfort. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Having on the one side revealed this to them, He leads them, in the consciousness of this received grace, not only to the Word of God but also to the promises which are made to such persons as they are. He sheds light upon such texts and causes them to acknowledge the infallible truth expressed in them. In this condition He ushers them into the presence of God and by virtue of two propositions -- one being deduced from the grace they possess and the other from the Word of God -- causes them to come to the conclusion that they are most certainly the children of God and thus will become partakers of eternal salvation. By way of such reasoning, the Holy Spirit not only labors to give clarity and assurance concerning both God's grace in them and the promises of Scripture for them, but also takes an active part in the formulation of this conclusion. By granting much light, He causes them to be steadfast and assured in this conclusion. By His sealing power He impresses this reality so deeply upon their heart that they believe it with such certainty as if they saw it with their eyes and touched it with their hands -- yes, as if they were already in possession of salvation itself. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit also occasionally seals in an immediate manner by means of clear and powerful declarations within the heart, such as: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; Thy sins are forgiven thee; Thou art an heir of eternal life," and similar passages. Such declarations occasionally occur by means of a Scripture passage which is powerfully applied. At other times this can occur without a specific text, bearing in mind that such a declaration will always be in agreement with Scripture, it being the touchstone for such a declaration. This immediate sealing does not only result in the confirmation of their spiritual state, but the Holy Spirit grants them the immediate enjoyment of the matter itself, which results in peaceful serenity, a pleasant and sweet frame of mind, and an exhilarating joy. This causes such a person to be saturated with love, be in a holy frame of mind, be lifted up in the ways of the Lord, be ready to heroically do battle with the enemy, and walk in the way of God's commandments. The bride refers to this as being kissed. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine" (Song of Solomon 1:2). She further testifies, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love," etc. (Song of Solomon 2:4-6). Such was David's desire, "say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Psalms 35:3). It is this blessing which Christ promises to believers. "I will love him, and will manifest Myself to Him. We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:21; John 14:23).

One should know, however, that, although all believers are sealed, this does not occur with equal clarity. Many are in the dark and remain there, as they cannot clearly perceive the indwelling of the Spirit nor the graces which are in them. They fear that they are neither partakers of the one nor of the other. They cannot formulate a conclusion from Scripture without many doubts, as they quietly fear self-deception. Many who are sealed do not experience being sealed by an immediate declaration to the soul. Moreover, many, who have enjoyed this immediate sealing in some measure, do not always live in this enjoyment. Those who with Paul have been drawn into the third heaven will also be buffeted by Satan. Those who with Peter walk upon the sea will subsequently sink due to unbelief. Those who have been enlightened will experience darkness, and those who have rejoiced will become sorrowful. Thus, those who previously had so much assurance, can again become subject to a doubtful frame and are kept from sinking away only by reflecting upon former days.

Fourthly, the Holy Spirit abides with them to all eternity. Even though the Holy Spirit often hides Himself and appears to suspend His operation so that with Job they must complain, "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him" (Job 23:8-9), He nevertheless dwells in them and will abide with them. This is according to promise. "That He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth ... for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17); "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you" (1 John 2:27). Since He is given to believers as a pledge, it is certain that He will abide as such until the promised benefits will be enjoyed in full perfection. "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:13-14; cf. Ephesians 4:30). Being temples of the Holy Ghost, how holy ought the conduct of believers to be, in order that He might find delight in dwelling in them! How carefully one should seek to prevent the desecration of the temple of God, either by personally engaging in sin or by causing others to sin. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (1 Corinthians 3:17). How careful we should be not to grieve the Spirit by either blatantly sinning in spite of His warnings, by a careless walk, or by resisting the way in which He leads us. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30). Rather, acknowledge His indwelling, willingly yield to His operation, listen to His comforts, and willingly follow in the way of His leading, in order that He may delight Himself in you and may work in you with ever increasing efficacy.

Behold, must you not admit that faith in the Holy Trinity is profitable? Is it not the only foundation of a truly godly life and the fountain of all comfort? Therefore, consider God as being one in essence and existing in three Persons. Take notice of the operation of each Person in the administration of the covenant of grace, especially as it occurs within you. If you may entertain appropriate thoughts, make appropriate comments, and have appropriate exercises concerning each Person of the Trinity, you will experience considerable and consistent progress in godliness. There will be a wondrous illumination concerning the unity of the Godhead as you consider each individual Person, and of the Godhead in its Trinity as you contemplate its unity. If so much light, comfort, joy, and holiness may be derived from perceiving what is but an obscure glimmer of the Trinity, what will it be and how will the soul be affected when he may behold God's face in righteousness, and awake, satisfied with His likeness? (Psalms 17:15). Then they will walk by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), and they will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). Therefore, "Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance" (Psalms 33:12). The Works of God Immanent / internal Intrinsic (remain with God) Of His Being Of His Persons Extrinsic (go outside God)

Decrees Transient / external

Creation

Providence

Redemption

006. Chapter 5: The Decrees of God: General Observations

----- CHAPTER FIVE ----- The Decrees of God: General Observations

Having considered the principal sources from which God may be known, and who and what He is in His Being, attributes, and the Persons of the Godhead, we proceed with a discussion of the extrinsic works [Note: To clarify the meaning of extrinsic, we provide the chart found in Reformed Dogmatics, by Rev. G. H. Kersten, 1:106. The Works of God Immanent / internal Intrinsic (remain with God) Of His Being Of His Persons Extrinsic (go outside God)]

Decrees Transient / external

Creation

Providence

Redemption] of God. These can be considered both as to their origin and manifestation. The extrinsic works of God originate in the decrees of God. This is true in a general sense, but also in a special sense, relating to man's eternal predestination, as well as the Counsel of Peace or the Covenant of Redemption, wherein the Son became Surety on behalf of His elect. The manifestation of the extrinsic works of God relates to nature -- creation and providence -- or grace, which is the execution of the great work of redemption.

We initially will consider the decrees of God, which is a doctrine from which a believing child of God may derive extraordinary comfort, delight, peace, and joy. God is all-sufficient in Himself, having had no need to create any of His creatures. The creature can neither add glory nor felicity to Him; however, it has pleased the Lord to create creatures in order to communicate His goodness to them and consequently render them happy. God in decreeing creation has eternally purposed and decreed within Himself where, when, how, and of what nature each creature should be, and what each should do and encounter. Whereas the doctrine itself can be deduced from the Word of God, the manner in which God decreed is hidden from us. In this respect we have hindsight rather than foresight. We discuss this doctrine in human terms, seeking to understand it in a manner consistent with God's Being.

Socinians and Arminians, considering the contingent nature of all that transpires, as well as the fact that man acts according to the free exercise of his will, are prepared to remove everything, particularly that which pertains to man, from under the domain of divine government, as they cannot comprehend how God could have decreed everything so precisely. They argue: "What happens to the concept of contingency and what remains of the freedom of man's will? How can prayer, exhortation, and diligence have any purpose, and how then can God be exempt from being the cause of sin and the damnation of man? If man cannot add anything to his salvation, he might as well cease all efforts and live in indifference." Consequently, they deny that God's decree extends to everything and that He has decreed specific events from eternity. We, however, being firmly grounded in the truth, maintain upon the basis of God's Word that there is such a decree of

God, a truth which we confess and seek to use in a sanctified manner. In order to present this truth clearly to everyone, we shall consider the essential nature of God's decree and its particulars, confirm this from God's Word, respond to objections, and exhort one another to put this doctrine into practice.

We shall begin by considering the testimony of the Word of God. Scripture, in teaching that God has created, maintains, and governs all things according to a decree which He has decreed within Himself, uses a diversity of expressions to describe and represent this eternal decree.

(1) It uses the word decree. "I will declare the decree" (Psalms 2:7); "truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined" [Note: The Statenbijbel uses the word "besloten" which can also be translated as "decreed".] (Luke 22:22).

(2) It uses the verb to appoint. "For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (Job 23:14).

(3) It uses the phrase determinate counsel and foreknowledge. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23); "For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:28).

(4) It uses the phrase the counsel of His will and His pleasure. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10); "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11).

(5) It uses the word purpose. "Who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28); "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which he hath purposed in Himself" (Ephesians 1:9).

These texts do not merely provide us with the various designations for this decree, but convincingly and simultaneously confirm the truth of the doctrine that God has eternally made a decree, according to which proceeds all that transpires in this time state. In human decision-making, people will view a matter from all angles, considering both pros and cons, in order to determine its feasibility. Often they cannot analyze the situation correctly, vacillate between two options, and ultimately must make a decision based on the facts as they appear to be at that moment and in similar situations. Far be it from us, however, to attribute such imperfections to the omniscient, only-wise, omnipotent, and immutable God; His ways are not as our ways. We cannot analyze in what manner the Lord decrees and establishes His counsel and purpose. We know, however, that He does so and that our human terminology gives expression to the unsearchable wisdom and immovability of God's purpose, as well as His comprehensive plan concerning all things as to the manner of their existence and the time of their occurrence. The Decree of God Defined

We understand the decree of God to be the eternal, volitional, all-wise, sovereign, and immutable purpose of God concerning all and every matter, comprehending both the time and the manner in which these matters will occur.

Prior to the creation of the world there was only eternity, and thus matter, bodies, forms of life, and whatever else one may imagine, did not exist. God, who inhabited eternity, purposed to create a world, populate it with creatures, and maintain and govern them, thereby determining and stipulating the place, activity, and the course of events transpiring during the existence of each

creature. This decree is the original cause whereby and according to which all things exist and occur in time, existing and occurring without deviation from this decree. Men first form a mental concept of that which they wish to make, adding and subtracting things which initially they have either partly or fully observed. Concerning God, however, there was no design external to Him imposed upon Him after which He would pattern that which He wished to create. All that He has created is an expression of His counsel. God's decree is the vehicle whereby He gives expression to His counsel; all that exists and transpires is the expression of that decree. The decree of God, being an intrinsic act of His will, is not incidental to God, but is the decreeing God Himself.

God's decree is from eternity. God does not decree things in response to issues which are already present; such is the manner of human decision-making. Rather, prior to the creation and existence of the world, He ordained all the events which He would bring into existence; that is, the time and place, means of execution, individual activities, and the individual circumstances from beginning to end for each. Scripture states emphatically, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). God, by virtue of His decree, has foreknowledge of all that will exist and occur in time, so that according to His will, by an act of His omnipotence, all matters are transferred from a state of potential existence to actual existence. It thus logically follows that God's eternal foreknowledge of all matters necessarily follows from the fact that He has eternally decreed them. "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4); "... to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). That which exists prior to time is necessarily exclusive of the concept of time. Prior to the existence of time there was only eternity. Should the thought occur concerning the moment when God made His decree prior to the existence of time, one is without knowing it already thinking within the parameters of time. Eternity necessarily excludes duration of time and chronology. Eternity is an incomprehensible concept for us as temporal creatures. Since God's decrees are existent prior to time, they are necessarily eternal. In the execution of things both duration of time and chronology are factors; however, also this chronology has been eternally decreed by God by a singular act of His will. In sequence and nature God Himself precedes His decree; however, in view of the eternal existence of this decree, such cannot be true in a chronological sense. Even among creatures the cause of an event does not always chronologically precede its effects. In considering God's decree we must differentiate between viewing this decree relative to the decreeing God, it being a singular act of His will, or relative to the matters which have been decreed. In the latter there are as many dimensions to this decree as there are matters to which this decree relates. The decree of God is in all aspects volitional and noncompulsory. It is also not motivated in the least degree by any internal or external necessary causes. It is purely an expression of His sovereign good pleasure. "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself" (Ephesians 1:9), "after the counsel of His own will" (verse 11). Compulsion and volition are mutually exclusive, but necessity and volition can very well coexist. God's Being is of necessity volitional. The fact, however, that His will extends to matters which are extrinsic to His Being, that is, to create and govern them; to decree their manner of existence; to establish the course of events during their existence, that one will be rich and the other poor, that one will live in this locality and the other in that locality -- all this is purely volitional. God could have decreed to create nothing; or if it were His will to create and govern, He could have created in a different fashion and have established a different course of events for His creatures. If a potter has power over clay to

create a vessel purely by the free exercise of His will, if the head of a household has the prerogative to furnish his home as he pleases by placing one object here and another there, would then the sovereign Lord of all things not have the prerogative to deal with His clay and with His creatures according to His good pleasure? Would anyone be able to prevent Him, who is omnipotent, from doing so, thus having to adjust Himself to the whims of His creation? Would anyone be able to say, "Why hast Thou decreed it to be thus and not otherwise?" Would any creature be able to compel Him to establish a particular decree? This obviously cannot be so! His decree is the expression of His sovereign good pleasure, and it is for this reason that everything, transpiring as it does, is good because He wills it to be so. How blessed it is for the creature to acknowledge this, approve of it, and surrender His will to the will of God.

God has decreed everything with eternal, infinite, and unsearchable wisdom. When people construct something peculiar or extraordinary, we are amazed and exclaim, "How has man been able to conceive this?" Nevertheless, the idea is not truly original, having been derived from other principles which have been observed either in animals, inanimate objects, or in the work of other men. By way of subtraction or addition, or by a rearrangement of order, he has developed the concept for his creation. But "who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him?" (Isaiah 40:13). He, who is "the only wise God" (1 Timothy 1:17), whose "understanding is infinite" (Psalms 147:5), who in wisdom has made all things (Psalms 104:24), has also, before the existence of time, with wisdom ordained and decreed all things. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). The Characteristics of God's Decrees The decrees of God are independent, absolute, purely unconditional, and not dependent upon secondary causes. Everything has most certainly been decreed, will most certainly come to pass, and will not have any other result or purpose than that which has been decreed. God has indeed decreed that many things will come to pass by virtue of secondary causes and means. These secondary causes, however, are not conditional to the decree; as if God has made a conditional decree which would change if these conditions were not met; as if these conditions were subject to the control of the creature or to chance. Rather, these secondary causes are merely the means whereby the decree is executed. Both these means as well as the ultimate outcome of the decree have been most certainly decreed, even though there may be much uncertainty and contingency relative to these secondary causes. Such contingency exists relative to the creature, but never with God.

Question: Did God decree many things conditionally, so that their ultimate outcome depends on whether or not these conditions are fulfilled, the latter being dependent upon the manner in which man exercises his power and free will?

Answer: Socinians, Arminians, and Jesuits answer in the affirmative, whereas we answer in the negative for the following reasons:

First, if God had made such a conditional decree, this would have been either because He could not do otherwise as He could be prevented from executing His decree or because He did not will differently, leaving the fulfillment of the condition or the lack of it in the hands of man. The first proposition cannot be true because God is omnipotent, and He exercises this omnipotence in the execution of His decree. "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" (Isaiah 14:27). The second is also impossible, because a creature is not able to function independently

from God; he cannot do anything apart from His influence and government. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:13).

Evasive Argument: The nature of man is such that it is impossible for God to make a decree concerning those matters in which man exercises his free will. God has created the will of man in such a fashion that it cannot be compelled but always retains its freedom to will or not to will something. God could have decreed to save any individual unconditionally, regardless of how such a person would conduct himself. If God, however, elects a person who will believe and repent, then this choice must necessarily be conditional, being dependent on the exercise of man's free will as to whether or not he wishes to believe and repent.

Answer: (1) The freedom of the will does not consist of an arbitrary disposition in determining whether one will or will not do something; rather its function is a necessary consequence of one's judgment and inclination.

(2) Both a freedom of will which is arbitrary in nature and a freedom of will which is self-determining do not function independently from God. God causes man to will. He works in men to will and fashions the hearts of all men (Psalms 33:15). He turns the hearts even of kings as rivers of water whithersoever He will (Proverbs 21:1). Is not He who has given man a will able once again to give him a good will if it so pleases Him?

(3) Faith and repentance are not conditions upon which the decree is made. Rather, God has decreed these means as well as the final outcome in order to accomplish His ultimate purpose. Thus, this argument neither applies nor renders the foregoing proof invalid.

(4) If the decree of God were contingent upon something which in turn was independent from Him, the Creator would be dependent upon the creature.

Secondly, God's decree was made purely according to His good pleasure, and therefore could not have been made contingent upon any conditions. "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matthew 11:26); "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:5). God accomplishes this good pleasure irresistibly. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10). In light of this, how can there be a condition upon which God's decree would be contingent? It would contradict the sovereignty, wisdom, and omnipotence of God.

Thirdly, all the decrees of God are immutable. "That the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Romans 9:11); "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6); "... the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us ..." (James 1:17-18). That which is contingent upon a condition, however, not having been decreed, and which, as some parties insist, is contingent upon man's own control and the exercise of his free will, must of necessity be mutable. Consequently, the immutable decree of God cannot be contingent upon any condition. God does not change His decree in response to man's mutability, but all human changes occur in harmony with the immutable decree of God, who by means of human mutability immutably executes the comprehensive relationship which He has decreed between the means and the end, between sin and its punishment, and between godliness and the experience of salvation.

Objection #1: "But ye have set at nought all My counsel" (Proverbs 1:25); "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves" (Luke 7:30). From this it is evident that men can reject the counsel of God, rendering His decree impotent. Therefore, it must be concluded that God's decrees are of a contingent nature.

Answer: The word "counsel" as used in these texts does not refer to the decree of God, which at times is indeed referred to as "counsel," but refers to a directive accompanied either by promises or threats, which becomes evident from the texts themselves. In Proverbs 1:25 there is added, "and would none of my reproof." The counsel as expressed in verse 23 was to repent. It is presented with a reproof, "Turn you at my reproof," and with promises, "Behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you." This exhortation they had not obeyed. The same is true for Luke 7:30. John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus had admonished the people of Israel to repent, for John preached the baptism of repentance, proclaiming that they should believe in Him who would come after him (Acts 19:4). They disobeyed this admonition, rejecting the counsel, the directive, this being evidenced by the additional clause "being not baptized of Him."

Objection #2: God's Word contains many conditional promises and threats. Since all promises and threats issue forth from one of God's decrees, there must of necessity be conditional decrees. Note these conditional aspects in the following texts, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword" (Isaiah 1:19-20); "And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto Me ... then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes ... but if ye will not hearken unto Me ... then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof," etc. (Jeremiah 17:24-25; Jeremiah 17:27).

Answer: It is a well-known truth which we readily embrace, that God's Word contains many conditional promises and threatenings issuing forth from one of God's decrees. We deny, however, the deduction that God's decrees must then of necessity also be conditional. The one does not imply the other, for it only follows that God has decreed to make such conditional promises and threats. He has decreed the cohesive relationship between these matters to be such, that it will be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. If someone improves, repents, and believes, it is the work of God. God converts (James 1:18), gives faith (Ephesians 2:8), and works both to will and to do (Php 2:13). "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). God's decree relative to all this is absolute and unconditional: to bring the elect to salvation in the way of repentance and faith, and to damn all others in consequence of their sins. The decree is absolute, but its execution is by means which have been decreed as certainly as the end itself.

Objection #3: God is said to change His decree if the condition is not fulfilled. Thus, the decree is conditional. This is to be seen in Scripture: "I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before Me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from Me; for them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30); "For now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue" (1 Samuel 13:13-14).

Answer: In these texts there is no reference to the decree of God, but rather to the execution of the decree. God does not make a decree in this time state in response to the issues at hand, but His decree has been made from eternity (cf. Acts 15:18; Ephesians 1:4). Thus, the execution of the decree is not contingent upon a condition which occurs in time. These texts merely demonstrate

the relationship between sin and punishment, and between godliness and divine blessing. God uses these as a means to convince man of his duty, and of God's righteousness in punishing sin when man fails to perform his duty. He also uses such texts as means to lead the elect to godliness and thus to bestow the salvation which He had ordained. "I had said," that is, "I had promised you upon condition of obedience. You did not obey, however, and neither did I will to give you such an obedient heart. I was neither obligated to do so, nor did I decree to give you such a heart. Thus, the fulfillment of the promises will also not be yours."

God's decree is immutable. If God were to change His decree, it would either be because subsequent to the decree He perceived that it was not good, there being a better option, or because a circumstance presented itself preventing Him from executing His decree. Neither of these two possibilities can be true concerning God. The first possibility cannot be true for He is the only wise God, and the second possibility cannot be true as He is the omnipotent One. Thus, it is certain that nothing can cause a change in God's decrees. Scripture confirms this in many places. "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6); "... with whom is no variableness" (James 1:17); "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" (Isaiah 14:27); "My counsel shall stand" (Isaiah 46:10); "That the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Romans 9:11); "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel" (Hebrews 6:17).

Objection: God is said to repent, not to fulfill His promises and threatenings, presently to command something different than He did before, and to change His dealings.

Answer: Such statements are never made in reference to God's decrees. This manner of speech merely reveals the relationship between the matters and the condition, be it expressed or implied -- all of which God has in each case most certainly decreed to propose or to command. Thus, He permits the ungodly in their wickedness to fail His requirements, in consequence of which they do not receive the promised blessing, but rather are partakers of the threatened punishment; whereas He causes the elect to fulfil the condition and thus obtain the decreed blessings.

Having considered the particulars of God's decree, we must now consider that which God decrees. His decree pertains to all matters in general and each individual matter in particular. No matter, no activity, meeting, no final results (whether they be great or small, good or evil) -- be it that it all transpires in the common course of nature -- are contingent upon secondary causes or happen accidentally. This is also applicable to the results of man exercising his free will, such as wars and their outcomes, marriages and all their related incidents, the times and places of our residence, our birthday and day of death -- none of these matters are excluded. In a word, everything, every angel, every inanimate created object in heaven and upon earth, every man, every action, every result, and whatever may exist regardless of the name attributed to it -- all function at a particular time and place according to a most certain and immovable decree. The one decree relates both to the intent and the execution of plans; the other relates to that which God permits and yet governs. This is taught throughout the entire Scriptures.

First, there are texts of an all-inclusive nature. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18); "... Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11). The word "all" is all-inclusive, and there are no exceptions.

Secondly, there are texts which refer to specific matters, such as,

(1) the place and time of everyone's residence. "... and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26);

(2) all the events which occur in man's lifetime. "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (Job 23:14);

(3) the blessings which will be bestowed upon the elect. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. ... Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself" (Ephesians 1:5; Ephesians 1:9);

(4) the election and reprobation of persons and nations. "That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:11-13);

(5) that which is accomplished by the exercise of man's free will. This is evident from that which men did to Christ. "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22); "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken," etc. (Acts 2:23); "For of a truth against Thy holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27-28);

(6) marriage. "Let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed out for my master's son" (Genesis 24:44); "What therefore God hath joined together ..." (Matthew 19:6).

Thirdly, the time, place, manner, and circumstances of the death of each man have been determined. (1) This is expressly stated in Scripture. "seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass" (Job 14:5). Job, referring to all men, speaks of a specified number of days and months which have been appointed, to which not one month or day will be added; that is, he will not live longer than this appointed time. David speaks likewise: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth" (Psalms 39:45). His reference here is not to the brevity of human life in general, but particularly that God has allotted him a measure of days, the duration of his life having its limits defined as it were by an handbreadth, so that his life was but a very short, predetermined time. "... and hath determined the times before appointed" (Acts 17:26).

(2) As He determines the day of birth of every man, likewise God Himself takes man's life at His time. God has life and death in His hand, works everything according to His determinate counsel (Acts 2:23), and according to the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11). Consequently, man's age has been determined. "My times are in Thy hand" (Psalms 31:15); "Thou turnest man to destruction" (Psalms 90:3); "He shall cut off the spirit of princes" (Psalms 76:12); "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive" (1 Samuel 2:6). Yes, even when someone dies due to an apparent accident, it is by divine government. If a man in passing is killed by an axe which has slipped from the helve (Deuteronomy 19:5), God will have delivered that man into the hand of the hewer of wood (Exodus

21:13). God had determined Ahab's age, even though it appeared that the arrow of a marksman hit him accidentally (1 Kings 22:28; 1 Kings 22:34). Did not God determine the age of the first world, and of the one hundred eighty-five thousand soldiers in Sennacherib's army?

Objection #1: The duration of life depends upon the good or evil behavior of man, according to which God either lengthens or shortens his life. Therefore the day of his death has not been precisely determined. "... that thy days may be long" (Exodus 20:12).

Answer: This lengthening of days is not related to the decree of God in which the terminus of each life has been determined. It rather expresses the relationship which God has established between godliness and blessing. Both have been decreed by God, the one as the end and the other as the means wrought in them by God Himself.

Objection #2: "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (Psalms 55:23). Thus, there is no established decree concerning the hour of man's death.

Answer: If this text refers to the decree of God, it obviously expresses that the precise duration of life has been determined, for if the half of such a life has been determined, the end has been determined with equal certainty. Then we would have to conclude that God had indeed determined the hour of each person's death, but that the person could yet resist and undo the determinate counsel of God. This is impossible, as we have shown. It is evident that this text does not refer to the decree of God, but rather to the natural resiliency of the body which potentially could enable man to live a much longer life. It could also refer to the possible notion of the ungodly that they will live a long life, but God -- due to their ungodliness and according to His decree -- joins the end and the means and thus removes them in the strength of their life. It is from this perspective that we must view Ecclesiastes 7:17, "Why shouldst thou die before thy time?"

Objection #3: "Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years" (Isaiah 38:5). This proves that there is no established decree concerning the duration of man's life.

Answer: It is obviously stated here that the duration of Hezekiah's life is limited to an additional fifteen years. God had decreed that this illness would not be unto death, but that his death would occur fifteen years later, even though, if God had not miraculously healed him, according to his physical condition he should have died. He therefore received a message that he would die.

Objection #4: Man has his life in his own hand. He has the option to drown or hang himself, and thus, as some do, shorten the duration of his life.

Answer: If someone commits such an act, the time of his death was according to God's decree. The fact is that in judgment upon his sins he would be his own executioner and thus die an ungodly death. If it is not his time, however, such a person will neither commit this act, nor will he be desirous to do so, but rather make every effort to preserve his life. Someone may be able to shorten his life as far as the potential of his natural constitution is concerned, but not relative to God's decree.

Objection #5: If the hour of death has been determined for every person, from which follows that man will not die before his time, there is no need that one avail himself of the means. Then one does not need to eat, one can throw himself in water or fire, and in illness one need not avail himself of medicine, etc.

Answer: God, having decreed the end, has also decreed the means to that end, and thus will motivate man to use the means for both body and soul, and man will delight in them. One may not use the means, however, with the foolish objective to change the decree of God, but rather in subjection to God's counsel, since God has commanded us to use the means. "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 27:31); "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Ezekiel 36:37).

Objection #6: Since man is completely free to do or not to do a certain thing, the outcome of nearly every event depends upon the exercise of man's will. Since many things occur accidentally, the time and place of man's death could not have been decreed. To go a step further, therefore there cannot be such a decree of God pertaining to all things, for then everything would have to occur by unavoidable necessity.

Answer: (1) It is erroneous to maintain that the freedom of the will consists in doing or not doing something. Man's will does not function arbitrarily but of itself, so that man does everything with consent and inclination. God, who has created the will to function in this manner, inclines it, without compulsion and in harmony with its propensity, to function in accordance with His will.

(2) The outcome of events does not depend upon man, nor upon his activity, but upon God who grants the means, and according to these means brings to pass the outcome according to His good pleasure. He grants to one more strength, wisdom, and wealth than the other (Proverbs 22:2), and provides one king with a larger army than the other. Even then, God often demonstrates that the final outcome does not depend on strength, wisdom, wealth, and number, but the ultimate outcome of events is from Him (cf. Proverbs 21:31; Psalms 33:16).

(3) In respect to man and secondary causes, everything is contingent and accidental. Such however is not the case from God's perspective. He has most certainly decreed everything, and without impediment will execute His decree according to His good pleasure. This is even true for those events which appear to be most contingent in nature, such as an unexpected murder (Exodus 21:12-13), the casting of lots (Proverbs 16:33), the falling of a sparrow from the rooftop, and the falling of a hair from our heads (Matthew 10:29-30).

(4) It is true that everything occurs by unavoidable necessity; however, it does not occur by compulsion. There is a threefold necessity. First, there is an internal necessity which proceeds from the very nature of a matter. Thus, fire burns of necessity, and that which is heavy necessarily falls downward. Secondly, there is a necessity which is the result of external compulsion, as for instance when a man compels a child, against his will, to go where he wishes him to go. Thirdly, there is a necessity stemming from dependence and the outcome of events. Every creature of necessity depends on God in all his activity, and the outcome of every event will necessarily be according to God's will. God, having most certainly decreed everything, executes everything irresistibly -- not in an unnatural, compulsory manner, but in harmony with the nature of His creatures. Therefore, relative to God's decree everything happens of necessity, even though there is contingency relative to secondary causes.

Therefore refrain from the Socinian, Anabaptist, Arminian, Jesuit, and all who submit to natural reason, who are ignorant of God and His way, reject and contradict these truths, seek to dethrone God, and make man master of all. We cast down the imaginations and every high thing that exalts

itself and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), and defend this doctrine which is so comforting and profitable for believers.

All believers, even though they believe these truths, do not have equal clarity concerning them but are often subject to temptation when they pray for a situation which they strongly desire. When things do not go well, when they experience adversity or are oppressed by various circumstances, they readily lose sight of the decree of God, being overcome by fear, and cannot submit themselves to God's decree with love and delight. They believe the Lord to be against them and to have decreed nothing in their favor. When they resort to prayer in these circumstances, they are sorely troubled by thoughts such as: "Of what use are my prayers, since I will neither receive what I request nor be delivered except it be decreed, and I fear that the decree is not in my favor." Such thoughts diminish their zeal. Prayer is impeded and becomes listless, clearly proving that we do not sufficiently love the decree of God, for we become more active to bring God's will in line with our desires, than our desires with God's will. We are more concerned to bring God's counsel in line with our will, than that our will be in line with His. This grieves believers and causes them to be much troubled within. They would gladly have faith in God's decree, delight in it, and believe that in all things it is for their good. They desire to use prayer and all available means to stimulate a holy desire to surrender to God's counsel, who by decreed means accomplishes the decreed end. They are much hindered, however, in this pursuit.

(1) Some are hindered by ignorance, having not been sufficiently instructed in these and other truths.

(2) Others are hindered by negligence, lacking the discipline to meditate upon this truth in order to become intimately acquainted with it.

(3) Some are hindered by strong and impure desires for earthly things.

(4) Others are hindered by failure to acquaint themselves with the Word of God whereby a text might readily be available when specific circumstances present themselves.

(5) Some are hindered by focusing too much on the circumstances, whether they are for or against them. All of this brings on darkness and yields opportunity for unbelief, thus allowing it to flourish.

Exhortation to Profit from this Doctrine Do you desire to profit from this comforting doctrine? First, seek to rid yourself of inordinate and close attachment to earthly things, and be diligent in renouncing your own will. The things of this earth are not your portion, and therefore cannot satisfy. Have you not often experienced that instead of resulting in more holiness, they rob you of your peace and spiritual liberty, hindering you from running your course with joy? Have you not often perceived in retrospect that it was God's wisdom and goodness that He did not give you the desire of your heart, and that at times you were uncomfortable when your desire was granted? Why then are you so set upon receiving your desire? Is it not much better to rest in God's decree?

Secondly, seek often to stimulate love for the sovereignty of God. Do you wish God to be your servant in order that you might receive your foolish desires? Or is it your joy that He is Lord, that He acts freely, and that as supreme Sovereign He rules everything according to His will, so that no one can stay His hand and say, "What doest Thou?" Would you wish God to be subject to you, and to do your bidding? Do you not rather desire that, without the least deviation, His will be

accomplished, both in regard to all things and in regard to yourself, even if you would have to lose all that you possess? You would certainly approve of this if you would but quietly contemplate this.

Therefore, rejoice in His sovereignty and render Him honor and glory. You will then find sweet rest in His decree concerning the future, the present, and the past.

Thirdly, consider and believe unreservedly that all that God has decreed concerning His elect He has decreed to their benefit to such a degree that they could not have imagined or desired anything to be more profitable. Approve of this truth and apply it to your own situation. If you may believe yourself to be a partaker of Jesus Christ, God's decree will be precious to you. You will be able to find sweet rest in it, and you will be able to surrender everything into the Lord's hand with ease, saying, "He may accomplish in me whatever He has decreed concerning me, and it will be well."

Fourthly, you have no prior knowledge of what God has decreed concerning you in various specific circumstances. This much you know, however, that God works out His decree in the way of means, and has bound us to these means. Whoever refuses to use the means -- which God will cause him to do if He has so decreed -- has no right to complain, as he himself is to be blamed for it. "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2). The promise is, "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matthew 7:7); "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalms 81:10). Keep yourself from using unlawful means, for then you are losing sight of God's decree, thus expecting it from the means. Use lawful means, and use them with the desire that God's counsel be accomplished rather than having the intent to change it. Let there then be no anxiety concerning the outcome of the matter, knowing that the outcome will be such as God in His counsel has decreed to be to your benefit. If this may be your practice, you will avoid or overcome many temptations, and preserve a quiet inner disposition. By confirming and believing this truth while allowing yourself to grow accustomed to it through much meditation, you will be armed and strong in all circumstances of life; your desires will be holy, your concerns will be moderate, and you will use the means with more liberty, and yet carefully. Should there be many evil circumstances, that you are threatened or oppressed with poverty, injury, disgrace, devastation by enemies, famine, pestilence, loss of property, loved ones, or life, the decree brings quietness since it is not inflicted by man, but is all according to God's eternal counsel, which you should neither desire to change, nor can be changed by anyone. Consider that His decree is for your good, even though you cannot perceive this beforehand. Then you will not fear, even if everything were to be turned upside down.

If you are currently desirous for something, meditation upon God's decree will not remove this desire, but will rather sanctify it, thus encouraging you to bring your desires before God more freely. Or it may cause you to bow before the Lord in holy submission, confessing, "Thy will be done!" without daring to insist strongly upon receiving your desire, but rather to have your desire swallowed up in God's will. It will soon become evident whether a person is entertaining any impure desires, which in such a frame will readily be extinguished. It will not only keep us from ever doing evil in order that good might come out of it, but rather it will motivate us to yield everything into the hands of the Lord, be satisfied with this, and thank the Lord in all things, confessing, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).

007. Chapter 6: Eternal Predestination: Election and Reprobation

----- CHAPTER SIX ----- Eternal Predestination: Election and Reprobation General Observations about Predestination

Having spoken of the decrees of God in general, we shall now proceed with a discussion of the specific decrees of God, speaking particularly of those relating to man's salvation and damnation. Due to repeated slander by individuals with evil motives, the word predestination gives some offense, triggers prejudice, and is repulsive to people who are both ignorant and filled with resentment against this doctrine. This has led some to be of the opinion that it is preferable not to speak of this mystery. Since Scripture, however, bears such abundant testimony to this doctrine; since it is a matter of supreme importance, yielding a proper understanding of the entire way of salvation; and since it is a fountain of comfort and genuine sanctification, nothing must be held back. The entire counsel of God must be declared. Everyone must strive to understand this doctrine well and apply it properly.

Scripture makes reference to election in a variety of ways.

(1) The Lord Jesus Christ is called the Elect (Isaiah 42:1), "who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20), to be the Surety and Savior of the elect.

(2) The holy angels have been elected to an eternal and permanent state of felicity. They are not chosen in Christ, and He is not considered to be their Mediator, as there was neither sin in them nor would there be. He is also not considered their Head to preserve and confirm them in their state, as Scripture makes no mention of this at all. The Lord Jesus has been given unto the salvation of men and not angels. As God and man, however, Christ is exalted above the angels who worship Him, and whom He, as Lord, uses according to His will to the benefit of His elect. These holy angels have been chosen by God, which explains why they are called "elect" (1 Timothy 5:21), in distinction from other angels who have sinned, not having kept their first estate, and having left their own habitation, are therefore eternally damned (cf. 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6; Matthew 25:41).

(3) Some people are elected to a specific office, possibly in government, as Saul was chosen to be king. "see ye him whom the Lord hath chosen?" (1 Samuel 10:24). This was also true when he was rejected. "I have rejected him" (1 Samuel 16:1). Others are chosen to an ecclesiastical office, as Judas, who was also chosen to be an apostle. "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70).

(4) This manner of election is not under discussion here, but rather the election of some men unto salvation, in contrast to those who have been rejected by God.

Various words are used to give expression to the doctrine of election, such as.

(1) Προόρισμος, predestination, which in Latin is "predestinatio." It signifies a determination of a matter before it exists or transpires in order to bring it to a certain end. "For to do whatsoever Thy

hand and Thy counsel, prorsie, determined before (that is, predestined) to be done" (Acts 4:28). This is further confirmed in 1 Corinthians 2:7, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." It is this word which is used to refer to man's destiny relative to salvation, as well as the means whereby they obtain this salvation. "We ... being predestinated ... having predestinated us unto the adoption of children" (Ephesians 1:11; Ephesians 1:5); "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. ... Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called" (Romans 8:29-30). This word not only relates to election, but also to reprobation, as confirmed in texts where the word is used in reference to Herod, Pilate, and Judas. "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:28). "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed" (Luke 22:22).

(2) Another word is Prognosis, foreknowledge. This word does not refer to a mere foreknowledge whereby God has prior knowledge of all things, including the end of men. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). It rather refers to a foreknowledge characterized by love and delight. In this manner Christ is referred to as "the Elect of God," stating that He "was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). In like manner "the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous" (Psalms 1:6), and "the Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19). Believers are therefore called "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2). It signifies election itself. "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew" (Romans 11:2); "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate" (Romans 8:29). This foreknowledge is contrasted with not being known, that is, being rejected. "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23); "I know you not" (Matthew 25:12).

(3) Scripture also uses Prothesis, or purpose. This word does not refer to an impotent wish, but to a certain, immutable, unbreakable decree. It is used in reference to the election of the Lord Jesus as Surety. "Whom God hath sent forth to be a propitiation" (Romans 3:25). It is also used relative to the elect, particularly in reference to both the means by which, and the end unto which they are made partakers of salvation. "... them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28); "... that the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Romans 9:11); "... being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11).

(4) Then there is the word ekloge, that is, election. Even though it is used in reference to other matters, it also is frequently used to describe divine appointment unto salvation as well as the means whereby the elect become partakers of salvation. "The purpose of God according to election" (Romans 9:11); "There is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:7); "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (1 Thessalonians 1:4). In this respect believers are called the elect. "Few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14); "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Romans 8:33). They are even referred to as "the election" itself. "But the election hath obtained it" (Romans 11:7). They whom God has chosen for a specific purpose He has also chosen in regard to the means, which is also referred to as "choosing." "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit. I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15:16; John 15:19).

Predestination Defined

Having considered the word, we now proceed to consider the matter itself. We shall present it descriptively, and explain it point by point.

Predestination is an eternal, volitional, and immutable decree of God to create some men, concluding[Note: At the end of this chapter à Brakel refers to Romans 11:32 when using a similar expression. The Dutch phrase from this text “onder het ongelooft besluiten” is translated as “concluding in unbelief” in the KJV.]them in the state of sin, and bringing them unto salvation through Christ, to the glory of His sovereign grace. He simultaneously decreed to create other men, also concluding them in the state of sin, to damn them for their own sin, to the praise of His justice.

Predestination is a divine decree. Whatever was stated in a general sense in the previous chapter concerning God's decrees must also be specifically applied to this decree: it is eternal, volitional, wise, and absolutely immutable. This decree originates in God Himself. “Moreover whom He did predestinate” (Romans 8:30); “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... having predestinated us” (Ephesians 1:3; Ephesians 1:5). God is all-sufficient in and unto Himself; the creation of creatures was not a necessity with Him. It is solely due to His goodness that He wishes to make His creatures partakers of this goodness -- indeed, that He has gifted both angels and men with intellect and volition, not merely to find sufficiency and delight within themselves, but to find their felicity in communion with God and in the reflection upon and acknowledging of God's perfections. Blessed is he whom God has chosen to be thus engaged! The objective which God had in view with predestination is the magnification of Himself in His grace, mercy, and justice. This should not be understood to mean that anything can be added to the glory of God, but rather that angels and men, in perceiving and acknowledging this glory, would enjoy felicity. Even among men a wise individual does not proceed without a well-defined objective. A building contractor does not first gather bricks, wood, and various building materials without any intent and then subsequently decide what he will do with them. Rather, he first determines that he wishes to build a house, and in order to accomplish that objective he acquires the materials which serve his purpose. This leads us to affirm the following proposition: The ultimate objective of a plan is conceived first and executed later. This is much more true of the only wise God. Would God first have decreed to create men and to conclude them in sin without having any further purpose, only to decree subsequently what He would do with them? No, He first decreed the end: the magnification of His grace and justice. For this purpose God decreed the means to accomplish this objective: the creation of man and his conclusion in sin. This is clearly stated in Scripture. “What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory?” (Romans 9:22-23). The apostle emphatically states God's objective: to manifest His wrath as well as the riches of His glory. He follows this up by stating which means He will use to accomplish this objective: the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and the vessels of mercy prepared unto glory.

Whatever God accomplishes in time has been decreed by Him from eternity. He selects some from the depraved mass of the human race to be the recipients of salvation, bringing them to Christ their Surety and saving them by Him. This presupposes that He decreed to do so from eternity. Yet, it is but a means to His objective, which is the magnification of His mercy and justice. It was for that purpose that God decreed the felicity of men; and for that purpose God decreed to

create men, to conclude them in sin, and to deliver them through Christ. Therefore if we view predestination comprehensively -- including both the end and the means whereby the end is accomplished -- both sin and Christ are involved. Although we make a separate and sequential distinction between these various matters, we recognize that God has decreed everything with one singular, all-inclusive decreeing act. For the purpose of orderly presentation, however, we distinguish between the end and the means.

God has also decreed that He will be magnified in His justice. To accomplish that objective He decreed to create men, to permit them to sin volitionally, and to justly damn them for their sins. God did not create one human being to happiness and another to condemnation. Rather, He created the entire human race perfectly holy, and thus unto felicity -- His objective in doing so. I repeat that we must here consider God's objective in creating man, for the felicity of man was the objective of the state of innocency. If man had remained in this state, it would have resulted in the felicity of all mankind. We should not confuse the objective of creation and the objective of the Creator. In creation it was not God's objective that all men would attain unto salvation; for as God's counsel will stand and His purpose will always be accomplished, all would then indeed attain unto salvation. God prevents no one from obtaining salvation, but man excludes himself since he sins willfully. The election of some unto salvation is not to the detriment of others. Reprobation is neither the cause that someone sins, nor why someone is damned, but the sinner himself and his sin are the cause. It is true that those who have not been elected will not be saved; it is equally true that none but sinners will be damned. It is also true that whoever repents, believes in Christ, and lives holily will not be damned but saved. Man is therefore to be blamed for not doing so. Likewise when God converts someone, brings him to Christ, and sanctifies him, it is to be attributed to His sovereign grace. It is thus evident that it is nothing but vicious slander to insist that the church teaches that one man is created unto felicity and the other unto damnation -- and therefore someone who would be virtuous to the utmost degree would nevertheless be damned, whereas someone else who would engage in wickedness to the utmost degree would nevertheless be saved. Far be it from the Almighty to do unjustly! That He has determined to manifest His grace and justice to man proceeds purely from His goodness and holiness. It is a pure manifestation of holiness to deliver men through Christ and to lead them unto salvation in the way of holiness. It is also a pure manifestation of holiness to leave men who sin voluntarily in their sin, and to damn them for their sins. When a person becomes godly and a believer, this is not to be attributed to any efforts by man who, being evil, wishes only to do evil. It must rather be attributed to the work of God's grace which He only performs in the elect. The Distinctive Characteristics of Predestination

(1) Predestination is eternal, that is, from before the foundation of the world. "... whom He did predestinate" (Romans 8:30).

(2) Predestination is volitional. God was not moved by external or internal causes to predetermine man's destiny, but was solely moved by His good pleasure. "For so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matthew 9:22). The fact that God has ordained to lead one individual unto salvation through Christ and to damn another individual for his sins is solely to be attributed to the free exercise of His sovereignty. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (Romans 9:21). This is infinitely more true of God.

(3) Predestination is an act of wisdom whereby God ordains suitable means to accomplish His end. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33). The apostle exclaims this concerning predestination, which he discussed in this chapter.

(4) Predestination is independent, absolute, and unconditional. God accomplishes His decree by the use of means, but the means are not the conditions. The decree is not contingent upon the means.

Thus, the means neither establish nor unsettle this decree. God Himself governs the means to accomplish His certain, immutable, and immovable purpose -- a purpose which proceeds from within Himself according to His good pleasure. All means are subordinate to this good pleasure. "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:11-13).

(5) Predestination is an immutable decree. Since God's purpose originates in eternity, it is not contingent upon the condition of goodness or evil within man, but proceeds solely from the good pleasure of God. It is thus impossible for this purpose to change. God Himself is immutable, wise, and omnipotent. Therefore Romans 8:30 states, "Moreover whom He did predestinate ... them He also glorified" (cf. Romans 9:21-23). The Two Parts of Predestination: Election and Reprobation

Predestination consists of two parts: election and reprobation. This is evident from texts in which both are mentioned simultaneously. "... vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: ... vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory" (Romans 9:22-23); "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Romans 11:7); "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). The Decree of Election

Various words are used to describe the decree of election, such as "purpose," "foreknowledge," and "predestination." "... them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate" (Romans 8:28-29). It is also referred to as being ordained to eternal life: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48); as being written in the book of life: "but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20); as obtaining salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:9), and by the word "chosen": "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

Election is the foreordination of God whereby He eternally, certainly, and immutably has decreed to lead some specific individuals, identified by name, unto eternal salvation, not because of foreseen faith or good works, but motivated purely by His singular and sovereign good pleasure, to the glory of His grace.

(1) Election is a divine deed. It has pleased the eternal God, who is all-sufficient in Himself, to communicate His goodness, having chosen some men to be the recipients of that communication. "He hath chosen us" (Ephesians 1:4); He hath appointed us "to obtain salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). It is for this reason that they are called "His own elect" (Luke 18:7). God must not be perceived here as Judge, judging the deeds of men to either justify or damn them in consequence of this, but He must here be considered as sovereign Lord, who deals with His creatures as it pleases Him, electing the one and rejecting the other.

(2) Election originates in eternity. In time, God sets some apart by His efficacious call, bringing them from a natural state into the state of grace. "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (John 15:16). This selective call, however, proceeds from God's eternal purpose (Romans 8:28). Thus the decree of election was not made in time -- in response to man's existence, faith, and godly life -- but occurred before man performed any good deed (Romans 9:11); that is, from eternity, before the foundation of the world. "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4); "According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11); "... according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9).

(3) Election pertains to specific individuals; that is, God has made a distinction between men and men. "Many be called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:16); "... but the election ... and the rest ..." (Romans 11:7). The elect are specific individuals, identified by name, in contradistinction to other specific individuals. God neither chose individuals because of qualities or virtues nor because of faith or godliness, but His choice relates to specific identity only. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate" (Romans 8:29); "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19); "... whose names are in the book of life" (Php 4:3).

(4) Election did not occur by virtue of Christ's merits, foreseen faith, or anticipated good works. These are fruits issuing forth from election. They are not the causes of election. They do not precede election but are a consequence of it. There is nothing which necessitates God to do anything. Nothing which would be in man, nor any future deeds, moved God to elect a person. The reason for election is nothing but the sovereign good pleasure of God. "... according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself ... having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Christ Jesus to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 1:5). This alone is the fountain of election. In its execution, however, God uses means. God, having permitted the human race to become subject to sin and punishment, in time draws His elect out of this state and is gracious to them. Election is therefore called the election of grace. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works" (Romans 11:5-6).

Because God has elected some, He grants Christ to them in order to bring them to God and salvation in a manner consistent with His divine Being. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (John 17:6). It is in this respect that election occurred in Christ. "According as He hath chosen us in Him. ... Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself ... wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:4-6). This election is not a consequence of any foreseen faith or good works. These issue forth out of election, being the means to make the elect partakers of the salvation ordained for them. This is true for faith: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Therefore faith is called the faith of the elect (Titus 1:1). Consider also what is stated concerning good works in Ephesians 1:5; Ephesians 1:4, "Having predestinated us [not because we were such and such or because God viewed us as such but] ... that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." For whom he did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:30). These He called, justified, and glorified (Romans 8:30).

(5) Election is immutable. Man will not change this decree, as this election was not made on the basis of conditions. God Himself works in His elect that which is pleasing to Him, thereby leading them unto salvation. God will not of Himself change this decree, since with the Lord there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). The Lord's wisdom and omnipotence cause His counsel to stand. This is why Scripture speaks of the "immutability of His counsel" (Hebrews 6:17); "That the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Romans 9:11); "The foundation of God standeth sure" (2 Timothy 2:19); "Whom He did predestinate ... them He also glorified" (Romans 8:30).

(6) The purpose of election is the glorification of God. This is not to add glory to Him, for He is perfect, but to reveal all His glorious perfections which manifest themselves in the work of redemption, to angels and men, in order that in reflecting upon them felicity may be experienced. Its purpose is, by glorifying and praising Him, to end with all things in Him in whom all things must end, and thus to afford Him honor and glory. The purpose is "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:10); it is to "the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:6). In reference to this the apostle exclaims, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).

Reprobation Defined The other element of predestination is reprobation, to which reference is made in a variety of ways, such as "to be cast away." "I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away" (Isaiah 41:9); to be fitted to destruction (Romans 9:22); to be appointed unto wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9); to be ordained unto condemnation (Jude 1:4); and not to be written in the book of life (Revelation 13:8). These texts prove at once that there is such a thing as reprobation.

We define reprobation to be the predestination of some specific individuals, identified by name, out of sovereign good pleasure to the manifestation of God's justice in them by punishing them for their sins.

(1) Just as we have shown and shall further prove that election pertains to specific individuals, so this is likewise applicable to reprobation. "... whose names were not written in the book of life" (Revelation 17:8). Christ said to specific individuals, "Ye are not of My sheep" (John 10:26). They are designated by the relative pronoun "who." "For there are certain men ... who were before of old ordained to this condemnation" (Jude 1:4). This is the reason why some are specifically called by name, such as Esau (Romans 9:17), Pharaoh (Romans 9:17), and Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:25). The number of reprobates far exceeds the number of elect, who in contrast to them -- even of those that are called -- are referred to as "few" (Matthew 20:16).

(2) Reprobation proceeds solely from God's good pleasure. Although the ungodliness of the reprobates is the cause of their damnation, this nevertheless was not the reason why God, to the glory of His justice, was moved to decree their reprobation. It purely proceeds from the good pleasure of God who has the right and the power to do as He pleases with His own. Thus, no one is permitted to say, "Why hast Thou made me thus?" (Romans 9:22). According to His good pleasure He conceals the way of salvation (Matthew 11:25-26); "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Romans 9:22). His purpose stands firm. This is confirmed in Romans 9:11 where it is stated, "for the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil." It is therefore according to God's sovereignty and good pleasure to manifest His justice towards some and His grace to others (Romans 9:22-23). God shall maintain His

holiness and justice. Believers know that God is just and righteous in all His doings. Let him who wishes to strive with God concerning this do so.

(3) As the decree itself is a manifestation of the sovereignty of God, its purpose is the manifestation of God's justice which reveals itself in the execution of this decree. He who decrees the end simultaneously decrees the means unto this end. Sin is the only reason that God has decreed to damn specific individuals. God permits them by their own volition to turn from Him and to enslave themselves to sin. They, having sinned, become subject to the curse threatened upon sin. God, while delivering others from sin and its curse by means of the Surety Jesus Christ, bypasses them, and therefore they neither hear God nor believe in Him. "Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47); "But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep" (John 10:26). As a righteous Judge God punishes them due to their sin in "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:5). Thus, God shows His wrath over "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Romans 9:22).

Up to this point we have explained this doctrine; however, this doctrine has many opponents, such as Roman Catholics (although not exclusively so), Arminians, Lutherans, and others.

Questions and Objections Answered The Arminians appeared on the scene at the beginning of the seventeenth century. They were condemned by the national Synod -- better referred to as the General Synod held in AD 1618 and AD 1619 in Dordrecht -- and were subsequently expelled from the Reformed Church. [Note: Contrary to today, there was only one Reformed denomination in the Netherlands during à Brakel's time, which bore the name "The Reformed Church."] They, first of all, propose the existence of a universal, indefinite decree which relates to believers and their perseverance in good works, as well as the damnation of the ungodly. This is referred to as the will of divine precedence. Secondly, they propose that God, moved by universal philanthropy, ordained Jesus Christ to be a Savior of all men in general and each one specifically. They maintain that God has done so in consequence of the universal atonement of Christ as well as man's faith and perseverance in good works, both of which they consider to proceed from the exercise of man's free will which God anticipates by virtue of His mediate knowledge (see chapter 3) whereby He knows what everyone will or will not do. They maintain that this is the reason why God was moved to decree to save some, whereas due to foreseen continuance in unbelief, ungodliness, and apostasy He was moved to damn others. They also propose that no person can be assured of his salvation because he knows not whether he will persevere or not, even though he is presently believing and godly.

Within Roman Catholicism there is no agreement concerning this doctrine, but rather vehement contention. Some are almost orthodox in this doctrine, whereas others agree with the Arminians. First the battle was waged between the Franciscans and Dominicans and afterwards between the Jesuits and Jansenists. Some hold to election by grace, whereas others promote election on the basis of works. Others hold to yet different opinions, the one maintaining that election unto grace is by grace only, but unto glory on the basis of works, whereas others insist that both are on the basis of works.

Lutherans do not strictly adhere to the sentiments of Luther who was pure in this doctrine in spite of his use of expressions which are a bit too crude. His followers, however -- the one more than the other -- deviate from his position. They propose the existence of two decrees. The first decree

pertains to the election of Christ to be a universal Savior of the entire human race. They hold to an election of all men in order that all might be redeemed through Christ, may receive means which are sufficient unto salvation, be called to Christ, and be saved upon the conditions of faith and repentance. Thus, all could possibly be saved if they would but believe in Christ and repent; however, the majority of mankind would reject this offer and thus perish. In addition they propose a different decree of election: God from eternity and out of sovereign grace has chosen certain specific individuals unto salvation in Christ, He being the foundation of election, who as Surety would pay for them and merit salvation. Others wish to hold to a foreseen faith, be it as a moving cause or as a means similar to its function in justification. They furthermore propose that the elect upon birth are dead in sins and trespasses and thus are entirely impotent to repent and to believe in Christ. At God's time, however, in accordance with the decree of election, He converts them, grants them faith, and preserves them unto salvation. Thus, they maintain that the elect can completely apostatize after regeneration and again become dead in sins and trespasses. Nevertheless they cannot do so irrevocably, since God, according to His eternal and immutable decree, restores faith and regeneration prior to their death. Consequently, an elect person, having been regenerated, can be assured of his salvation.

Amyraut, and all who follow him, maintain to have found a middle position whereby the offense of the true doctrine can be removed. They hold to the existence of two decrees. One is a universal decree whereby God, being graciously disposed towards the entire human race, decreed to send Christ into the world so that He by virtue of His atonement would merit the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation for all men -- this being contingent upon faith in Him and their not neglecting this salvation. To some extent God would then will the salvation of all men and every man would be able to be saved if he would but exercise his will accordingly. To this they add a special decree whereby God out of sovereign grace has chosen certain specific individuals unto salvation. By virtue of this decree He will most certainly lead them to salvation, granting them (due to their natural inability) faith and repentance and preserving them in this state by His power. From all this a regenerate person may be assured of his salvation. As far as the first decree is concerned, Amyraldians are in agreement with Arminians and Lutherans, but are orthodox concerning the second decree. In the presentation of the sentiments of the various parties it becomes evident that there is not merely one point of contention, but that various points of contention are intermingled. We shall therefore consider and treat each point by itself.

Socinians maintain that there are two elections: one universal, eternal election of godly men, and one particular election which occurs in time.

Question #1: Has God from eternity purposed universally to have mercy upon the entire human race, having ordained Christ to be a Savior for each and every one, calling them all to Himself and blessed communion with Him?

Answer: The sentiments of the various parties and the manner in which they express themselves concerning this manner have been explained above. All agree, however, in this point that God has not ultimately intended and purposed to save all men, perceiving that then all men would most certainly become the recipients of salvation -- a fact contradicted by reality.

We respond that God does not hate any creature other than because of sin, having a common affection for all His creatures as created beings, each after his kind. He maintains and governs

them, in this way not leaving Himself without witness to sinners, doing good to them and filling their hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14:17). We also maintain that God is pleased with the conversion of men, their faith in Christ, their prayers, their alms, and their sanctification, as all of these are principal elements of the restoration of God's image in man. We deny, however, the existence of such universal grace or purpose to be gracious to all men, to give Christ to be a universal Savior for all men, and presenting Christ as such to all men.

First, we maintain that whatever God does in this time state, He has decreed from eternity. "... who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11). Thus, God, in this time state, is not gracious to all men. "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Romans 9:18). God did not send Christ into the world to be the Savior of all, but only for His elect. Christ suffered as a Surety and High Priest, and the merits of Christ and their application are inseparable. The first is not broader in scope than the other, and Scripture ascribes the efficacy of Christ's death only to some. We will deal with this more comprehensively in chapter 22, "The Satisfaction of Christ." God does not offer Christ to all men, for he does not call all men. "He sheweth His word unto Jacob. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Psalms 147:19-20). Christ confirms this in Matthew 11:25-26, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight." This reality is incontrovertibly confirmed by daily experience. We therefore conclude that in eternity God did not make a universal, gracious decree. He neither ordained Christ to be the Savior of all men, nor did He decree to offer Christ to all men.

Secondly, election and reprobation are the opposite of each other. Both relate to specific individuals. Both election and reprobation concern specific persons with specific names. All of this has previously been demonstrated. Thus, there is simply no room for a universal decree -- to be gracious to all and to send Christ for all men. It cannot be maintained that this is a determination in a second or subsequent decree, and then suggest that this decree does not eliminate a prior decree which is universal in scope. Nowhere does Scripture speak of a first and a second decree, much less of a first decree which is nullified by a subsequent decree. God's decree is immutable. Since God in His eternal decree has appointed some unto wrath and destruction, it follows that there was no prior decree of God to be gracious to them.

Thirdly, the position that grace is universal in scope has several inherent absurdities, which in turn generate additional absurdities:

(1) To propose that there is a universal will to save all men implies that God wills contrary to His will. He who truly, sincerely, and fervently wishes to accomplish a task, will execute it if at all possible. God is able to actually save all men, but it is not according to His will. This is confirmed by the outcome of events. If, however, it is God's desire to save all men, then He necessarily has willed to do so, which is also true for the reverse argument.

(2) This universal decree to save all men is either absolute or conditional. If it is absolute, God has failed in His purpose, for all men are not saved. If it is conditional, God will either execute this condition or merely demand that it be met. If God Himself were to execute this condition, all men would actually be saved. This is simply not true. If God does not wish to execute the condition, but merely demands that it be met, then He does not truly will the salvation of all men. God knows that

it is completely impossible for sinful man to comply with this condition, since he is spiritually dead, blind, unwilling, and impotent. Then God would fervently and earnestly desire something which He simultaneously knows with certainty will never come to pass.

(3) If God were to universally will the salvation of all men, He would fail in His purpose and would be deprived from accomplishing His will, since He wills something which does not occur. He wills the salvation of all men; and nevertheless, they are not all saved.

It is quite different, however, when God commands something and declares that obedience to it would be pleasing to Him. There can obviously be no argument about the fact that men do not obey the will of God's command. It is again a different matter to decree something with a purpose, and it is this will of God's decree which is the point of contention here. It is the will of God's decree which is thwarted if that which He wills does not come to pass. If God had decreed the salvation of all men, He would be thwarted in His purpose, as He would not obtain that which He decreed according to His will and that which He wills according to His decree. Since all this is absurd, it is also absurd to maintain that within God there is a will to decree the universal salvation of all men. The reasons advanced by those who hold to the view of universal grace are dealt with in our discussion concerning the satisfaction of Christ in chapter 22. Here we shall deal briefly with some of the reasons and demonstrate that they do not lend support to the idea of a decree of universal grace.

Objection #1: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from His way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11).

Answer: The decree of God, which most certainly will be executed and whereby God always accomplishes His purpose, is not discussed in this text. It rather speaks of God's delight in the conversion of man whereby man is again restored in the image and likeness of God; also that God, by virtue of the fact that man is His creature, is displeased with both man's failure to repent as well as his damnation.

Objection #2: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth ..." (John 3:16); "... which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51); "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:19); "And He is the propitiation of our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Answer: (1) These texts do not deal with the point of contention, which is the eternal decree of God, but rather with Christ's mission on behalf of man.

(2) The word "world" here refers to human beings, to the human race which is the object of God's love for men, the human race being the object of God's love and benevolence. This does not mean that God loves every individual human being in the world, that Christ imparts spiritual life to every man, and that sin is not imputed to everyone. All this is evident from the general language of the Bible. The first world perished in the flood (Luke 17:27); nevertheless, Noah and his family were preserved. The devil "deceiveth the whole world" (Revelation 12:9), "and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). Who would therefore conclude that there were no believers in the world and that there was not a single human being who was not deceived by the devil, nor lying in wickedness? Christ says, "I pray not for the world" (John 17:9), which does not imply that

there is not a person on earth for whom Christ does pray. The word “world” cannot be understood as referring to each and every human being upon earth, but one should understand it to refer to those individuals which the text has in view. Sometimes the reference is to a multitude of people, “Behold, the world is gone after Him” (John 12:19), or to the ungodly in contradistinction to the elect (John 17:9). Sometimes it is used in regard to the elect in contrast with others. In 2 Corinthians 5:19, “world” is used to refer to those who are reconciled with God and to whom God does not impute their trespasses. This does not apply to the ungodly, but to the elect.

Objection #3: “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all” (Romans 11:32); “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Romans 5:18); “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22); “And that He died for all ...” (2 Corinthians 5:15); “Who will have all men to be saved. ... Who gave Himself a ransom for all ...” (1 Timothy 2:4; 1 Timothy 2:6); “... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Answer: Our response to each of these texts can be found in chapter 22. The word “all” does not refer to all men who have existed, do exist, and will exist, but rather to all those who are under discussion in each individual text. Romans 5:18 speaks of all those who are in Christ, who will be the recipients of justification unto life. Romans 11:32 refers to the rejection and the restoration or repentance of the Jewish nation. 1 Corinthians 15:22 speaks of all who will be made alive in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:15 makes mention of all believers who have died to sin and are partakers of spiritual life. In 1 Timothy 2:4-6, the reference is to all sorts of men, which is evident in verse 2 -- all sorts of men rather than all men will come to the knowledge of the truth. Whatever God has decreed shall certainly come to pass and whatever does not occur is not according to the will of God's decree. Thus, all men are not saved, but only those in whose stead Christ has been given as a ransom. 2 Peter 3:9 refers to the elect who will come to repentance and who must first be gathered in before the world perishes. It also makes mention of the command and the declaration of the gospel which commands everyone who hears it to repent, speaking of both God's pleasure and displeasure relative to repentance or the lack of it.

Since we have demonstrated above that the proponents of universal grace make Christ the foundation and cause of election, it is necessary to answer the following question.

Question #2: Does the election of Christ precede in its order the election of men, so that God was moved by the merits of Christ to elect men, or does the election of men take precedence, and thus Christ was chosen to execute the election of men?

Answer: The proponents of a universal grace hold to the first position and we to the second position. Christ, as far as the decree of election is concerned, is the Executor of this election. He is the meriting but not the moving cause of the salvation to which the elect are ordained. We maintain this for the following reasons:

First, Christ has been chosen on behalf of the elect, to be their Mediator, Redeemer, and Savior. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10); “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). These texts state clearly that the gift of the Son proceeds and issues forth from the

love of God towards the elect. It is a fact in the realm of nature that the cause precedes the effect, the end precedes the means whereby the end is attained, and the objective precedes any activity related to it. Thus, the love of God toward the elect as well as their election preceded the ordination of the Surety who is given to them (Isaiah 9:5), is given them unto their redemption and salvation, and who was foreordained and manifested for them (1 Peter 1:20). The Lord Jesus confirms this in John 17:6, where He states, "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." They were therefore the property of the Father before they were given to the Son as Surety and Mediator, and thus their election precedes the election of the Surety who was chosen for the benefit of their salvation.

Secondly, election has no other cause than the good pleasure of God. "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:9-11). Election has precedence here, as the elect are said to be ordained according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will; that is, according to His good pleasure. There is here no other cause which would have moved God. To this is added the means whereby God would accomplish His purpose: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ." Thus, Christ is the ordained means whereby those who have been chosen according to God's sovereign good pleasure are made partakers of the salvation to which they have been ordained. He is therefore neither the moving cause nor the foundation of election. This is also confirmed by the following texts. "... it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32); "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matthew 11:26); "... not of works, but of Him that calleth" (Romans 9:11).

Objection #1: "According as He hath chosen us in Him" (Ephesians 1:4); "... grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9).

Answer: (1) To be chosen in Christ is to be made partakers of all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). The apostle clearly expresses this in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, where he states, "For God hath ... appointed us ... to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Our appointment unto salvation is the issue at hand, and this appointment is executed by the agency of Christ. Thus "in Christ" does not mean "for Christ's sake," but rather by means of Christ. He has chosen us to be saved through Christ. Before anyone was in Christ, he already was the property of the Father. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (John 17:6).

(2) Grace was given in Christ before the world began, although not in actuality, as the elect did not as yet exist. Rather, it was ordained that grace would be given them in time by Christ as the Executor of the plan of salvation. Thus, these texts do not afford the least proof that Christ is the moving cause and foundation of election.

Objection #2: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). The image to which there must be conformity precedes that which is conformed to this image. Thus, Christ was elected prior to men, and man is elected as He is viewed in Christ.

Answer: (1) The apostle states expressly that His foreknowledge of the elect has precedence. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image," etc.

(2) Conformity to the image of His Son occurs in this time state, and is not related to the decree but to the execution of this decree. The apostle states that God has ordained from eternity, and that those known from eternity would be conformed to the image of Christ in this time state. He does not say, however, that God, in electing, conformed His elect to the image of His Son. If there were such a text, their argument would have a semblance of validity, but this is not at all the case.

(3) Christ is said to be the firstborn among many brethren, but not the first elect. It is the latter that needed to be proven. The apostle here speaks of the beginning of the salvation of the elect, which is the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is both the meriting cause of salvation as well as the example to which the elect are conformed in time, both in reference to His suffering and His life. In this respect He is the firstborn of all in the actual execution of God's decree, and in His excellence.

Question #3: Have some men been the specific object of God's choice; that is, has He chosen them by name? Answer: The Arminians maintain that all men have been the object of God's choice, this choice being contingent upon faith, repentance, and perseverance, all of which in turn are contingent upon the exercise of man's free will. They insist that election is God's decree to save all who believe and are godly, and that reprobation is God's decree to damn all unbelievers and the ungodly, without specifying them by name. They furthermore maintain that God, by virtue of a mediate knowledge, knows who shall and who shall not be willing to believe. As a result of this knowledge God knows who will and who will not be saved.

We maintain, however, that God has chosen a predetermined number of specific individuals by name. He has furthermore decreed to send Christ to be a Mediator to lead them unto salvation. He decreed to call them irresistibly unto Christ, grant them faith and repentance, preserve them by His power, and thus in actuality save them. This is confirmed by the following proofs.

Proof #1: It is evident from the word *proōrizein*, that is, to ordain beforehand, which is repeatedly used in reference to election (cf. Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:5; Ephesians 1:11). This word means "to ordain someone for a specific purpose." "For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:28); "Him ... by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," etc. (Acts 2:23); "Again, He limiteth a certain day" (Hebrews 4:7); He "hath determined ... the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). Since God uses this word in reference to election, it therefore pertains to specifically identified individuals who are ordained unto salvation. The same is also expressed by the verb "to elect," which is the Greek word *ekloge*. He who takes the whole does not make a choice. To elect is to choose something from among many for oneself according to one's own pleasure. Since Scripture states that God from eternity has chosen certain men unto salvation, it does not imply that all men are ordained to this salvation, but rather that He has chosen specific individuals unto Himself.

Proof #2: It is evident from the fact that some names have been written in the book of life. The children of Israel had their genealogies from which they could prove their tribal origin. Likewise God is said to have such a book, which is called the book of life (Revelation 3:5). The names of the reprobate are not recorded in this book. "... whose names are not written in the book of life ..." (Revelation 13:8). Rather, the names of those elected unto salvation are recorded in this book.

“But rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). In Revelation 21:27 it is stated that “they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” will enter the new Jerusalem. The Father has elected them, written them in His book, and has given them to the Son in order that He might redeem them. He in turn assumed responsibility for them, and has transferred their names into His book, which for this reason is called the “book of the Lamb.” “... help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life” (Php 4:3). It cannot be expressed any more clearly. There is here no mention of any virtue or condition. There is no general reference to evil and good, to believers or unbelievers, but the name of each individual is recorded in the book of life. Those whose names are recorded in this book are mentioned by name, as well as those whose names are not recorded. Thus, election relates to specific individuals.

Proof #3: This is also evident from the contrast between persons rather than virtues. “... many be called, but few chosen” (Matthew 20:16); “... the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Romans 11:7). It is nowhere recorded that God elects or rejects virtues, nor is it stated anywhere that God has elected or rejected individuals with a specific nature. Rather, the reference is always to specific persons. “Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated” (Romans 9:13). Even though this may be applied to their descendants, as the descendants of the one were incorporated into the church and those of the other were rejected -- even from the administration of the means of grace -- the text nevertheless refers to individuals as far as eternal election and rejection is concerned. All of this is evident from the context of this text, for the apostle follows this proposition with a treatise concerning election and rejection. This is also confirmed by those texts which do not mention individuals by name, but which nevertheless use the pronouns “our,” “those,” and “these.” “... as He hath chosen us ...” (Ephesians 1:4); “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate ...” (Romans 8:29). These words do not refer to virtues, but rather to specific individuals. “The Lord knoweth them that are His” (2 Timothy 2:19).

Objection #1: If God had chosen specific individuals, their names would have to be recorded in the Bible, which contains the entire counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

Answer: The names of some are recorded as has been demonstrated. It is sufficient if their names have been recorded in the book of life. As far as the full counsel of God is concerned, Scripture reveals as much as we need to know to believe, to live holily, and to be comforted.

Objection #2: Since all the promises of God are conditional, then this is also true for election. God’s manner of operation in this time state is consistent with His eternal decree, and if therefore election is conditional, it is neither absolute nor does it relate to specific individuals.

Answer: We reject this conclusion. There are conditional promises, but it does not necessarily follow that there is a conditional decree of election. The decree is one thing and the administration of the gospel another. It is true that whatever God accomplishes in time He has decreed from eternity. Since He makes conditional promises in time, He consequently decreed from eternity to make conditional promises. This is logical, but it does not follow that therefore election is also conditional.

Objection #3: If God has decreed such an election which is both absolute and specific, then He would not issue a conditional command to the elect relative to the acquisition of salvation, nor a

threat of damnation upon disobedience to this command, which nevertheless does commonly occur in the Word of God.

Answer: This is not a logical argument. He who has most certainly decreed the end, has also decreed the means whereby He brings the elect to that end. This is the way which God holds before them: faith and repentance. He uses promises and threatenings, which are sanctified by His Spirit, to motivate them towards that end.

Objection #4: If there was such a thing as an election of specific individuals, the gospel could not be proclaimed to everyone unconditionally, nor could a reprobate be commanded to believe in Christ, with the promise of salvation annexed to it. It would be contradictory not to will someone's salvation and nevertheless to promise salvation to him if he believes in Christ. Consequently, God has not chosen specific individuals by name.

Answer: The fact that there is such a specific election has been proven beyond the shadow of a doubt. It is equally true that there is an unconditional offer of the gospel, to which the promise of salvation is annexed upon the conditions of faith and repentance. There is no contradiction here, for the one is absolute and the other conditional. The one is a decree, whereas the other is a command. There is a difference between the objective of the worker and the ultimate realization of his work. It is a manifestation of God's goodness to present the gospel to the unrepentant with a conditional promise, and it is man's duty to obey that gospel. Election does not prevent the unrepentant from obedience, but rather their own evil nature, and God is thus glorified when He damns them for their own disobedience.

Question #5: Did election proceed purely from the sovereign good pleasure of God, without any external influence, or was this decree made on the basis of foreseen faith and good works?

Answer: The latter is the view of many in Roman Catholicism, of Arminians, and of many Lutherans. We do maintain that faith and holiness constitute the way by which God accomplishes the decree of election. They are, however, in no way the moving cause nor the foundation of election which solely and purely proceeds from God's sovereign good pleasure.

First, this is evident from Scripture's express declaration that election has no other cause but God's good pleasure alone.

(1) "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). The apostle speaks of persons (us), and not of virtues. He declares that God who saves them grants them eternal glory, and leads them there by means of the calling. He reveals the fountain from which the purpose and the means unto this purpose proceed. He affirms that this is not to be found in works but solely in the purpose and grace of God.

(2) "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her ... so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Romans 9:11-12; Romans 9:16). The apostle here refers to two specific individuals, Jacob and Esau, and not to their descendants as if to imply that Jacob's descendants would constitute the church of God and Esau's descendants would be deprived of the means of grace. He speaks of

these two, considering them not yet born, “neither having done any good or evil.” It is the apostle’s objective to exclude all consideration of works as the moving cause that one person is accepted and the other rejected. He wishes to confirm that God’s purpose according to election is the only origin of election and rejection, and thus the decree is not based on works but originates in the God who calls. From God’s dealings with these two men, the apostle draws the line to God’s dealings with all other men. Thus the reason why someone is appointed for destruction is not to be found in man even though sin is the cause for damnation coming upon them. Likewise, the reason why anyone is prepared unto glory is neither to be found in man, but only in the good pleasure of the Lord (vss. 21-22). The reason is not to be found in willing nor running, but in the mercy of God.

(3) “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32); “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight” (Matthew 11:26); “Having predestinated us ... according to the good pleasure of His will” (Ephesians 1:5); “... there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace,” etc. (Romans 11:5-6). These texts expressly state God’s good pleasure and His sovereign grace to be the origin of election unto salvation, excluding all other things, particularly all works.

Faith, good works, and the perseverance in both of these do not originate in man himself, but in God. They proceed from eternal election. Consequently, election is not based on faith, good works, and perseverance. We will subsequently demonstrate in chapters 31 and 32 that these matters do not proceed from man himself. That election is not the result of faith, but faith the result of election, is evident from what follows.

First, “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Romans 8:29-30). Here the apostle posits election as being unto glory and grace, unto glory as the ultimate end, and unto the benefits as means whereby this ordained glory is obtained.

Evasive Argument: Paul makes mention of the cross and states that believers have been appointed to suffer as Christ has suffered in order that they may be conformed to the image of His Son. He further says that they are called to this and that patient cross-bearing has the approbation of God; in this way He brings them to glory in the sight of all men.

Answer: (1) It is obvious that the apostle is referring to individuals; that is, specific individuals, pointing them out as it were with his finger as he uses words such as, “this,” “that,” “those,” “not such,” and “such.”

(2) Even though the apostle has previously made mention of suffering, his reference in these texts is not to suffering, but he establishes a firm foundation for comfort in suffering: their eternal election unto glory -- the latter being attained by making them conformed to Christ, calling them, and justifying them.

(3) This conformity of believers does not consist in the cross itself, for the ungodly also encounter crosses, who nevertheless are not conformed to Christ. This conformity consists in holiness. “... we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:49); “My little children, of whom I

travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19); "But we all ... are changed unto the same image ..." (2 Corinthians 3:18).

(4) This calling is not a calling unto the cross, but unto faith, hope, and love, which occurs by means of the gospel and is to glory and virtue. "... Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3); "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory" (1 Peter 5:10). This calling proceeds from election, as the apostle confirms here. Those whom He has foreknown, He has predestinated, and those He has called. This is why those who are called are declared to be chosen and faithful: "And they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14). In addition, the apostle speaks of such a calling which is inseparably linked to glory. The calling to bear the cross does not generally result in salvation, however, for God also brings crosses upon the ungodly. Many who are called externally, apostatize as a result of the cross (Matthew 13:21).

(5) The suggestion that justification would be God's approbation upon the suffering of believers does not contain a semblance of truth. To be justified means to be acquitted from sin and punishment for the sake of Christ's merits. "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died" (Romans 8:33-34). Thus, justification is not God's public approbation upon the suffering and patience of believers.

(6) Likewise, glorification does not signify the granting of honor before men; rather, it refers to making one a partaker of eternal glory. Nowhere does glorification refer to the act whereby God exalts someone or gives him a position of honor among men. Furthermore, believers are not honored among men for their suffering; suffering causes them to be held in contempt and to be despised by the world. To be glorified is to be made a partaker of eternal glory. "... that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17). Peter refers to being glorified as receiving a crown of glory. "Ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4). From all this it may be concluded that this argument is vain and invalid. Thus, this text confirms that conformity to Christ, calling, and justification proceed from eternal election, from which follows that God in His electing decree was not moved by faith and good works to elect one person rather than someone else.

Secondly, this is confirmed by texts specifically referring to faith, good works, and perseverance. These texts demonstrate that election is not based on these virtues, but that they are the result of election. In Acts 13:48 there is stated concerning faith. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Specific individuals are here said to believe, to which is added why they believed, whereas others did not. The origin of their believing was to be found in the fact that God had ordained them unto eternal life. Although it is not stated who ordained them, we nevertheless know that no one can ordain anyone unto eternal life but God alone. "God hath ... appointed us ... to obtain salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). The objective was eternal life, to which some had been ordained. Although it is not stated here that they were predestinated, we nevertheless know that ordination to eternal life is from eternity (cf. Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 3:11). They had been ordained to eternal life. This does not imply that they had a good, suitable inner disposition, for apart from the fact that this word is never descriptive of an internal spiritual frame -- no man has such a suitable inner disposition to believe or to be worthy of eternal life as we will demonstrate at the appropriate time -- it does mean "to ordain," "to determine," "to appoint," and "to be committed to something," which in 1 Corinthians 16:16 is expressed as "submitting one's

self unto.” Since God had ordained them unto eternal life, it necessarily follows that God granted them faith as the means to lead them to eternal life. When it is stated “as many as believed,” it is neither suggested that the apostle knew the precise number, nor that there were no more elect in those localities to be converted later. It merely indicates that the word was fruitful and efficacious, causing many to believe, and that none but the elect did believe. This is also confirmed in Titus 1:1, where the phrase occurs, “the faith of God’s elect.” This neither suggests that faith preceded election, nor was a moving cause for election, for then it would have been an election of faith. Since, however, it is referred to as the faith of the elect, it is evident that faith is subsequent to election and proceeds from it.

Thirdly, it is evident that holiness proceeds from election. “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children” (Ephesians 1:4-5). Although holiness is the objective for which God chooses someone, it is not therefore the moving cause why someone is chosen above someone else. That He has chosen us does not suggest that He has chosen us as believers, knowing by virtue of His mediate knowledge that we would believe, as a fruit of which we would exercise holiness. Then foreseen faith would be the moving cause of election, from which holiness would issue forth. The apostle rather speaks of those who now actually believe, and says of them that they were elected, since faith is given to someone because he is elect. This we have demonstrated and is also evident from verse 3, “... who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” All spiritual blessings proceed from election, which includes faith, it being a special blessing and gift of God. This is equally true of sanctification.

Fourthly, it is evident that perseverance proceeds from election. “... that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24). False prophets would have much power of deception and thus deceive many, but they would not be able to deceive any true believers, the reason being that they are elected. Such is also the case in Revelation 13:8 where it is stated, “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him (the beast), whose names are not written in the book of life.” Why is it that others would not follow the beast? By comparison it is evident that it was because their names were written in the book of life, as is confirmed by the golden chain of salvation, out of which not one link can be removed. Those whom He has foreknown, predestinated, called, and justified, he has also glorified (Romans 8:29-30). The apostle Peter extracts all blessing -- also the perseverance of saints -- from eternal election. In 1 Peter 1:2 he calls believers “elect,” and in verse 5 he says about those elect that they “are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”

Objection #1: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate” (Romans 8:29). Here it is expressly stated that foreknowledge precedes predestination. This means that God sees the faith, good works, and perseverance of believers prior to His election of them, and is thereby moved to elect them in deference to others.

Answer: Far be it from us to suggest that the apostle here states that God perceives the faith and good works of some in advance and therefore elects them. The apostle in using the relative pronoun “whom” speaks of persons and not of virtues. This foreknowledge is the eternal election unto salvation; it is a knowing of some to be His. “The Lord knoweth them that are His” (2 Timothy 2:19). It also relates to the election of Christ as Mediator, “... who verily was foreordained ...” [Note:

The Statenbijbel reads, “Dewelke wel voorgekend is geweest,” which literally translates as, “who verily was foreknown.”] (1 Peter 1:20), as well as to the election of some individuals, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Peter 1:2). God did not randomly determine who would become godly and believing, but consciously chose specific individuals to be His own. The reason why the apostle here allows foreknowledge to precede predestination is due to the fact that he establishes foreknowledge to be the fountain of all things. From that point he proceeds to the means whereby God leads those who are foreknown to salvation. Those whom He has known to be His own, He has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, and those He has called, etc.

Objection #2: God has loved the elect from eternity, and therefore foresaw their faith, for “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Answer: It is God’s will that we love our enemies, that we bless those who curse us, and that we do well to those that hate us (Matthew 5:44). Nevertheless there is nothing desirable in these enemies which would move us to love them. God likewise loves His enemies and, motivated by love, gives them His Son (John 3:16). “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). God’s love has its origin in God Himself, and He chooses objects to whom He will manifest His love. The motivation for this love does not originate with man. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:10; 1 John 4:19). It is a known fact that one can exercise love in a twofold manner. One can love with the love of affection and benevolence, which can be exercised towards his enemy, or with a love of pleasure or delight. [Note: à Brakel uses “welbehagelijkhheid,” which expresses love towards those with whom we are well-pleased.] God has eternally loved the elect with a love of benevolence, and in time with the love of His delight, finding delight in their holy deeds. From that perspective it is impossible to please God without faith. Thus, they whom it pleased God to elect from eternity, please God in time.

Objection #3: God has chosen the saints, the poor of this world, and those that are rich in faith. “As the elect of God, holy and beloved ...” (Colossians 3:12); “... because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13); “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit ...” (1 Peter 1:2); “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?” (James 2:5).

Answer: In these texts sanctification and faith are not presented as the moving causes why God has chosen His elect, but rather as fruits of election and as evidences that the person who manifests these fruits has been chosen by God from eternity. Colossians 3:12 does not suggest that these matters coalesce within God’s eternal purpose, much less that holiness precedes election as its cause. Rather, the apostle refers to the elect as they exist in time, already being partakers of sanctification. He advances election before time, sanctification in time, and the love of God towards them as reasons why they should be motivated to live worthy of these benefits. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 Peter 1:2 do not refer to holiness as either preceding election or as being its cause. It does not say, “God has chosen you in view of your sanctification,” but rather that He has chosen them unto salvation and sanctification, this being the way in which they will be

brought to salvation. In James 2:5 the apostle makes mention of the temporal condition of some believers as being the poor of the world. He admonishes not to despise them since God had also chosen them to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom. As election occurred according to God's sovereign good pleasure, so likewise did reprobation occur for the same reason.

Question #5: Is the decree of eternal election mutable or immutable? Answer: The Arminians are at a loss here, as they must yield to too many clear and irrefutable passages of Scripture in this regard. In an effort, however, to maintain mutableness -- which they must do as they consider election to be contingent upon the exercise of man's mutable will -- they have invented a distinction by proposing the existence of a perfect and an imperfect decree of election. They view the imperfect decree to be the will of God to save those who believe and are godly. All of this is contingent upon the exercise of man's free will which enables man either to believe or to apostatize from the faith. They consider the perfect decree of election to be the will of God to save specific individuals, since God has foreseen that they would believe and persevere in faith. The first decree is considered to be mutable and the second immutable -- not due to election, but due to the sufficiency of man, which God most certainly and infallibly foresaw. We reject this distinction as being outside of and contrary to the Word of God, and contradictory to the doctrine itself. We therefore maintain that the decree of eternal election, by virtue of its nature, is immutable in the absolute sense of the word. In it God has most certainly decreed the end, as well as the means to that end, by which He irresistibly accomplishes one thing or another.

First, this is evident from all texts which testify of the immutability of all God's decrees, a truth which we have considered comprehensively in the previous chapter. "For I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6); "... with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17); "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" (Isaiah 14:27). "My counsel shall stand" (Isaiah 46:10).

Add to this the texts referring to election. "... that the purpose of God according to election might stand ..." (Romans 9:11); "... God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel ..." (Hebrews 6:17); "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19). It cannot possibly be disputed that this last text refers to eternal election, for the apostle has just discussed the apostasy of Hymenaeus and Philetus. Following this he declares that although they had apostatized, those who are God's will not apostatize. This does not suggest that the foundation for perseverance is to be found in man, but rather that their being called and brought to faith rests upon a sure foundation -- the sure foundation of God, which He Himself has laid. This foundation is His eternal counsel and the election of His own, whom He knows individually by name, upon whom is His eye from eternity (and also in time), and whom He keeps from apostasy by His power. Subsequent to this text the apostle gives us the reason for the apostasy of these two, so one will neither consider it to be strange nor be offended by it, as all sorts of people are to be found within the church -- both good and evil -- who afore are prepared unto glory or damnation. This compares to the situation in a large house in which various vessels of silver, wood, and stone are to be found, some to honor, and some to dishonor.

Therefore, everyone ought to be diligent in perseverance, adherence to the truth, and the practice of godliness, whereas those who are known by God most certainly must depart from iniquity.

Whomever God chooses unto salvation, He also chooses unto holiness. The sanctification of the elect is the evidence that God has chosen them, for which reason they will remain with the truth and persevere in godliness. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29).

Secondly, Scripture binds election and salvation together with an unbreakable knot. Neither the immutable God, the evil one, the evil world, nor its powerful corruption will break this bond. Whomever God has chosen unto salvation will most certainly obtain it. Whomever God has foreknown, He has also predestinated, called, justified, and glorified (Romans 8:29-30). The apostle speaks of glorification in the past tense, it being so certain as if it had already occurred. Consider also Romans 11:7, where it is stated, "The election has obtained it, and the rest were blinded." This eliminates any notion about virtue and the focus is upon God's work alone. The apostle states that from election issues forth that which is obtained, for God who does the one, also grants the other.

Thirdly, the perseverance of the saints as a consequence of God's immutable decree is confirmed by the Lord Jesus. "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). It is therefore impossible that the elect will be deceived. The word "elect" refers to those whom God has eternally designated to be His, and set before Him as His property. The attack of the false prophets would also be focused on them, doing their utmost to deceive the elect also. They would not be successful, for it is impossible. The statement "if it were possible" does not mean, "if with much objection and great difficulty they would be able to do it," neither does it say, "if they[the false prophets] would possibly be able to," for the word "possible" does not refer to the false prophets and their work. Instead, it refers to the certainty of the spiritual state of the elect warranted by the decree of God. As the elect they could not be deceived, and therefore the labors of the false prophets would have no effect upon them.

Objection #1: Believers are continually exhorted to fear and diligence in order to make their calling and election sure. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). This refers to apostasy from God, as was the case with many of the Israelites. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Php 2:12); "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Hebrews 4:1); "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10); "Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Peter 3:17).

Answer: (1) These texts do not refer to a fear for damnation, but to a careful watch over our conduct.

(2) These exhortations are means to lead believers in the way of righteousness to the salvation to which they are ordained. Since election is unto glory and grace, it thus relates to the end as well as the means unto that end.

(3) Calling and election are made sure from our side; that is, we need to be assured that we are partakers of the heavenly calling, from which may be concluded that we are chosen by God. From God's perspective, however, election is not made sure by us, since it has been sure from eternity

in God's immutable counsel.

Objection #2: Threatenings relative to damnation indicate that election is not immutable. "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3); "God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city" (Revelation 22:19).

Answer: (1) Threatenings, just as exhortations, are means to stir us up to abstain from sin and to practice godliness. Whoever does not repent will most certainly go lost, and therefore this threatening is applicable to all who are unconverted. If, however, a person is converted but is not assured thereof, then in his estimation this threat relates to his condition. If, however, a person is converted and is conscious of it, this should motivate him to make additional progress. If he becomes lax and his condition deteriorates, he needs to arouse himself for fear of chastisement in body and soul. All believers must carefully refrain from everything which brings the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. They must give heed to all threatenings in such a manner that they flee from those sins to which the threatening pertains.

(2) To have one's part taken out of the book of life is synonymous with not being saved. Such a person is neither a partaker of life, nor does he belong to those whose names are written in the book of life. This does not imply, however, that they initially were partakers of salvation and had been recorded in the book of life, for then all men most certainly would be partakers of eternal life. Then even someone who, until that very moment, would have lived a very ungodly life from his youth, would have his name written in the book of life until he would mutilate the Word of God by eliminating some truths from its pages, and only then would be erased from the book of life. Not even those who object to the immutability of election would hold to such a view, from which they should be convinced that this text cannot be used to maintain the mutability of election.

Objection #3: Those whom God has given to Christ can nevertheless perish. Thus, the decree of election is not immutable. "Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition [Judas]" (John 17:12). Paul also testified that he was not sure of his spiritual state, as he could also be a castaway. "... when I have preached to others, I myself should be castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Answer: (1) In John 17:12 there is no coalescence of Judas and the others who have been kept, they having been given to Christ by God. Instead there is a contrast. It is not stated that Judas had been given to Christ, but it is merely stated that even though Judas perished, others did not perish. Therefore the word "but" actually means "except," for the Greek phrase *ei mé* is often translated with the word "except" (cf. Matthew 12:4; Galatians 1:7).

(2) Judas had never been given to Christ, for although he had been chosen to be an apostle, he was nevertheless a devil (John 6:70). Refer also to our answers to the objections found in our discussion concerning "The Perseverance of the Saints" in chapter ninety-nine. [Vol. 4, p. 275] The slanderous suggestion that one of the elect, living in the most ungodly manner, will nevertheless be saved, has been answered already.

Question #6: Can believers be assured of their election?

Answer: Those of Roman Catholic and Arminian persuasion, who propose a conditional election due to the mutability of man's freewill, do not know whether they will persevere until the end, and

consequently cannot be assured of their election. We do not maintain that all believers are in possession of assurance, neither do we maintain that assurance is always present in the same sensible degree, nor that a believer is assured during a season of spiritual desertion. Nevertheless, we do maintain that God has given marks of election in Scripture which are such, that a believer perceiving these in himself may conclude by the operation of the Holy Spirit that he is elect and may thus rejoice in the assurance of them. Therefore believers can be assured of their election and should strive to be assured thereof.

Election is also confirmed by its fruits, which are calling, faith, and sanctification. One can be assured that he is a partaker of these and may ascend higher, namely, that God has justified those whom He has called. And those whom He has called He has predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, and those He in turn has foreknown. That someone may be assured of his calling is confirmed in the following texts: "For ye see your calling, brethren" (1 Corinthians 1:26); "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1). One can also be assured of his faith. "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12). This is also confirmed by the purpose for which believers have received the Holy Ghost. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). Furthermore, Scripture states expressly that believers are indeed assured. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). We will treat the subject of assurance comprehensively in the chapter which deals with justification (chapter thirty-four [Vol. 2, p. 341]).

Practical Applications of the Doctrine of Election

Aside from the fact that many are offended by these divine truths -- the one rejects them, the other slanders them, and a third refuses to heed them -- God's children are occasionally assaulted about whether or not they are of the elect. Some are overcome by a great fright due to an inner voice which says, "You are not called." Some gradually come into strife concerning this matter while thinking, "If I am not elected, I shall yet go lost, and I fear that in the end I shall find it to be true that I am not one of the elect." Sometimes the devil is the originator of this assault, who, without reason, suggests this and impresses upon them word for word, "You are not elected; God hates you; God has rejected you; you will not be saved; and all your prayer and activity are in vain. Therefore, simply give up." These suggestions torment and injure the soul, bringing it into a disconsolate condition. This causes the soul to be deprived of what he previously enjoyed: a lively faith, heartfelt prayer, a sweet resting and rejoicing in God, and a simple cleaving to and serving of Him. Sometimes these assaults proceed from man's own heart. In mentioning these assaults I am not referring to the struggles of him who as yet is not assured about his spiritual state, is greatly concerned, and is seeking a basis for assurance by which he would be able to ascend to the fountain of election itself. Rather, it is an assault which originates in our own evil and unbelieving heart. Due to a foolish inclination we then begin to gainsay, so that by way of gainsaying we would as it were compel God to assure us of our election. This in turn may generate fretting and resentful thoughts towards God. It is also possible that such disturbing suggestions can occur when the soul is in a better spiritual frame than the aforementioned. This occurs when the soul focuses upon the darkness within, unbelief, the power of inner corruption, and upon the fact that his prayers are not answered. Such a soul has been very desirous to be rightly and thoroughly assured of his state -- and thus of his election -- so that the issue is beyond question. In spite of having often prayed for

this, however, he has never attained it. Initially this results in some passing thoughts whether or not one is one of the elect, or a reprobate. Subsequently, these thoughts become established thought patterns, and the reasons why one is not elected present themselves more clearly and more powerfully, thus increasingly disturbing the soul. At last such a soul draws the conclusion that he is not one of the elect. This results in a nearly complete neglect of the means, such as prayer, reading, and a laboring to receive Christ by faith. One can no longer engage himself in spiritual matters as previously, being continually confronted with, "You are not elected anyway; it is all for naught and in vain." From this arises despair, anxiety, the inclination to have hard thoughts about God, and whatever other inner turbulence there may be. What a sad condition this is!

What counsel is there for such? Who can better heal the wounds of the soul than the great Physician Himself? He does this in the way of means; therefore listen to my counsel, and allow me to quietly instruct you.

First, did these turbulent thoughts ever give you peace and quiet within? Are you now much better off than before? Have you increased in wisdom and understanding? Have you become holier? Has there been an increase in inner peace? If not, are you now filled with much more anxiety than before? Why then are you torturing yourself? Cast away all these suggestions. But you will reply, "I cannot rid myself of them, for they have a hold on me." Do you not now perceive that you were initially too careless by entertaining these thoughts, and have too easily yielded to these assaults? It is therefore time to cease doing so and to do battle against all those reflections and thoughts about this matter. Allow other thoughts and activities to divert you from them in order that you may distance yourself from these assaults.

Secondly, consider what foolishness all this is, for you are mulling about matters which God has concealed within His own counsel and has not revealed to man. For even if you lacked the least evidence of your election, you still could not determine whether or not you are elected, as you have no reason to conclude that you will never be converted.

Objection: I feel within my heart that I am not one of the elect but rather a reprobate, and that therefore I shall never be converted.

Answer: This is an untruth and nothing but imagination. No man can know whether he is a reprobate because God has not revealed this in His Word. The Lord does not have such intimate communion with the ungodly that He would make this known to them in an extraordinary way.

Objection: Some have known this, such as Spira and others.

Answer: They had no knowledge of this but it was mere imagination. I am neither suggesting that their imaginations could not have been true, nor that they did not belong to the elect, all of which could be true. I am saying, however, that they neither knew this from Scripture nor from immediate revelations, but rather from their imagination. It has happened that some who with such certainty imagined themselves to belong to the reprobate, just as these others, were subsequently converted. Others who were already converted received much assurance concerning their election.

Objection: Those who have sinned against the Holy Ghost know that they are reprobates.

Answer: Those who have sinned against the Holy Ghost are indeed reprobates; however, such do not come to repentance after the commission of this sin, but persevere in their wickedness and without any sensitivity continue in their rage against God. Since therefore you neither know nor are able to ascertain this, and all this is but imaginary, why are you then so foolish to torment yourself with unfounded imaginations?

Objection: I know that I am unconverted, have once been enlightened, and that I have been hardened under the use of so many means. May I not conclude my reprobation out of all this?

Answer: Suppose that you are presently unconverted, have resisted previous enlightenment and conviction, and have hardened yourself against the Word of God; even then you may not conclude your reprobation, for you can still be converted. It is also possible that you are neither conscious of your own condition nor of the grace which the Lord has already granted you. It is one thing to be a recipient of the life of grace, but it is additional grace to be conscious of those things which God has granted us. No matter how you view your state, you cannot know whether or not you are a reprobate, and therefore ought to desist from this foolishness and reject it outright.

Thirdly, let the revealed will of God be your guide. In the gospel God offers His Son Jesus Christ, inviting all who are desirous to come to Him to do so. He promises that all who believe in the Son will have eternal life, while promising at the same time that none will be cast out who come to Him. God will never damn anyone but for his sins. God does not prevent anyone from repentance, believing in Christ, and salvation. God is not the cause of anyone's damnation. Man and his own free will are to be blamed for the fact that he lives an ungodly life, and it is therefore just when God punishes and damns him for his sins. Let the Word of God be your rule and cease from entertaining these haughty imaginations. Seek Christ, believe in Him, pray, do battle against sin, and believe, so that, by proceeding according to Scripture, you will be saved. This way is both a steadfast and safe way.

Objection: Faith and repentance are the work of God, which He grants only to His elect. If I am a reprobate, He will not bestow it unto me.

Answer: (1) It is likewise an established fact that you are to be blamed for your failure to believe and to repent. Therefore if you do not believe or repent, blame yourself rather than God, for He is under no obligation to grant these graces to anyone. Even if He grants them to some, He is therefore not obligated to do so to others.

(2) Even though God has not granted you these graces until this day, you nevertheless do not know if He will yet do so. Therefore, do not be fretful or resentful towards the Lord and His holy decree. Be humbled and start from the beginning, allowing yourself to be guided by Scripture. Thus, in dependence upon the blessing of the Lord you will prevail over these assaults while making more lively and steadfast progress in the way of salvation. We have dealt sufficiently with this matter, however.

Although one cannot be assured of his reprobation, we have already demonstrated that one can be assured of his election. It is thus the duty of every Christian to strive for assurance according to the exhortation of the apostle in 2 Peter 1:10, as this assurance is the fountain of much joy in God and results in much growth in sanctification. One does not obtain this assurance by ascending into heaven to examine the book of life for the purpose of ascertaining whether one's name is to be

found in it (Romans 10:6-7). Neither is this assurance obtained by imagining oneself to be one of the elect, so that by the duration of this imagination one could consistently maintain this assurance, being of the opinion that it is a sin to be doubtful about it even though one lacks the least foundation for this assurance. Rather, one obtains this assurance from the Word of God wherein is found a clear description of those who are of the elect. If these characteristics are discerned within, he may draw the conclusion that he is one of the elect. The first characteristic is the calling. God calls internally and efficaciously only those whom He has chosen. This is a well-established truth. "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called" (Romans 8:30); "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). If, while bringing yourself into the omniscient presence of the Lord and examining yourself in truth, you may perceive that your mind has been illuminated to enable you to discern the spiritual dimension of the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace; if you perceive within yourself a love and desire for spiritual frames within your soul such as the love and fear of God, willingness and obedience, spiritual liberty, and joy in the Lord; if you perceive within yourself a recurring stimulus, stirring you up to think upon God, to pray, to repent after backslidings, to walk in a way pleasing to God; and if you perceive that the nearness of the Lord is your life and His absence your grief -- if all these things are to be found in you, then you may be assured of being called and drawn. Since all of this proceeds from election one may therefore conclude, "God has drawn me to Himself and His communion with a heavenly, internal, and efficacious calling, and thus I am also one of the elect." Blessed is he who deals truthfully with himself in this matter, neither denying what he has received nor glorying in things which he does not possess.

Secondly, the Word of God teaches that faith is a certain characteristic of election. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48); "... the faith of God's elect ..." (Titus 1:1). If then you are assured that you find delight in God's counsel to reconcile sinners to Himself through the Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ; if, due to grief and sorrow over your sinful heart and deeds, fear for God's wrath, love for communion with God and a spiritual walk, and a sense of your own impotence to attain to these matters, you take refuge to this Surety who offers Himself; if you look to Him, long for Him, engage in transactions with Him, accept His offer, surrender yourself to Him, rest your salvation upon Him, and rely upon Him -- be it one time with more, and then again with less intensity, with more clarity or more darkness, with more or less strife, continually or intermittently -- if these things are to be found in you, then you are a partaker of true faith. If you may thus be assured of your faith, you may then consequently conclude your eternal election.

Thirdly, sanctification is also a sure characteristic of election. "According as He hath chosen us ... that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). If you then perceive within yourself a hatred, repulsion, and sorrow concerning both the secret sins of your heart, as well as your sinful deeds, and if you find an inner delight and love for a godly spiritual frame and the practice of all virtues in the fear, love, and obedience of God, as being His will; if you perceive within yourself the warfare between flesh and spirit so that sin does not have dominion over you, that is, that you are not governed by your evil will; if sin meets with internal resistance of your will, being restrained and often driven away by the fear of God; if you perceive within yourself the inclination to pray, wrestle for peace of conscience, and experience the nearness of the Lord; if, either privately or in the presence of men, you desire to let your heart, thoughts, words, and deeds be governed by the will of God; if, I say, these things be found in you, then you are a partaker of

spiritual life and the principle of sanctification is in you. This is not the result of your natural disposition, but a gracious gift of God issuing forth from election. Thus, you may conclude your election from this spiritual condition.

Having made this conclusion, focus upon it and meditate upon the fact that this election is the primary fountain from which your life, godliness, and salvation issue forth. You would not presently exist, neither would you have been born into the world, had it not been for this decree. Since you do exist, however, must you not perceive how sinful and miserable you are in yourself? How great is God's goodness towards you that He, who passes by millions, condemning them for their sins, has eternally chosen you to be His child and the object of His incomprehensible grace and salvation! Why is the gospel proclaimed to you? Why are you called, drawn, and quickened? Why do you know Jesus and receive Him by faith? Wherefore may you have some delight in communion with God and are desirous to fear His Name? Does not all of this issue forth from this eternal counsel to save you? Lose yourself in holy amazement and confess with Hagar, "Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me?" (Genesis 16:13), and with the psalmist, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of Him?" (Psalms 8:4). And if there are any inner motions to rejoice, then rejoice in this that your name is written in the Lamb's book of life. After having engaged yourself in such meditation for some time, proceed to consider each grace which you receive as issuing forth from this -- yes, proceed to consider eternal salvation itself and link it to eternal election as Paul does in Romans 8:29-30. In doing so, consider the immutability of that decree and the certainty, steadfastness, and immutability of your spiritual state and salvation. Quietly rest therein and say with confidence, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalms 73:24).

Here we may have the fountain of comfort in all the grievous trials and tribulations which the Lord causes us to encounter in this life. All of these occur according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). "For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (Job 23:14). All these trials and tribulations proceed from love and are for your good. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). He who has eternally loved you and has appointed you to be his child and heir to manifest all His goodness to you -- would He allow anything harmful to come your way? Far be it from us to suggest such a thing. He chastises those whom He loves (Revelation 3:19). Bear therefore your cross joyfully and submissively, and be comforted by the prospect of a favorable end which as yet you cannot perceive.

Here is comfort against the sins which oppress a child of God and frequently rob him of all spiritual desire and liveliness. What wretched thoughts sin often produces within the elect. Notice, however, that He, who in sovereign goodness and love has chosen you without being moved to such a decree by your good works or faith; who never deviates in His goodness and love; who concluded you in sin that He might have mercy upon you (Romans 11:33); and who most certainly glorifies those whom He has elected unto salvation, will therefore not reject you for your remaining sin over which you grieve. Therefore, stand firm in faith, do not succumb to the multitude of remaining enemies, but rather focus upon this eternal decree, the perfect atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the covenant of grace. Rest in these, and although sin must continue to grieve you, do not let it cause you to be discouraged. The assurance of one's election also affords much liberty and gives much support in prayer. One may approach unto God and say, "My Father! Hast

Thou not known me by name and have I not found grace in Thine eyes? Hast Thou not eternally known me to be one of Thy own, chosen me to be Thy child and the object of Thy love, and wondrously to glorify me by Thy grace, mercy, and faithfulness, which manifests itself in the way in which Thou hast led me and wilt lead me? Therefore, oh Father, consider the trials and tribulations which I fear, the troubles which press me down, and my sinfulness which oppresses me. These matters I desire, these are the needs of my body, and these are my spiritual desires. May it therefore please Thee to look down upon Thy chosen one and upon the object of Thy favor. May it please Thee to hear me and to grant my desire.” How this yields liberty, familiarity, faith that my prayer will be answered, and quiet submission! The assurance of election is a significant means whereby sanctification is promoted. Although the natural man cannot comprehend this, is offended by this, and imagines that resting on such a foundation makes one careless, Scripture teaches the contrary: “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:3). This is the daily experience of the godly. The more they are assured of the love of God towards them, the more they are stirred up to love God in return. “We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Since the believer knows that sanctification is not the cause of his election and salvation, but a fruit of election and a principal element of salvation, all his activity proceeds purely from love. While he thus loves God it ignites within him a desire to be conformed to His will and to be engaged in a manner pleasing to his Lord.

Finally, when the godly perceive that the beginning, middle, end, yes everything, proceeds only from God according to His eternal election -- there being neither any contribution from him nor any reason within him -- it will then stir up the soul to return everything to God and in all things to honor and glorify Him, most heartily thanking Him as the apostle did on behalf of others in this respect. “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Here the attentive soul will perceive God’s sovereignty, goodness, mercy, wisdom, power, and immutability. He will be deeply led into this in order to have an intimate view of these perfections in all their glory. Oh, how he will lose himself in this and sink away in sweet amazement, only to arise afterwards to worship, be at rest, and rejoice that God’s glory so far exceeds his comprehension! This will cause him to exclaim, “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Romans 11:36).

008. Chapter 7: The Covenant of Redemption Between God the Father and God the Son Concerning ...

----- CHAPTER SEVEN ----- The Covenant of Redemption Between God the Father and God the Son Concerning the Elect; or, the Counsel of Peace

Having considered the decrees of God in general, and the predestination of men in particular, we now proceed to the discussion of the covenant of redemption. The first Reformers and some subsequent writers have spoken with much reverence about this sacred mystery, some discussing it at great length. How I wish that such reverence would also currently prevail when either speaking of, or hearing this mystery discussed. Do not understand this to mean that this is a truth which only recently has become known, as some pretend who are ignorant of what has previously been written. Rather, it is a truth which of old has been known in the church. Everyone should strive to understand and use this truth correctly. We shall present the full ramifications of this covenant, also as it is presently administered by Christ. We shall consider, (1) the parties in this covenant;

(2) the persons concerning whom, and for whose benefit this covenant has been made;

(3) the reality of this covenant transaction;

(4) the work of the one party, the Father, which we subdivide into the commands and conditions of this covenant, the promises related to the fulfillment of these conditions, and the confirmation of these promises by oath and sacraments;

(5) the work of the other party, the Lord Jesus Christ, which is subdivided into His acceptance of the conditions and the promises, His fulfillment of the conditions, and His demand relative to these confirmed promises. The Covenanting Parties of the Covenant of Redemption

First of all we shall consider the covenanting parties, who are God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be easier to comprehend this matter if we primarily consider the execution of this covenant rather than the decree from which it proceeds. We maintain that the manner in which the Lord executes it in this time state is consistent with the manner in which He has eternally decreed it. We nevertheless treat this covenant as one of the intrinsic works of God, being repeatedly presented in such a manner throughout the Holy Scriptures. Concerning Christ it is stated that He "was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). The elect are chosen in Him (Ephesians 1:4), and grace has been given them "in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). Whatever Christ encountered in this world happened to Him according to the eternal decree, foreknowledge, and determinate counsel of God (cf. Psalms 2:7; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23). By virtue of this eternal covenant there has been an eternal relationship between the Son and His suretyship. This He demonstrated already in His government of the Old Testament church immediately after the fall, prior to His incarnation. This raises a question: Since the Father and the Son are one in essence and thus have one will and one objective, how can there possibly be a

covenant transaction between the two, as such a transaction requires the mutual involvement of two wills? Are we then not separating the Persons of the Godhead too much? To this I reply that as far as Personhood is concerned the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father. From this consideration the one divine will can be viewed from a twofold perspective. It is the Father's will to redeem by the agency of the second Person as Surety, and it is the will of the Son to redeem by His own agency as Surety. The persons on whose behalf and for whose benefit this covenant is made are those who have been elected in Christ. We have extensively discussed this matter in the previous chapter. Of the elect it is stated that they belong to the Father and have been given by Him to Christ. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." Therefore they are said to be written in the Lamb's book: "They which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27). The Lord, in a holy manner, would permit that they would sin by their own free will and thus would be concluded in sin, by virtue of which they are by nature children of wrath. In order that the infinite mercy and grace of God should be bestowed upon them in delivering from them this state and bringing them unto salvation, it was necessary that there be a Surety to satisfy God's justice. The Father thus gave the elect to His Son as Surety, and the Son accepted them, recorded their names in His book, became Surety for all of them -- none excepted -- and for them alone, and promised to accomplish His Father's good pleasure in bringing them to salvation. The Existence of the Covenant of Redemption Scripturally Verified That there was such a covenant made between Jehovah and the Lord Jesus concerning the elect can be verified as follows.

First, in Psalms 89:28; Psalms 89:34 it is recorded, "My mercy will I keep for Him for evermore, and My covenant shall stand fast with Him. My covenant will I not break." Proof that mention is made here of the covenant between God the Father and the Lord Jesus is clearly evident. It is a known fact that the Psalms contain many references to the Lord Jesus, and that David in many respects was a type of Him. Therefore, Christ is also referred to as David (Hosea 3:5). In this Psalm mention is made of David and of the Lord Jesus as He is typified by David. I have stated that it also refers to the Lord Jesus, for

(1) whatever is recorded up to verse 37 applies most eminently to the Lord Jesus. In other texts He is also identified as the Elect of God (Psalms 89:3; Isaiah 42:1), the Holy One of God (vs. 19; Luke 1:35), One that is mighty (vs. 19; Psalms 45:8), the Anointed One who was anointed with oil (vs. 20; Psalms 45:8), the firstborn of God (vs. 27; Hebrews 1:6), the King of kings (vs. 27; Revelation 19:16), One whose kingdom extends over the entire earth (vs. 25; Psalms 72:8), and One whose kingdom will endure as long as the sun and moon will be (vss. 36-37; Psalms 72:5).

(2) Everything in this psalm does not apply to David, such as being the firstborn Son of God (vs. 27), being the King of kings (vs. 27), and possessor of an eternal kingdom (vs. 36).

(3) The last part of the psalm, beginning with verse 38, presents us with a contrast between David's kingdom and that of the Messiah. This contrast points especially to the fact that the kingdom of the Messiah would extend over the entire earth and, as has been pointed out previously, would endure as long as the sun and the moon. The kingdom of David, on the contrary, would come to an end.

(4) That which is stated in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and in verses 26-37 of this psalm refers to the identical matter, and therefore it is beyond doubt that it refers to the same history. The words of 2 Samuel 7:1-29 however, are expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament (cf. Acts 13:22;

Hebrews 1:5), and it therefore follows that this is also true for vs. 26-37 of this psalm.

Taking all this into consideration, let us now reason as follows. The Psalms often refer to Christ, David frequently being a type of Christ in them. Everything eminently applies to Christ, but everything does not apply to David. A contrast is made between the kingdom of Christ (vs. 25-36), and the kingdom of David which, according to vs. 38, would be destroyed. It is thus very evident that mention is made here of the Messiah, Christ. He is here said to be in a covenant engagement with the Lord, and thus it is evident that there is a covenant between the Lord and Christ.

Secondly, this is also evident in Zechariah 6:12-13, "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord: Even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

We cannot understand both to refer to Jews and Gentiles. They are indeed united in one church in the New Testament, but not the least mention is made here of them. Therefore this idea cannot suddenly be inserted here. The pronoun "them" indicates that mention is made of two who have previously been mentioned, who are none other than Jehovah and the Branch.

Neither can we understand both to refer to the two offices of the Lord Jesus, that is, His kingly and priestly offices. It is true that these offices were not to be united in one person. A king was neither permitted to be a priest, nor a priest to be a king. These tribes (Judah and Levi) and their respective offices had to remain distinct; however, in the Lord Jesus they coalesce in one person. It is equally true that these two offices coalesce in the execution of the mediatorial office, but one may therefore not conclude this text to refer to these two offices. This cannot be true, for, (1) Christ is one Person, and there is mention of two.

(2) There is no reference here to two offices, but merely to "being a priest" and "ruling."

(3) Christ had three offices, which all function in unison for the building of the Lord's temple. Therefore, if the reference is meant to be to the offices, it should have stated "between these three."

(4) There can be no mutual consultation between offices, as this is the activity of persons. Such consultation occurred instead between individuals who held the three Old Testament offices; thus we should not understand the reference to be to the kingly and priestly offices.

"Them both," however, refers to Jehovah and the Branch, the latter being the Messiah. In one glance it can be discerned that the reference is to these two. "Thus, speaketh the Lord of hosts ... the BRANCH ... He shall build the temple of the Lord," which is the work of the Messiah. He who would build the Lord's temple, that is His congregation, would be endowed with the necessary qualifications: to rule and to be a priest. Therefore, rulership and priesthood are descriptive of the Branch who would accomplish this work, and thus it reinforces our contention. He, the Branch, would be engaged in the Lord's work to which He had been commissioned: the building of the Lord's temple. This required mutual understanding and consent as well as consultation, counsel, and wisdom. Thus the Father and the Son not only agreed to promote the peace of the elect, but they also agreed about the manner of execution, that is, it would be accomplished by the Prince of

Peace, the Branch, who had the necessary qualifications for this task.

Thirdly, this is also confirmed in Luke 22:29, where it is stated, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me." It is not stated *horizo*, nor *diatatto*, but *diatithemai*. This word means as much as to promise something to someone by way of testament or covenant. From this word *diatheke* is derived, which means "testament" or "covenant." Thus, the verb "to appoint" includes the idea of covenant, and by virtue of this covenant He would receive the kingdom. This is expressly stated in Galatians 3:16-17, where it is recorded, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ," etc. Thus, we have here the covenant, the promises, and the fact that these have been made to Christ, as well as the fact that this covenant has been confirmed in Christ. Therefore, there is a covenant between God and Christ.

Fourthly, this is also evident from words which implicitly refer to a covenant, such as "My God," and "My Servant." That was the promise of the covenant. "And (I) will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33); "... My servants ..." (Isaiah 65:13-14). Members of the covenant, by virtue of that covenant, call God their God (Deuteronomy 26:17-18). The Lord Jesus generally makes use of the same manner of speech: My God, My Father. "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17).

Fifthly, the existence of this covenant is also clearly evidenced by the fact that Christ is called "surety" in both the Old and the New Testament. Only consider Hebrews 7:22, "By so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament." None can be a surety unless there is a contract and a covenant between the creditor and the surety of the debtor. The creditor must be satisfied with, and consent to the fact that such and such a person functions as surety. The surety in turn must obligate himself to the creditor to pay the debt. Since the Lord Jesus has become Surety by virtue of mutual consent and approval, there is a covenant between Jehovah and Christ.

Sixthly, it is also evident by virtue of the following conclusion. Whenever, on the one hand, there are requisite conditions and commands as well as promises and sacraments, and on the other hand, consent and acceptance of conditions and promises, satisfaction of conditions, and a demand for the promised benefits upon satisfaction of the conditions, then we have an incontrovertible reference to a covenant. All of this exists between God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus there is a covenant between both of them. This we now wish to demonstrate, not only as proof for this doctrine, but also to describe the nature of this covenant. In doing so we shall first reveal the work of the one party, and subsequently of the other party.

Concerning the work of the Father we must consider separately: 1) the commands which function as the conditions of the covenant, 2) the promises of the covenant, and 3) the warranty of the covenant. The Father in electing the Lord Jesus to be Surety, Mediator, and Savior, presents Him to the elect and gives them to Him so that He may merit and accomplish salvation for them, as we have seen above. For this purpose He presented several conditions to Him and commanded Him to fulfill them. "... The Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting" (John 12:49-50 a); "This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10:18). These commands, being the conditions, include among others the following:

First, that the Son would assume the nature of the sinner; however, without sin. "... A body hast Thou prepared Me" (Hebrews 10:5).

Secondly, that He, as Immanuel, God and man, having assumed the identical nature of elect sinners, would become their Substitute, remove their sins from them, and take their sins for His account as if he Himself had committed them. For this purpose He, being a divine Person and thus above the law, would place Himself under the law, which demanded punishment for the transgressors and perfect obedience to gain a right to eternal life. "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4).

Thirdly, that on their behalf He would bear all the punishment which their sins had merited, and would suffer, die, and arise from the dead. "No man taketh it [life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10:18); "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

Fourthly, that on their behalf He would have to fulfil all righteousness in order to make them righteous. "... So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19); "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. ... He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Fifthly, that He would make the elect partakers of this merited salvation, by declaring the gospel to them, regenerating them, granting them faith, preserving them, resurrecting them from the dead, and ushering them into heaven. Thus the execution of this great work would rest upon His shoulders. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39). This then is a general presentation of some of the conditions of this covenant. To these conditions the Father added glorious promises, both in reference to the Surety as well as in reference to the elect.

First, the Father promised that God's good pleasure would prosper through Him. "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah 53:10).

Secondly, the Father promised that He would be King over all the elect, not merely from among the Jews, but also from among the Gentiles. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psalms 2:6; Psalms 2:8); "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. ... All nations shall serve Him" (Psalms 72:8; Psalms 72:11).

Thirdly, the Father promised that He would have power over all creatures in order to govern them to the benefit of His elect. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18); "For He hath put all things under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:27).

Fourthly, the Father promised that He would be glorified in an exceedingly magnificent and wondrous manner which would be observed and acknowledged by the creatures. "... When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3);

“... I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

Fifthly, the Father promised that He would be the Judge of heaven and of earth. “And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man” (John 5:27); “Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained” (Acts 17:31).

Sixthly, relative to the elect, the Father promised to Him that the elect would receive all the benefits of the covenant of grace through Him: forgiveness of sin, reconciliation, adoption unto children, peace, sanctification, and eternal glory. “... It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32); “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

God confirmed all these promises to the Son by means of both sacraments and extraordinary declarations.

(1) He confirmed this to Him by oath. “The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psalms 110:4); “Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David [Christ]” (Psalms 89:35).

(2) He sealed this to Him by means of the Old and New Testament sacraments which we will discuss shortly.

(3) God assured Him of this by means of extraordinary and immediate revelations and declarations. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). This declaration is repeated in Matthew 17:5. God was not only pleased with His Person, but also with His qualifications as Surety and Mediator, and in His work of redemption. This then is the work of the one party, the Father. We shall now consider the work of the other party, the Lord Jesus Christ, which consists in 1) His acceptance of both the conditions and the promises, 2) His fulfillment of these conditions, and 3) His demand that the promises be fulfilled on the basis of these conditions being fulfilled.

First, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is very God and a holy man, in hearing these conditions according to His human nature, neither would nor could but accept these conditions due to His perfect holiness and love for God. With full joy He wholeheartedly accepted them, as it is stated in Psalms 40:6-8, “Burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, [Note: The Statenbijbel reads as follows, “Ik heb lust, o mijn God! om Uw welbehagen te doen,” which translates as, “I delight to do Thy good pleasure, O my God.”] O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” The apostle also quotes this text in Hebrews 10:5-7, and extends its application more fully to Christ.

Secondly, He also accepted the promises. This acceptance is confirmed by the fact that the Father strengthened Him in the execution of the covenant by means of its promises, oaths, and seals. “He is near that justifieth Me; who will contend with Me?” (Isaiah 50:8). In like manner He is said to be justified in the Spirit (1 Timothy 3:16). In what manner is Christ justified? The Father reaffirmed and assured Him of the fact that His suffering and death was a perfect ransom for all the sins of the elect, that the Father was perfectly satisfied with the execution of His suretyship, and that He merited a complete salvation for all the elect. Therefore, He who manifested Himself in the

likeness of sinful flesh during His sojourn upon earth (Romans 8:3), and who had all the sins of His elect imputed to His account, will “appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28). It is also evident that Christ strengthened Himself with these promises, for in His suffering He anticipated the glory which was promised to Him. “... who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2).

Question: In what manner did the Lord Jesus use the sacraments? We have a dilemma here, for the sacraments were instituted for believers in order to seal to them that they are partakers of the benefits of the covenant on the basis of His suffering and death, whereas Christ was perfect and knew of no weakness of faith.

Answer: It is a certainty that He partook of the sacraments such as circumcision, the passover, and also holy baptism; this is not as evident regarding the Lord's Supper. To solve this dilemma the following must be considered.

(1) Both the sinless as well as sinners may make use of the sacraments. Prior to the fall the Tree of Life was a sacrament for Adam. This is true, considering that a sacrament, a) repeatedly and vividly brings to mind the promised matter; b) repeatedly reconfirms the certainty of the promises; c) provides a sweet foretaste of the matter signified; and d) rekindles and quickens the approbation of the conditions of the covenant as well as the person's pledge to fulfil these conditions. All of these are applicable to a sinless person. Since Adam could use the sacrament in this fashion, the Lord Jesus was able to use them likewise.

(2) The sacraments, being the seals of the covenant, sealed to Christ all the promises of the covenant of redemption. For believers, the sacraments seal the covenant of grace in Christ, but for Christ they sealed the covenant of redemption, assuring Him that He, on the basis of His perfect obedience and satisfaction, would merit all the promised benefits for Himself and His children. It was thus sealed unto Christ that His sacrifice was pleasing, His satisfaction was efficacious to remove the sins of the elect which He had taken upon Himself, and His perfect righteousness was efficacious to acquire the right to eternal life for them.

Thirdly, as the Lord Jesus had promised to fulfil all that the Lord demanded of Him, He therefore came and perfectly accomplished this in very deed. “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Php 2:6-8). Therefore He said, “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4), and “It is finished” (John 19:30).

Fourthly, upon fulfillment of the condition, the Lord Jesus demanded the fulfillment of the promises both for Himself and for the elect. He does so first of all for Himself. “I have glorified Thee on the earth: and now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” (John 17:24-25). He also does so on behalf of the elect. “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me” (John 17:24).

Question: Did Christ merit something on His own behalf, since He did and suffered everything on behalf of the elect?

Answer: These matters are not contradictory, as one thing can be pursued with various objectives. In suffering on behalf of the elect and in fulfilling all righteousness for them the Lord Jesus manifested such a perfect obedience and love toward God and the elect, that He, according to the covenant of redemption, has merited the promised benefits for Himself as Mediator.

First, when considering a covenant which contains conditional promises, the party which fulfills the conditions merits the matter which has been promised. Here there is also a covenant with conditional promises. Since the Lord Jesus has fulfilled the condition, He has consequently also merited the fulfillment of all the promises which have been made to Him as well as the elect.

Secondly, Christ anticipated the payment of His wages. "... surely My judgment is with the Lord, and My work with My God" (Isaiah 49:4).

There is a gracious reward which is not according to merit, and there is a just reward which is according to merit and on the basis of accomplishment. In reference to Christ we have here a contract which justly requires the payment of wages upon the accomplishment of a task. In view of this, Christ has merited a reward for Himself.

Thirdly, the Lord Jesus had His glory in view as a prize which was set before Him. "... Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). We thus observe that joy was set before Him upon the condition of submitting to the cross. That joy He had in view and therefore He endured the cross, thereby meriting that joy for Himself.

Fourthly, this is also confirmed by all those texts in which His work is stated to be the cause of His exaltation. Christ humbled Himself, and therefore God exalted Him. "He shall see the travail of His soul. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, ... because He hath poured out His soul unto death" (Isaiah 53:11-12); "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Psalms 45:7); "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" (Php 2:8-9). The use of such language is so common, and so clearly presupposes merit, that the mere observation of these texts confirms that Christ did not only obtain glory in consequence of what had previously transpired, but He also merited the same.

Practical Observations Concerning the Covenant of Redemption

We have thus seen that relative to the eternal salvation of the elect there is a covenant of redemption between the Father and the Lord Jesus. We have considered the specific conditions and promises which it contains, how willingly the Lord Jesus has accepted them, and how perfectly He has finished everything. One should not be of the opinion that all this is mere intellectual speculation, and that, having perceived all this, one can let the matter rest, for it is the foundation for all sure comfort, joy, holy amazement, and the magnification of God. Therefore we must strive to understand this doctrine well, and to make use of it continually. For your guidance, consider the following matters.

First, the salvation of the elect is unmoveably sure. They are therefore in an unchangeable state -- indeed, as confirmed in this as the elect angels. For both parties, God the Lord and Christ, are fully and mutually satisfied concerning the salvation of the elect and the way in which they will become

partakers of it, the conditions for this having been fulfilled by the Surety. They need not keep themselves, but according to this decree they are in Christ's keeping and thus they are kept by a sure, almighty, and faithful hand. Therefore, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 8:35). Who shall disannul the covenant which has been established between them both? "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Secondly, the elect neither need to accomplish nor merit salvation, nor add anything to the acquisition thereof, for by this covenant all the weighty conditions were laid upon Christ. He would bear the punishment; He would fulfil the law on their behalf; He would keep them; and He would lead them to salvation. He would perform all that pertained to the covenant, and has also accomplished it. On the other hand, all the merits of Christ extend to God's children, and all graces are theirs: the adoption unto children, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification. All these, at the appropriate time, manner, and measure, are administered to them in accordance with the contents of this covenant. Therefore, in recognition of this, how they ought to cry out, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake" (Psalms 115:1)!

Thirdly, the covenant of grace and our covenant transaction with God in Christ has its origin and basis in this covenant of redemption between God and Christ. From this covenant issue forth the beginning, continuance, and end of man's salvation. Before anyone existed, and before the gospel was proclaimed to them, it had already been decreed and established in this covenant when each of the elect would be born; when and by what means they would be brought into the covenant, the measure of grace, comfort, and holiness; and the quantity and nature of the tribulations and crosses they would have to endure in this life. All this has been determined and all the aforementioned matters issue forth from this covenant. Therefore the elect on the one hand need but be still and to let the Lord work. They need but to open their mouths to receive, for whatever is comprehended in the articles of this covenant will most certainly be given to them. On the other hand, they must focus upon this covenant, be active in entering into the covenant of grace, and living therein, they must make it the foundation of their life. This will motivate the godly to proceed with understanding and steadfastness, neither resting in the steadfastness of their faith or godliness nor, as one so often is inclined to do, being tossed to and fro when both appear to diminish. In consequence of this, they will acknowledge that the manifestation of every grace and influence of the Holy Spirit proceeds from this covenant. They will be enabled to exclaim feelingly, joyously, and lovingly, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).

Fourthly, this covenant reveals a love which is unparalleled, exceeding all comprehension. How blessed and what a wonder it is to have been considered and known in this covenant, to have been given by the Father to the Son, by the Son to have been written in His book, and to have been the object of the eternal, mutual delight of the Father and the Son to save you! The parties of this covenant were not moved to include any of the elect on the basis of foreseen faith or good works. They were not moved by necessity or compulsion, but by eternal love and volition. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). Love moved the Father and love moved the Lord Jesus. It is a covenant of love between those whose love proceeds from within themselves, without there being any loveableness in the object of this love. Oh, how blessed is he who is incorporated in this covenant and, being enveloped and irradiated by this eternal love, is

stirred up to love in return, exclaiming, “We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Fifthly, by virtue of this covenant the Lord Jesus is the Executor of the salvation of the elect. The Father has given them into His hand and entrusts them to Him. The Son in love has accepted them and has committed Himself not to lose one of them, but to raise them up again at the last day (John 6:39). The Lord Jesus is omnipotent, faithful, loving, immutable, and possesses everything which is necessary for their salvation. How safely one may therefore surrender everything to Him, and rest therein, confessing, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalms 23:1); “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me” (Psalms 138:8); “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psalms 73:24); “Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psalms 2:12)!

009. Chapter 8: The Creation of the World

----- CHAPTER EIGHT ----- The Creation of the World

Having considered the intrinsic works of God, we proceed to consider His extrinsic works -- in the realm of nature and in the realm of grace. His works in nature are creation as well as His providence in regard to His creation. We shall first discuss creation.

Creation Defined The verb “to create” has various meanings.

(1) It can refer to God’s common government of things. “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil” (Isaiah 45:7).

(2) It can refer to extraordinary acts of God. “For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man” (Jeremiah 31:22).

(3) It can refer to regeneration and renewal of heart in conversion. “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psalms 51:10).

(4) Generally we understand the verb “to create” to refer to the generation of matters, either out of nothing as was the case on the first day, or out of formless matter created on the first day, the latter being the method by which God created on the five succeeding days. In travelling reversely through time, one will ultimately arrive at the beginning, beyond which one cannot proceed. Beyond this there is nothing but God only who inhabits eternity. No temporal human being can comprehend this eternity, and those who seek to view it as a very long time, view it erroneously. The eternal God, being desirous to reveal Himself and to communicate His goodness, has according to His eternal purpose and by His wisdom and omnipotence, created the universe and all things belonging to it. Thus, whatever exists has a beginning, prior to which nothing existed except God Himself. There was no infinite light. Neither were there elements, formless mass of matter, matter in motion, nor anything else which one could possibly name or conceive. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). “In the beginning” does not refer to the moment before anything existed, but it refers to the first moment of time which coincided with the appearance of the very first element of creation. This is confirmed in Psalms 90:2 : “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world.” Prior to the existence of the world, there was a “before,” not in reality, but only when viewed from the perspective of the beginning of creation. In this “before” the world did not exist, but this “before” was eternity itself. “... even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.” The world which did not exist was brought forth. That which has been brought forth, however, of necessity has no prior existence, but rather a beginning. This is confirmed by the use of the word “before” in other texts. “... before the foundation of the world ...” (Ephesians 1:4); “... before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9). Both texts imply that there is a beginning of time and a beginning of the world. Consequently, the world has not existed eternally. As the world did not exist eternally, neither could it have existed eternally. God was indeed eternally capable to create, however that which is created cannot be without beginning, and thus cannot be eternal. This is true for the following reasons:

First, it could then not have been stated that the world was created, for to create is to bring forth matter which had no prior existence. Since in this formation there is a transition from nothing to something, there is of necessity a beginning.

Secondly, there is progression of time during the existence of a created entity. Progression of time logically implies, however, that there be an initial moment, and therefore the existence of a created entity must of necessity have a beginning.

Thirdly, if the world would have eternally existed, then it either must eternally have been self-existent, or it must exist by virtue of God's eternity. If it existed by virtue of its own eternity, then of necessity there would be two collateral eternal entities, and God would neither be the only eternal One nor the original cause of everything. Scripture, however, consistently attributes these to God as being unique to Him alone. If the world would have eternally existed by virtue of God's eternity, then it would be God Himself, and thus also be omnipotent, omniscient, simple in essence, immutable, etc., for in every perfection of God all other perfections are comprehended. Within God these perfections cannot actually be distinguished, but they are all one and the same. It thus follows that the world could not have existed eternally. In calculating retroactively from our time, the beginning can be dated approximately 5750 years ago. I say "approximately," for this date cannot be determined exactly, since this chronological calculation is not based on the course of the stars, but must be solely deduced from the genealogies of the patriarchs which are recorded in Holy Scripture, all of which only record the years, without reference to months and days. It is therefore uncertain during what season of the year the world was created. The suggestions that it occurred 1) either when the sun was at its zenith or lowest point, 2) at the point when during fall or spring both day and night are of equal length, or 3) during a different season of the year, are entirely speculative. Most often it is suggested to have been at the time of the spring equinox. Those who claim that it occurred at the time of the fall equinox seem to have the better arguments. I personally do not know which view is correct. The world did not come into existence of itself for nothing can bring forth itself. Instead, the world has been created by God who is the Creator of all things. "... The Creator of the ends of the earth ..." (Isaiah 40:28); "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth" (Exodus 20:11); "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Psalms 121:2); "In the beginning Elohim (the triune God) created" (Genesis 1:1).

Creation, the Work of a Triune God

Since God is one in essence, and the three Persons are the one God, their will and power are one and the same. All God's extrinsic works are common to the three Persons, being the work of a triune God. Nevertheless, each of these extrinsic works is attributed to individual Persons according to the relationship which each Person has to the particular work. Consequently, creation is attributed to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. In doing so, however, the other Persons are not excluded but expressly included in the same work, so that any extrinsic work attributed to one of the Persons, is also attributed to the other Persons. Thus, creation is attributed not only to the Father, but also to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. The Son has created the world. "All things were made by Him (that is, the Word, the Son of God); and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3); "For by Him were all things created" (Colossians 1:16). In doing so He did not assist, nor did it occur through Him as a means, but He is the moving cause Himself, for the word "by" refers to the original cause. "... Through Him ... are all

things" (Romans 11:36). "God is faithful, by whom ye were called" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

Creation is also attributed to the Holy Spirit. "And the Spirit of God, Merachepheh moved (in a forming, creating, and generating manner) upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2); "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalms 33:6).

Since creation is the work of the Holy Trinity, it is stated in Genesis 1:26, "Let US (Na'aseh, plural) make man." "Remember thy Borecha, Creators" (Ecclesiastes 12:1); "Bo'alaich 'osaich, thy Makers is thine Husbands" (Isaiah 54:5). [Note: It should be understood here that à Brakel wishes to give expression to the plurality of these words in the original Hebrew.] Creation, the Proper Work of God

Creation is the proper work of God; He and He alone has created. The angels are not "co-creators," nor can this creative power be communicated to anyone. Some wish to make such a proposition to protect their view concerning transubstantiation. Others do so to deny the Holy Trinity. However, this neither is nor can be true.

First, Scripture states expressly that creation is exclusively the proper work of God alone. "I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by Myself" (Isaiah 44:24); "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens" (Isaiah 45:12).

Secondly, God distinguishes Himself from everything else by a power which, as it is in Him, is both inherent and incommunicable. "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish. ... But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King. ... He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion" (Jeremiah 10:11; Jeremiah 10:10; Jeremiah 10:12); "For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens" (Psalms 96:5).

Thirdly, creating is the manifestation of infinite power. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20). This infinite power is the infinite God Himself. If God were capable of communicating this infinite and eternal power, then God could cause other eternal gods to exist, which is absurdity itself. On the other hand, the creature is finite and therefore cannot comprehend nor perceive the infinite. It is true that the work of creation relates to finite creatures, but the power of creation is and remains infinite.

Fourthly, in order to make a certain thing, a creature must work with something which already exists, and in addition that substance must be suitable to be used for given purposes. A painter, for example, cannot paint a picture on water. To create, however, is to bring forth something out of absolutely nothing -- from something that in an absolute sense has not been formed, to something that has form. It is therefore impossible that the power of creation could be communicated to a creature. When men are said to have performed miracles which necessitated the exercise of infinite power, then they themselves did not do it. They did not possess such infinite, inherent power, but were merely the moral causes of such power. Being inwardly convinced of God's will and being moved by God to declare His will, they thus stated, "Arise," "Receive thy sight," or "Walk." Upon such declarations God performed a miracle by His power. Peter confirms this when

he states, "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power ... we had made this man to walk?" (Acts 3:12). The performance of miracles is the proper work of God alone. "Thou art the God that doest wonders" (Psalms 77:14); "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things" (Psalms 72:18). Thus it is evident that this creative power cannot be communicated to anyone, and therefore only God is the Creator. As infeasible as it is for this creative power to be communicated to anyone, so infeasible it is that any instruments were used during creation. What would be the purpose of an instrument, when God, by the use of one word, brings forth something out of nothing? In the transition from nothing to something neither matter nor time play a role. The use of an instrument, however, necessitates the presence of both.

Objection: The angels were "co-creators." "Let us make man" (Genesis 1:26). God could not have addressed Himself, and thus He addressed the angels.

Answer: This text proves the Trinity of Persons. Man was not created in the image of angels. God did not create the world from an infinite air mass, neither from indivisible elements, from an eternally formless mass of matter, nor from anything else, whatever name one would wish to attribute to it. This is a pagan fabrication derived from the fundamental principle: only nothing can come out of nothing. This is true in reference to the finite creature and natural forces, but not as far as the infinite and omnipotent God is concerned. He has brought forth everything out of nothing. The determining factor here is this "nothing," and not the matter from which things were formed. The apostle demonstrates this in Hebrews 11:3, where he states, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Natural reason teaches that by virtue of causal relationships one ultimately must come to God as the original cause of all things. Natural reason, however, cannot understand the "how"; that is, how something can come into existence out of nothing, how God with one word and with one single command has caused everything to come into existence. All this we accept by faith. By faith we also accept the order described by Moses, in which all things were brought forth. The pagan physician Galenus, upon reading the first chapter of Genesis, stated, "Moses says much, but proves little." By faith we understand and maintain with utmost certainty that *ta blepomena*, were made *mee ek phainomenon*, that is seeing that which does not appear, the latter being a Greek manner of speech. It is as if it were stated, "*ta onta eks ouk onton*," that is, being out of what is not, which is equivalent to "out of nothing." This manner of expression is found in Matthew 9:33 : "It was never so seen in Israel," which does not imply that anything of this nature had existed before, but rather that something of this nature had never existed before. Our intellect can readily understand that something can be created from something, but faith is required to conclude that things which exist have been brought forth out of nothing by God "who ... calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17); "For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalms 33:9).

(1) If anything existed prior to creation, then of necessity it either had to be created, or it was not created. If created, it necessarily was created out of nothing, and if not created, it was necessarily eternal and independent and thus was itself God. Then God would have created the world out of something which was external to His own existence and until this day the matter of the universe would be unrelated to God's Being. Added to that which we have already stated, this is the absurdity of absurdities.

(2) Scripture states clearly, "Thou hast created all things" (Revelation 4:11). This statement is all-inclusive. The creation of the world came to pass (1) by the exercise of omnipotent power, merely by a singular verbal command of God's omnipotent will, all of which occurred without the least exertion. "Let there be light," etc. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" (Isaiah 40:28).

(2) by virtue of His absolute sovereignty. God was able to create the world, and He could have also refrained from doing so. He could have created prior to 5750 years ago, at a later date, or also could have created several worlds. He only made this one world, however, brought forth at the precise moment according to His volitional decree.

(3) as a result of His infinite wisdom. This wisdom can neither be searched out anywhere in the entire universe, nor by examining the orderliness, motion, and interrelatedness of secondary causes; nor can it be traced even in a simple flower -- although all of these reveal a glimmer of it. Here one must end with the exclamation, "In wisdom hast Thou made them all" (Psalms 104:24). This wisdom is wonderfully manifested in the orderly fashion in which everything that has been created continues from the beginning. The Orderly Progression of God's Creative Activity

Immediately upon creating the formless mass of matter, God in one moment could have created everything in the perfect state which existed on the seventh day. It has pleased Him, however, to create sequentially within the time frame of six days, thereby providing man with an example to labor six days and to rest on the seventh day. This reason is stated in Exodus 20:11 : "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth ... and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

It is, however, not recorded whether God devoted an entire day to each task, or whether the accomplishment of each day was created in one moment. God could indeed have commanded it into existence in one moment, and in one moment have created everything out of nothing. Due to one thing being created out of the other, however, that which was created needed time to set itself in motion. Air, as it issued forth from the shapeless mass of matter -- which was but small in comparison to the globe in its final form -- needed time to expand from the very center of this mass to form the immeasurable firmament. Time was needed for the division of the waters which were under the firmament and the waters which were above the firmament. Time was needed for trees to spring forth from the earth and to come to full height, etc. The quantity of time required each day for all this cannot be determined, however. It appears probable to me that an entire day was used for the accomplishment of each daily objective in order to give the angels reason each day to shout for joy (cf. Job 38:7) in response to their observation of the wisdom and power of God in the creation of things. It is also probable -- in order for the six day duration of creation to be an example to man to perform his labors in six days, and because God observed and approved His work at the end of each day and is said to only have rested upon the seventh day.

Since the Lord has described creation for us in such a detailed fashion, it is therefore our duty to attentively observe all this. To facilitate this, we shall make the following general remarks.

First, it should be noted that the first verse of Scripture, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" is not a superscription, nor is it a summary statement relative to creation, but it

represents a stage of creation. By “heaven” we understand the third heaven, and by “earth” we understand the globe and the visible universe.

Secondly, on the first day God created out of absolutely nothing, and on the other days God formed everything from this formless, inert mass of matter.

Thirdly, God was initially -- that is on the first four days -- occupied with the creation of lifeless objects: on the last two days He created living creatures.

Fourthly, in the creation of lifeless objects God began with that which is most sophisticated: light, from which He proceeded to air, from air to water, and from water to the earth, which is the least sophisticated structure. In creating living creatures, however, God began with the lowest degree of complexity, the irrational animals, and ended with His most magnificent creature, man.

Fifthly, on each day of creation the following is to be observed: (1) There is a command: Let there be ...; (2) there is a chronological equation: And it was there; (3) there is an approbation: “It was good”; (4) there is a definition of purpose, and (5) there is a blessing.

Sixthly, three matters must be considered in the creation of each thing: (1) Its generation, whereby it came into existence; (2) its formation, identifying it as a specific creation; and (3) its adornment, making it both beautiful and pleasant.

Seventhly, in considering the entire work of creation, it should be noted that it was God’s objective to create man and to exalt man in a most extraordinary manner. For this purpose He prepared such a large and spacious edifice, arranged everything in an orderly fashion, and adorned it in every possible manner. Having prepared everything, God then created man, placing him in dominion over the works of His hands. In proceeding to the creative work of each day, we discern that God created three things on the first day: the third heaven, the shapeless mass of matter, and light.

God created the third heaven upon the first day. “In the beginning God created the heaven.” This refers neither to the atmosphere nor the firmament, which were created subsequently, but to this heaven which is also called the heaven of heavens (1 Kings 8:27), the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2), Paradise (by comparison) (Luke 23:43), the Father’s house (John 14:2), and on high (Hebrews 1:3). Concerning this place I dare not say much, as nothing has been written about it (I am referring to its locality and not to the benefits and felicity to be enjoyed there). We do know, however, that the third heaven was created. “For we know that ... we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1); “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). In Matthew 25:34 it is stated, “Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” which confirms that this third heaven was created at the beginning of the six-day creation. Aside from knowing that it was created, it can be deduced from Revelation 21:1-27 that this heaven is exceedingly glorious, not merely due to the heavenly blessings with which the souls of men will be saturated as they enjoy perfect communion with God, but also in respect to the place itself. Man in his glorified state will retain his body, and whatever is most delightful for the body will therefore be found in this place, which is God’s artifice (Hebrews 11:10). We are therefore of the opinion that this third heaven, compared to the earth and to the earthly Paradise, will be superior in a manner exceeding our imagination. The particulars of this place, however, have been concealed from us. The second

activity of the first day was the creation of the formless mass of matter. We refer to this as “formless” in view of the formation which followed. This first mass was “thohu wavohu, without form and void” (Genesis 1:2). Everything was brought forth from this original matter -- not due to divinely induced activity whereby everything formed itself or had the potential for formation -- and has thus been created from this mass by the omnipotent power of God, for it is expressly stated, “The Spirit of God Merachepheth, moved (in a creative manner) upon the face of the waters”; that is, upon this mass of matter which was fully enveloped by water. The pagans refer to this mass of matter as “chaos,” that is, the conglomerate mass of matter containing the original elements of all things. The third activity of the first day was the creation of light. This light was not an effect without a cause; such would be contrary to the nature of an effect. It was also not an illuminating cloud, for clouds had not as yet been created. Its existence was also not exterior to this mass of matter, for exterior to this matter there was no space. Rather it was something which at its most extreme edge revolved around this mass of matter during a twenty-four hour period thus creating day and night. It is easier to describe what light is in its manifestation than to define its internal form and essence. Paul states, “For whatsoever doth make manifest is light” (Ephesians 5:13). On the second day God created two matters. First, He created the firmament. This mass of matter was neither suited to be a dwelling place for man nor did it manifest as yet the extraordinary wisdom of God. Consequently, God created additional space, bringing forth an air mass from this matter, limiting it by means of an immeasurable circumference, outside of which neither space nor anything else existed. Thus, the boundary of this air mass was not defined by something exterior, but its boundary was defined by the air-mass itself. From the very center of this mass of matter to its utmost extremity there was a remoteness established by God Himself, beyond which there was and is no space. This firmament is subdivided into two heavens, as the paradise of God is the third heaven. The first heaven extends from the earth to a specified point in the atmosphere which is unknown to us. The second heaven extends far beyond the point where the first heaven terminates, which is the space in which sun, moon, and stars have their place; this is referred to as the firmament. We will leave speculation about any further divisions of the firmament to astronomers. The second activity of the second day was the division of the waters which are above and under the firmament. One should not imagine that there are waters beyond the stars and beyond the extreme circumference of the firmament, for beyond this extreme circumference there is no space, it being the ultimate boundary. It is probable that the farther air is removed from center, the thinner it is. The waters above the firmament, however, are the clouds, some of which float higher than others. They have, as far as altitude is concerned, a boundary beyond which they cannot move. This text (Genesis 1:7) uses the word Mé'al, “above,” that is, in the higher regions of the firmament Lerakia', and thus neither beyond nor in the lower regions of the starry heavens, but at the highest boundary of the first heaven. Since Moses refers only to two levels of water, dividing them in lower and upper waters, it negates the suggestion that there would be waters above the stars, as Moses would then have spoken of three levels of water: an upper, middle, and lower level. On the third day God accomplished two things. First, He separated the lower waters of the earth. At various places He made cavities in which the flowing waters would collect so that dry land would appear everywhere and would be a suitable dwelling place for man and beast. This gathering together of the waters the Lord called seas, for which He established definite boundaries. Even if these waters rise higher than the shores which enclose them, they would nevertheless not move beyond these shores by virtue of the order which has been established.

These waters, together with the earth, constitute a globe. As the second activity of the third day, God adorned the dry land with trees and every imaginable type of vegetation, greatly beautifying the face of the earth with their delightful colors and scents. This was true in a far more glorious manner than presently is the case upon an earth which the Lord has cursed. Every plant had its elegance -- even thistles, thorns, and poisonous herbs, which prior to the curse were not that abundant, but by virtue of the curse were multiplied to the disadvantage of man and beast. On the fourth day God made sun, moon, and stars. Sun and moon are called the two great lights. It does not say the two greatest bodies, but they are referred to as lights. We will let astronomers argue about whether they are the largest bodies. The Bible calls them great lights, and it should be incontrovertible to all men that such is the case. The idea that these lights and the stars, or the sun alone, would be stationary, and that the earth would revolve is a fabrication of men whose heads are spinning too much. We believe the Holy Scriptures, and by that faith we understand "that the worlds were framed by the Word of God" (Hebrews 11:3). Scripture states that the earth is stationary. "Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever" (Psalms 104:5). Scripture states that the sun has a circuit. "Which (the sun) is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it" (Psalms 19:5-6). When the sun stands still, it is due to a miracle. "And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed" (Joshua 10:13). [Note: See footnote 129 in chapter two.]

These lights have a threefold purpose: 1) to divide the day from the night, 2) for signs, for seasons, for days, and for years, and 3) by their influence to make the earth fertile. "I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth" (Hosea 2:21 b).

God does reveal extraordinary signs in the heavens to warn and to startle (Matthew 24:29-30), or for the purpose of instruction (Matthew 2:2). In observing the light of the stars and the moon one can even discern whether the air is stable or unstable, from which one can conclude whether good or unsettled weather is imminent (Luke 12:54-55). By them to predict future events, however, which will transpire by the exercise of man's free will, as well as the outcome of wars, the death of this or that individual, prosperity or adversity, etc., is

(1) a vain practice which is refuted by reality. If someone accidentally makes a correct guess, this is not due to the stars, but mere guesswork or the secret influence of Satan by which he seeks to confirm people in their superstition and thus draw them away from God;

(2) also contrary to the express command of God. "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them" (Jeremiah 10:2).

Question: How could God have created the two great lights on the fourth day since He created light on the first day?

Answer: The light which God created on the first day, He, on the fourth day, caused to be transmitted by the sun -- similar to the manner in which one places a candle inside a lantern. And since the sun illuminates the moon, it communicates that light to the earth by way of reflection. On the fifth day God began the creation of living animals: the fishes and the birds. The fish were brought forth from the water, and the birds perhaps partly from the water (Genesis 1:20) and partly

from the earth (Genesis 2:19). The amphibians, which live both on land and in the water, apparently were brought forth out of both. On the sixth day God created four-footed animals with all their peculiar natures and shapes, as well as insects, be it with or without feet. We also believe that all vermin, which in the opinion of many exists as a result of decay or came into existence due to heavenly influences, was created on this day.

God gifted the animals of the earth with five senses, and thus also with feeling. Even though they cannot respond intelligently to these feelings (as is true for men), they nevertheless feel in their own way. Who would deny that a dog sees, smells, hears, tastes, walks, and conveys a friendly or angry disposition, albeit not in a human manner? This is also true for feeling, which manifests itself as clearly as the other senses. Scripture also confirms this in many texts (cf. Job 39:6-7; Psalms 104:11).

Finally, God created the most glorious of all creatures upon earth -- man. Of this we will speak separately in a subsequent chapter.

After having completed everything in six days, the Lord added the seventh day, conveying to us His activity upon this day, namely, that He rested "from all His work which He had made" (Genesis 2:2). The perfection of His work was such that nothing was lacking, neither was there any necessity for Him to add anything to it. He rested, and thus no longer created any new creatures. He was not weary, for "the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary" (Isaiah 40:28). Humanly expressed, however, He examined all that He had made, and delighted Himself in His work. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:17 b). The Lord has thus united the first seven days into one unit, thereby holding His work before man as an example to be followed, while simultaneously commanding man, by virtue of His example, to work six days and to rest on the seventh day. The number seven throughout the word of God is generally referring to this seven, which is expressive of the perfection of a matter. By taking note of this, light will be shed upon those texts in which the number seven occurs and it will prevent one from drawing erroneous conclusions in seeking to distill other mysteries from this number.

Whatever we have stated concerning creation was neither done merely to enhance your knowledge concerning these things nor to satisfy your curiosity. Rather we did so to direct you by way of the visible to the Invisible One, that you might observe and acknowledge the Lord's greatness, power, glory, and goodness. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Psalms 107:43). How clearly creation reveals the perfections of God! The heathen discern them, putting many Christians to shame. How they ought to be convicted that they have never been exercised with this, never having beheld the Creator in His creatures!

Exhortation to Meditate Upon the Wonder of God's Creative Work

Come, behold this magnificent edifice and Him who has made all this. Behold His majesty and supremacy and consider especially that you are His creature. He therefore has absolute power over you and you are thus obligated, because of what you are, to devote yourself to your Creator. How dreadful, unnatural, and unspeakably horrible it is that you, who are so needy and dependent upon your Maker, dare to sin against such a God! How appalling it is that you dare to despise and

reject Him, neither desire communion with Him nor fear Him and His wrath. Added to this is your abuse of His creatures, the use of which you have forfeited through sin. How suitable this consideration therefore is to perceive the magnitude of sin, to abhor oneself, and to sink away in shame, fear, and trembling. The contemplation of God as Creator first of all makes it very evident that all your security, freedom, rest, peace, and happiness consist in the goodness and love of your Maker towards you. While you remain the object of His wrath, all His creatures will be opposed to you, and every one as it were waits for permission to destroy you. Whatever you touch will resist you with displeasure. It does not want to be touched by you, but rather wishes to be used against you. Nothing will give you peace as long as your Maker is displeased with you, and therefore the fear of Cain ought to be upon you. When, however, your Maker is again reconciled with you in Christ, your Father now being pleased with you, you are then free indeed, for everything will be at peace with you. "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee" (Job 5:23). Strive therefore with all your heart to be thus reconciled by receiving this precious Savior Jesus Christ. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

Secondly, I wish to address you, children of God -- both the strong and the weak, and you in whom there is but a small beginning of true spiritual life. What a steadfast foundation for comfort and confidence in the Lord you may have, both in prosperity and adversity, in abundance and in poverty, in times of peace and persecution, and in the present time as well as in the future! "For Thy Maker is thine husband" (Isaiah 54:5); "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Psalms 24:1). Since the Lord, your Father, is Creator and Proprietor of the entire world and all that it contains -- which willingly avails itself for His service -- how can you lack anything? How can the creature harm you? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" (Job 34:29). Therefore distill your own comfort from this and reason as follows: The Lord has known me and accepted me to be His child. This I know by the Holy Spirit who has been given to me, and has wrought light and life in my soul, however small it may be. The Lord is the Creator of heaven and of earth; everything belongs to Him and is at His disposal. Thus, I shall not lack anything and all will therefore be well, for on the one hand the Lord loves me and on the other hand He desires and is able to help me. He has promised and declared, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). Therefore, acquiesce in this, and if things do not proceed according to your wishes, then look unto your Maker and submit yourself to His holy will. Approach Him as His creature, as His child; pray, wait upon Him, lean upon Him, and always let the Lord, who has made heaven and earth, be your reliance.

Thirdly, children of God, therefore as God's creatures make use of everything, for the world is yours both in respect to property and usage (1 Corinthians 3:22). All of this, however, is only so because you are the property of Christ, and God ultimately remains the Proprietor of everything. Refrain from cruel behavior towards the creature and from its unnecessary and deliberate destruction, because it is the Lord's property. Refrain from abusing the creature through revelling, drunkenness, and ostentatious and adulterous behavior, for it is God's property. Rather, use it freely for necessary purposes, as well as for honest enjoyment by seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching and adorning it. Realize that three words are written upon each creature by which you are continually reminded: Accipe, Redde, Fuge, that is, take, return, and avoid. Take

and receive whatever God gives you, return it with thanksgiving to Him from whom it originated, and avoid misuses and sinful abuse.

Fourthly, accustom yourself to behold creation in such a fashion that you may behold God in it. May you thus be stirred up to praise Him, to glorify Him with your heart, mouth, and deeds for His magnificence, power, wisdom, and goodness, exclaiming, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches" (Psalms 104:24). As you consider these perfections of God as manifested in creation, seek to cultivate a reverent, spiritual frame, and to bow yourself with reverence before Him. "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Psalms 95:6). This is the work of angels. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4; Job 38:7). The man after God's heart found his delight in this and he praised God as he beheld His creation. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands" (Psalms 8:1; Psalms 8:3-4; Psalms 8:6); "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge" (Psalms 19:12).

Fifthly, although the Lord reveals Himself in a much more special and glorious manner in the work of redemption than in His works of creation and providence, heaven and earth have not been created in vain. They do not exist merely to be at man's disposal for the duration of his existence, but they exist for the glory of their Creator.

(1) An unregenerate man views heaven and earth, and God's government of them, in a natural way. His focus remains upon the creation and he rarely ascends to the Creator. If he does so, it is with a carnal heart and eye, perceiving little of God in it. And whatever he does perceive of God in it, he does not glorify God in response to it.

(2) The person, however, whose eyes of his understanding have been enlightened, who now knows, loves, and esteems God to be His God, now beholds everything -- every creature and every motion -- as so many books and mouths to declare the glory of his God and Father. And since his focus is not on creation itself, it does not concern him so much if the natural is inferior to the work of grace in the realm of the spiritual. His concern is how God, by means of creation, reveals Himself to the soul.

[1] Did not heaven and earth and God's government serve as a mirror to Adam after He was created, and prior to the fall, having as yet no knowledge of redemption? Did it not enable him to behold the glory of His Creator and to glorify Him in response to this?

[2] The heathen who are scattered throughout the entire earth, and have no knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, nevertheless behold God in the works of nature. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20).

[3] God often directs His church to behold His works of creation and providence for the purpose of knowing Him. "Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have

placed the sand for the bound of the sea? Neither say they in their heart, let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest" (Jeremiah 5:22;Jeremiah 5:24); "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isaiah 45:12).

[4] Holy men of God have often focused upon the works of nature and magnified God in them. "And blessed be Thy glorious Name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein ... Thou preservest them all" (Nehemiah 9:5-6). David does likewise in Psalms 104:1-35. He begins as follows, "Bless the Lord," upon which he demonstrates how the glory of the Lord reveals itself in the maintenance and government of both His inanimate and animate creation. He ends in like manner: "Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord." The prophet made this reflection a foundation for the confidence of the church by saying, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalms 124:8).

Therefore, you who love to magnify God, seek to observe God freely in His creation and wondrous government of heaven and earth. Do not easily let opportunity pass by, as if such a practice were childlike and less spiritual, and as if nothing worthwhile could be observed in this. The latter is the practice of many people who in doing so, follow the example of the irrational animals of the earth. Instead, may you take intelligent notice with a spiritual eye, and thus either from the observance of creation ascend unto God -- thereby stirring up your soul to a lively frame to glorify God -- or from living spiritually near to God, descend from the Creator to the creature and observe them. You will discover more in such reflection than a man could possibly express. If, however, it pleases the Lord not to stir up your soul by His Holy Spirit, the entire edifice of creation, His government inclusive, will be a closed book to you, which under such circumstances will likewise be true for the Holy Scriptures. If God's Spirit leads you into it, however, you will perceive God in an incomprehensibly glorious manner.

If, with an attentive soul, it is your desire -- the soul now seeking to accustom itself to continually have God in view and to glorify Him -- to observe all God's works, then do the following:

First, in a godly frame of mind go outdoors and lift up your eyes on high to observe the immeasurable dimensions of the universe (as far as man is concerned) as well as its enormous space, and consider yourself as a grain of sand surrounded by all this.

Secondly, observe heaven's beautiful countenance. How delightful are the distant heavenly blue, the fluffy clouds, the elegant moon, the innumerable multitude of glittering stars, the comprehensive view of the countenance of heaven; the quiet evening, the pensive night, the lovely sunrise; the sitting or walking under the canopy of a lush forest, the sweet rustling of the wind in the trees, the dimension of immensity presented by rows of lofty trees; and the immensity of a plain when viewed either from a lonely elevation or from a distant point! Here one observes green meadows filled with cattle, and there cultivated fields with either lovely, multi-colored, and aromatic growth, or delicious fruits; while yonder are mountains interspersed with valleys. Then again one walks along the seashore, and yonder one sits down by a quietly babbling brook, everywhere hearing the joyful sound produced by the voices of birds of various plumage. If a soul is to some degree spiritual, will he not be drawn towards his Creator and Father, and will it not stir up a variety

of emotions within? Will he not observe more than he can possibly express, and will not such exhilarating excursions both during the morning and the evening cause him to return home joyfully with a heart filled with praise?

Thirdly, observe the infinite diversity of colors, smells, tastes, voices, and shapes of birds, fishes, animals, insects, leaves, and grasses in the field. Seek to find two that are fully identical!

Fourthly, observe the infinite chain of secondary causes, and how one thing serves and assists the other; how heaven and earth interact, as is stated in Hosea 2:21-22, "I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel." When you sit down at your table to eat, has not the entire edifice of heaven and earth been in motion to set this table before you? What an innumerable multitude of people have served you in this, who have labored to provide you with a table, a table cover, knives, dishes, spoons, glasses, bread, meat, fruits, wine, and beer? Through how many hands did all these things pass before coming to your table? But who sets all of this in motion and who caused them to serve you in the sweat of their brow? Behold, oh, behold the good hand of your Father! It is He who gave life to the bird, the animal, or the fish. It is He who gave them food with the intent to raise them for your benefit, and who directed men to catch them, to deliver them to your home, and to prepare them for you. It is He who causes a little tree to be planted on your behalf, and prevents all His creatures from picking that apple, cluster of grapes, etc., rather directing them to leave it until, being ripe, it be delivered to your home, even if it were thousands of miles from your residence. Is all of this not suitable to prompt you to observe the hand and glory of God in a variety of ways? Does this not draw the soul which loves God towards Him?

Fifthly, observe the mountain peaks, the crowns of the trees, the church steeples, and blades of grass, and consider in which direction they point. Do they not point upward? Does all this not teach you not to focus on creation itself, but rather, to turn away from it to know the Lord God, love Him, delight yourself in Him, and give Him honor and glory? No education is required to discern what one may observe in, and learn from, creation. The Holy Spirit, having given God's child a sanctified soul, reveals with great clarity many glorious attributes of God, revealing them in a clearer and different manner than the brightest physicist would be capable of doing. Yes, a godly farmer can observe a thousandfold more than a secularly trained astronomer, herbalist, or biologist.

Sixthly, we hereby conclude that God is, all of which is manifested in a clear, incontrovertible, and immanent manner. This concept of God's existence transcends our ability for verbal expression. It declares and reveals to us "His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20). The fact that He created everything with one word, and by the influence of His power energizes in its existence and activity every one of the innumerable multitude of His creatures, is a reality too wonderful for our comprehension. In this we may observe the unsearchable wisdom, the infinite power, and the wondrous goodness of God, a view which will cause us to lose ourselves in amazement.

These and other attributes of God are observed by a godly person with an attentive disposition, doing so not simply by way of reasonable deduction or by mere observation. It is not so that he simply concludes God to be such and such and nevertheless remains in darkness. Rather, the Lord reveals Himself to the soul by way of His creation and the manner in which it functions, doing so as clearly as light manifests itself to the bodily eye. The fact that we neither observe all this nor

lift up our hearts to the Lord with wonder, delight, and joy, or, when reasoning deductively, do not discern the glory of the Lord in all this and thus do not glorify Him in this, is but a sign of our lack of spirituality. It is a natural rather than spiritual reaction to imagine that we cannot observe God's creation from a spiritual perspective. Perhaps this is due to the fact that one ends in creation itself, drawing but obscure conclusions from such observations, and having no experience in observing the glory of God either inductively or deductively [Note: The Dutch reads as follows: "... of van onderen op, of van boven neder."] with a heart which has been spiritually illuminated.

Seventhly, when a person who loves God ascends from creation to God Himself, he will observe far more of the glory of God than the creature itself can externally convey to him. He loses sight of the creature and ends in the Creator, acknowledging that His glory far exceeds the narrow confines of the creature. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee" (1 Kings 8:27). Should he attempt to express the honor and glory of His majesty, then all mental capacity is too limited and all words are inadequate, causing him to exclaim, "His greatness is unsearchable" (Psalms 145:3). He concludes that if God has created this lowly earth, the firmament, and the entire universe in such a glorious fashion and to His honor, His glory must be much more manifest in the third heaven, in that city whose Builder and Maker He is. There glory is to be observed in all its dimensions. It is there that the Lord Jesus was received in glory and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. There the angels are the most excellent creatures, excelling in glory. There the bodies of the godly will be conformed to the glorified body of Christ, be fully manifested in glory, and receive the crown of glory which will not fade away. The glory of God illuminates the New Jerusalem in its entirety -- a glory which is so great that Paul, having been lifted up into the third heaven, only shares with us that He heard unspeakable words, which are not lawful for a man to utter; that is, which cannot possibly be expressed. Thus, a person viewing this by faith, in believing meditation can join himself to this glorified multitude in heaven, with them prostrate himself before the Lord, take his crown and cast it down before Him, and join in exclaiming, "Hallelujah to Him who sits upon the throne, to whom be honor and glory!" Even then one could say that all of this is as nothing compared to the infinite glory which God has within Himself. And thus we must end in amazement and exclaim, "Thou, who hast set Thy majesty above the heavens, Thy glory is infinite! Therefore, to Thee be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever! Amen."

010. Chapter 9: Angels and Devils

----- CHAPTER NINE ----- Angels and Devils

Since angels and men have the highest measure of perfection among all creatures, we shall consider them separately. First, we shall consider the angels. The Name “Angel” Defined The name Angel (Hebrew: Maleach) is used for a variety of persons in the Word of God.

(1) The Lord Jesus Christ is called the Angel, of whom it is stated, “My Name (Jehovah) is in Him” (Exodus 23:21), that He is “the Angel of His presence” (Isaiah 63:9), and “the messenger of the covenant” (Malachi 3:1).

(2) Ministers are called angels. “... for he is the messenger (angel) [Note: In both Malachi 3:1 and Malachi 2:7 the Statenvertaling uses the word “engel”, which is translated as messenger in the KJV.] of the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 2:7).

(3) Messengers are referred to as angels (Job 1:14).

(4) Incorporeal personal entities are referred to as “angels.” “And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem” (1 Chronicles 21:16). In Greek Angelos is used two or three times to denote a messenger; otherwise it is always in reference to incorporeal personal entities which are denominated as “angels.” This name is not in any way related to their mission. It is a name which belongs as uniquely to these creatures as the name “man” belongs to the human race. Thus, this name does not refer to an office, but signifies spiritual, personal entities in contrast to human beings. “For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1 Corinthians 4:9); “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels ...” (1 Corinthians 13:1). Men are compared to angels, Isangeloi. “But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry ... for they are equal unto the angels” (Luke 20:35-36; cf. Matthew 22:30). These incorporeal personal entities are also called spirits, which in Hebrew is ruach, and in Greek pneuma. This word is also used in a variety of ways. (1) It refers to God (John 4:24); (2) to the third Person in the divine essence (Psalms 33:6; 1 John 5:7); (3) to the soul of man (Psalms 77:3, Acts 7:59); (4) to the wind (Psalms 1:4; John 3:8); (5) however, most frequently it refers to angels, that is, incorporeal personal entities. “A spirit passed before my face” (Job 4:15); “Are they not all ministering spirits?” (Hebrews 1:14). “And the evil spirit answered ...” (Acts 19:15). Both this name and the name “angel” are proper to their being, and are not assigned to them on the basis of comparison with other creatures. God who gave everything a name according to His will has given these specific names to these personal entities, and those names are synonymous with these personal entities. The use of these names is as common as our use of money; it is not necessary to anxiously and cunningly search for hidden meanings. We know what the word “angel” or “spirit” means, and what we understand by it.

Anyone who believes Scripture and does not impudently reject human histories and witness accounts, needs no proof for the existence of angels. If anyone wishes to join the Sadducees,

however, in stating “that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit” (Acts 23:8), let him not object to being numbered among them. The angels were created, for whatever exists is either Creator or creature. Since they are not the Creator, they are creatures and have been created. Paul confirms this when he states, “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him” (Colossians 1:16). Although it cannot be stated with certainty on which day of creation they were created, we do know that they were not created prior to “the beginning.” Prior to the beginning there was nothing but God Himself who inhabiteth eternity, whereas all creatures have a chronological existence, making them increasingly distant from the initial moment of their existence. It is equally true that they were not created after the initial six days, since God perfectly completed everything within this time frame. It is most probable that as the heavenly host (Luke 2:13) they were created on the first day with the third heaven, for when the Lord in subsequent days brought forth everything from that shapeless mass of matter, they were already present. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? ... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4; Job 38:7). In the beginning God created but one person, from whom He created a second, and out of these two the innumerable multitude of human beings has been brought forth. However, He created the entire, unfathomably large multitude of angels in one moment. There is “an innumerable company of angels” (Hebrews 12:22); “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels” (Psalms 68:17); “Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him” (Daniel 7:10). The Existence of Angels Defined An angel is an incorporeal, personal being which God has created and gifted with an extraordinary intellect, will, and power. An angel is a personal being based on the following evidence. Everyone will admit that whatever possesses intellect, a will, and power, and engages in intelligent and energetic activity, is a personal being. All this is true for angels -- which we will subsequently support with abundant evidence -- and they are therefore personal beings. As their form and manner of existence are unknown to us, however, their internal essence is likewise unknown to us. But we do know that their attributes, such as intellect, will, power, goodness, and wisdom are to be differentiated from their essential being, for “simplicity” is one of the incommunicable attributes of God. Beyond this we cannot delve into the essential nature of their being, since it has not been revealed to us. As it is beyond the reach of our intellect, we do not wish to deal with matters which have been hidden from us, but must wisely be moderate so that our own thinking and that of others may not be tainted.

Angels are incorporeal personal beings; that is, beings which exist without a body. It is their very nature to be spirits, and thus there is no essential union with a body. A body is *trinam dimensionem*; that is, three-dimensional, having length, breadth, and height. We emphatically deny this to be true for angels, even if one were to think of a body of the minutest dimensions. There is not the least relationship between angels and that which is corporal. “... a spirit hath not flesh and bones ...” (Luke 24:39). They have been created by God to exist independently, without being united to a body. As is true of the angels, the soul of man is also incorporeal, that is, a spirit. The concept of three-dimensionality is also entirely absent here, for the soul can exist without a body, as is true after man's death. This does not mean that the soul is then an angel, but as there are various bodily forms, the soul is likewise a different kind of spirit. It has spirituality and incorporeality in common with the angels, albeit in a lower degree, as the essential difference

between the two is hidden from us. We also are not fully cognizant of the form of existence of our souls. We do know this, however, that they are not angels, nor are they ever referred to as angels. Rather, they are expressly distinguished from angels. "But ye are come unto ... an innumerable company of angels ... and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:22-23).

Although there is no essential union between angels and bodies, they do appear in bodily form. They did not appear as apparitions or shadows during their frequent appearances, but the bodies in which they walked, sat, spoke, ate, wrestled, or touched other bodies, were true bodies. The saints to whom they appeared were not mentally impaired, did not sleep (although they did appear to them corporally in dreams or during a state of mental ecstasy), but were awake, spoke, moved, and interacted with them as if they were human beings. However, I neither know the origin of the bodies which they temporarily possessed, nor do I wish to make a guess. Although the bodies by which they interacted with men were true bodies, the angels were not essentially united to those bodies as the soul is united to the body. They set those bodies in motion, not formaliter, that is, in essence, but efficienter; that is, as operative agents of those motions, such as when a man moves the gears in his watch. This occurred for the purpose of enabling the angels to meet with man in a manner consistent with his own form of existence, and thus to interact with man in a manner familiar to him.

Although the angels are incorporeal -- and thus not surrounded by the atmosphere, etc., as is true for human bodies -- they nevertheless, in a manner consistent with their nature, exist in one locality, although we as corporal beings cannot comprehend how. We nevertheless know that they exist elsewhere, for that which exists nowhere does not exist, and whatever exists everywhere and without dimensions is God. If they are in one locality, they are not simultaneously elsewhere. Whenever our bodies change locality, our souls likewise change locality. Whenever a godly person dies, his soul does not remain upon earth, but has its residence in the third heaven. Whenever an ungodly person dies, his soul goes to hell and does not remain upon earth. Thus a spirit changes locality and the angels do likewise. When the angel was stationed at the east of Paradise, he was at that location and not in heaven (Genesis 3:24). When the angel of the Lord spoke to Zachariah while standing at the right side of the altar (Luke 1:26), he was not in Nazareth. When the angel Gabriel was sent to Nazareth and visited Mary (Luke 1:26; Luke 1:28), he was not in Jerusalem. When the angels of God ascend and descend (John 1:51), they are changing location. Thus, they are always in a specific locality and move from place to place.

It is even more absurd to think that a spirit is wherever he thinks himself to be. This presupposes of course that he is in a specified locality at that moment. The devil would still be in heaven, since he can think of having been there. Then man would be without a soul whenever he is mentally present in another place. Then the soul of a deceased person would still be within his body upon earth, since he could still think of being there. Whenever the soul of man removes itself mentally to other places it does not go there in actuality, but man brings such distant places and matters into his imagination; thus the soul reflects upon that which is manifest in the imagination. Similarly, an angel also thinks about matters which are remote, doing so in a manner consistent with his nature, but which is concealed from us as we do not know his form of existence.

Angels are intelligent creatures in a manner far exceeding the intelligence of man. This is why the wise woman of Tekoa said to David, "My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God"

(2 Samuel 14:20). Their knowledge is either natural or acquired. By virtue of their nature, the angels from the initial moment of their existence have always beheld the countenance of the Father (Matthew 18:10). They do, however, acquire knowledge concerning matters of which they had no prior knowledge, either by revelation or by experience. The Lord Jesus revealed the mystery of "things which must shortly come to pass" to an angel, sending him to reveal this to John (Revelation 1:1). By constant exhortation, the church makes known to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10). Their knowledge is finite and therefore they do not know all things, as many things are hidden from them.

(1) They are not naturally capable of themselves to perceive future events which will transpire by the exercise of man's free will or which will result because of secondary causes. This attribute properly belongs to God alone. "shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods" (Isaiah 41:23); "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven" (Mark 13:32).

(2) They have no knowledge of the heart, free will, and thoughts of men by way of an extrinsic act of the intellect. Such knowledge is in the first place attributable to God alone. "For Thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men" (2 Chronicles 6:30); "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins" (Jeremiah 17:9-10 a). Such knowledge is never attributed to an angel. Secondly, the reasonable will is subject to God alone and is immediately dependent upon Him. He only is capable of influencing the will. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it withersoever He will" (Proverbs 21:1); "He fashioneth their hearts alike" (Psalms 33:15).

If angels are cognizant of the will and opinion of men, this is neither due to immediate nor prior knowledge. Rather, they perceive this in retrospect, observing all the circumstances and manifestations of man's movements and thus they conclude the probability of man's thoughts and will. However, the probability of being in error concerning these matters always remains. One must always distinguish here between the will and the manifestation of the will. The angels are conscious of the latter from which they conclude the former.

Nevertheless, God does reveal to both good and evil angels some of the things which will come to pass -- either to the benefit of the godly or as a trial and punishment upon the ungodly. The angels utilize these revelations for the purpose of comfort and exhortation. The devils, however, use them to deceive, to cause men to acknowledge that they are capable of predicting future events, and to induce men to believe them. Our little children often ask when they begin to reason, "Why is this?" and "How does this work?" In regard to these matters they ask, "Does an angel have eyes?" Answer: No. "How is he then able to see? How is he able to read the Bible and thus know what it contains as well as what transpires in the world? Does he have ears?" Answer: No. "How then is he capable of hearing what we say? Does he have hands and feet?" Answer: No. "How then is he capable of moving from one place to another? How is he capable of doing anything?" We respond that all this is known to us from God's Word. Since, however, we are ignorant of the manner of their existence, we are also ignorant of the "how" of their existence. Being unable to understand the "how" of a matter does not mean that we must deny the matter itself. All we can say is that they do not see, hear, and function as man does, but rather in a manner which is consistent with their nature. The angels are in possession of superior and extraordinary power, enabling them to

execute great matters which far exceed the ability of men. "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might ..." (2 Peter 2:11). It is stated that they "excel in strength" (Psalms 103:20); they are called "His mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7); they are referred to as "the heavenly host" (Luke 2:13), and as "horses and chariots of fire" (2 Kings 6:17). All this is evident from the acts which they perform, as recorded in God's Word. The Interaction of Angels and Physical Entities

Question: Is it possible, and has it truly occurred that an angel has interacted with a physical entity since they are neither compatible nor have anything in common?

Answer: By positing that there is no compatibility between the two, one thereby presupposes that there are angels as well as men.

First, if this were an impossibility, the impossibility exists either in relation to God, to the physical entity, or to the angel. The impossibility is not with God for He is omnipotent and can empower a creature to a degree that is pleasing to Him. This also is not true relative to the physical entity which can be set in motion, nor is it true relative to an angel, as both God's Word and experience confirm this to be so. No one is able to state in what manner this interaction occurs, however, unless he were to have a perfect and thorough knowledge of the nature as well as the manner of an angel's existence -- which man does not have. Poor, insignificant man! How can men who hardly understand how one physical entity interacts with another even entertain the notion to argue about the power of angels? I said "hardly," for there be many things of which they have no knowledge at all; they are not able to tell us how sun, moon, and stars influence whatever transpires upon earth, nor the cause of low and high tides, and many other such phenomena. Explain that first to us and then you may explain to us how our soul is united with and influences the body, as well as proceed to state what is either possible or impossible relative to angels. Or else, believe the Word of God, as well as experience, which is the teacher of fools.

Secondly, it is certain that God -- who is a Spirit and is distinctly different from physical entities to a far greater degree than is true for angels -- interacts with physical entities. Therefore the fact that an angel is a spirit does not prevent him from interacting with a physical entity. If you reason that God is omnipotent whereas an angel is not, and thus disallow the aforementioned conclusion, I respond that this is true as far as omnipotence is concerned. The congruency between God and angels consists, however, in the fact that both have nothing in common and are incompatible with physical entities. From this we draw the incontrovertible conclusion that this incompatibility and incongruency does not prevent a spirit from interacting with a physical entity. The entire foundation of this logical construction collapses, and thus all reasons for denial are nullified.

Thirdly, our soul is a spirit, and as such is as distinct from the body as an angel is from a physical entity. Our soul interacts with the body, however, and thus an angel is capable of the same. Upon the suggestion that a soul is united to its own body and therefore interacts with its own body -- and by the agency of this body with other physical entities -- I respond that the fact whether the spirit does or does not belong to a physical entity is not the issue here. The soul is a spirit and as spirit it immediately interacts with the body. You can suggest as many indirect contacts between body and soul as you wish, but one must ultimately arrive at the point of immediate contact in their union. Thus, we conclude that a spirit interacts with a physical entity. Once more, is God not able to give a body to an angel, temporarily assigning him a body? Would this angel be able to interact with his own body as the soul interacts with its body and, by virtue of its body, with other physical entities?

As this is true for the soul, it is obviously true for angels as well. Having eliminated every reason for the objection, it is certain that an angel can interact with a physical entity.

Fourthly, the interaction between angels and physical entities is so clearly and abundantly attested to by Scripture that it merely suffices to read about this. From a large number of Scripture references let me select the following example. "Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand" (Isaiah 37:36). An angel performed this task; no other creature was capable of performing a task of this magnitude. People, and that in respect to their bodies, were the object of his activity; they were killed by the angel. This certainly is an example of interaction with physical entities. "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths" (Daniel 6:22). Did not an angel of the Lord announce the birth of Christ to the shepherds with heavenly clarity using the language of men (Luke 2:13)? The act of speaking sets air particles in motion, and thus the angel, as well as the multitude of the heavenly hosts which joined him, interacted with physical entities. It was an angel who spoke with the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane (Luke 22:43). Angels appeared to the guards and the women at the resurrection of Christ (Matthew 28:2-5). "And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying ..." (Acts 12:7). Is it possible to express the interaction between a spirit and a physical entity any more clearly? Also in verse 23, "And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him [Herod]." From all these examples it is undeniable that angels interact with physical entities.

Objection #1: The angels were not involved, but were merely bystanders to enhance the luster of God's work. Answer: Is there a single text where this is stated? Allow for the enhancement of glory that they would manifest themselves to men in human form; they nevertheless, in this manifestation, were interacting with physical entities. In addition to this it is expressly stated, however, that angels performed all these things. Who dares to contradict what God affirms?

Objection #2: One could ask in what manner angels interact with physical entities. Is it merely by means of their will, or are the exercise of power and exertion of influence also factors?

Answer: (1) The will is the initiating principle for the activity of a rational creature. To bring anything to pass by the mere exercise of the will, however, is an act of God rather than of the creature. God says, "I will: be thou clean" (Luke 5:13); "God ... calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17); "For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalms 33:9).

(2) It is nowhere stated in the entire Bible that angels have executed tasks merely by the exercise of their will. Who therefore dares to state such a thing, and what is the basis for such a statement?

(3) God's Word states that they excel in strength, have power, killed, smote Peter's side, closed the mouths of lions, spoke, and did everything in a manner as one would describe the activity of men. This proves that in addition to the exercise of their will there also was the exercise of power.

(4) If one wishes to maintain that angels are merely active in exercising their will, such a statement would imply the negation of the fact that angels truly interact with physical entities. By such reasoning one would not be able to rebut those who deny this very interaction itself, thereby confirming the very thing he wished to negate. Since they truly and actually interact with physical entities, however, they are thus not merely exercising their will, but the exercise of power and

exertion of influence are added to this. Yet as far as the manner of operation is concerned, we readily remain silent. It should be observed that all this haggling and manipulation is expressive of a subtle inclination to completely deny the existence of any spirit. As angels interact with physical entities, they likewise interact with each other, as 1) there is among them no incompatibility of natures, 2) Scripture states it to be so, "And one cried unto another ..." (Isaiah 6:3), and 3) if such were not the case, they would each exist in solitude and would be less perfect than man. It is also to their well-being to see and hear each other and to speak to and interact with each other.

These then are general observations concerning both good and evil angels.

Concerning the Good Angels In the beginning all angels were created in a holy state; however, a large portion of them have apostatized so that presently both holy angels and devils exist. The good angels are also referred to as elect (1 Timothy 5:21), proving that there is an election of angels as well as of men. They are generally referred to as holy angels (Matthew 25:31; Jude 1:14), angels of the Lord, or also, without the use of an adjective, angels. They are also called ministering spirits, cherubims, appearances (due to their visible appearances to men), and seraphims (aflame) because of their zeal and readiness. In reference to their service they are called holy watchers, sons of God, morning stars, heavenly hosts, thrones, principalities, powers, and rulers. In one text they are called Elohim (Psalms 8:5), which the apostle, in view of their radiation of divine power, translates as angels in Hebrews 2:7. The third heaven is the residence of the angels. "... in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10); "... but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30). Therefore they are called the angels of heaven (Matthew 24:36). It is from heaven that they are sent forth to perform those things which they are commanded to do. "For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came ..." (Matthew 28:2); "And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven ..." (Luke 22:43).

There is a very orderly relationship between the angels. Since God is a God of order, there can be no disorderliness in the holy environment of heaven. The manner of this order and the nature of the hierarchy are not known to us. We only know that there are thrones, principalities, powers, and rulers. The orders or ranks suggested by some are a pure fabrication.

Generally, their task is to execute God's commands. "Bless the Lord, ye His angels ... that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word" (Psalms 103:20). God specifically sends them forth to serve the elect (Hebrews 1:14). They preserve them, "for He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Psalms 91:11-12). They warn them against danger (Matthew 2:13); they rebuke them for committed sins (Revelation 22:9); they exhort them (Revelation 19:10); they give them direction as to what their course of action must be (Acts 10:5); they reveal future events to them (Daniel 8:16); they carry their souls to heaven after death (Luke 16:22), and they will be used to gather them prior to the final judgment (Matthew 24:31). God uses them for these and many other special tasks to the benefit of the elect, and uses them on the other hand to punish the ungodly. An angel slew 185,000 men in one night (Isaiah 37:36), and an angel smote Herod the King and he died (Acts 12:23).

Someone may ask whether every country, every city, every home, and every person has its special guardian angel. Our response is that nothing of the sort is to be found in God's Word, and

therefore our wisdom must not go beyond the boundaries of what is written. Scripture does state that an angel is present with a godly person (Acts 12:7). Sometimes more angels are present with a godly person (2 Kings 6:17), and sometimes one angel is present with several godly persons (Daniel 3:25).

Practical Exhortations Concerning the Doctrine of Angels

If the angels interact with man in such a fashion, the godly must believe and acknowledge this and behave themselves accordingly for the activity of angels has not been recorded without purpose.

First, one should carefully avoid attributing anything to them which is not revealed in God's Word and which we are forbidden to attribute to them. They must neither be acknowledged as intercessors nor must we desire that they intercede for us, as such activity is not according to God's Word. We must neither serve nor worship them for the following reasons:

(1) It is idolatry to serve anything which by its very nature is not God (Galatians 4:8). One may serve and worship only God. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

(2) It is expressly forbidden. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels" (Colossians 2:18).

(3) It is sharply condemned. "see thou do it not ... worship God" (Revelation 19:10). Secondly, one should observe and acknowledge this, and by way of frequent meditation seek to increase both observation of and faith in the fact that it pleases God to accomplish so many great things by their agency. We must stand amazed at the interrelationship of secondary causes and God's government of them in relation to the influences of sun, moon, and stars upon earthly things, as well as in relation to the interaction between terrestrial objects. While observing the wisdom and goodness of God in all these things, we must also be amazed about God's use of the angels. Although we do not know everything, we can deduce many other things from that which has been recorded. We would know even more if we would more frequently contemplate upon it. This would render us more fit to acknowledge and praise God joyfully concerning His wisdom and goodness in His use of the angels.

Thirdly, one must refrain from and be fearful of offending, despising, and grieving the godly, for they have such holy guardians who are displeased with such behavior -- standing ready to punish their offenders, as has been demonstrated in the past (cf. Isaiah 37:36; Acts 12:23). It is for this reason that the Lord Jesus states in Matthew 18:10, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven."

Fourthly, how safe God's children are! It is true that only God by His power and supervision protects and preserves His people. Thus, one may neither trust in nor rely upon a creature. Nevertheless, God uses means in this preservation, as He provides nourishment for the maintenance of life and armed forces for the protection of cities and countries. God therefore is to be acknowledged in the provision of means. And we ought to stand amazed and rejoice in the manner whereby He directs the holy angels, in that He uses such glorious creatures to preserve such minuscule and insignificant human beings. Since God has commissioned them to guard,

protect, and keep the godly, one ought to be quiet and without fear, even when all things appear to be against us. "For they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16).

Fifthly, in view of their presence we, even when not being observed by man, ought to conduct ourselves holily and without blame. Although God's omnipresence and omniscience alone ought to sufficiently restrain us, God nevertheless uses the presence of men, due to our respect for them, as a means to keep us from many sins and to stir us up to the practice of virtue. Thus, it also behooves us to be holy and without blame in our behavior in view of the presence of angels, considering them to be fellow servants and our "company" (Hebrews 12:22). We shall thus cause them to rejoice, and by virtue of their communication of this there will be joy in heaven (Luke 15:7; Luke 15:10). Consequently, the apostle exhorts that "for this cause ought the woman to have power (a covering) on her head because of the angels" (1 Corinthians 11:10).

Concerning the Devils

God created all angels in a state of holiness; however, a large multitude apostatized. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned ..." (2 Peter 2:4); "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation ..." (Jude 1:6). They are referred to as angels (sometimes without the use of any adjectives) by virtue of their nature -- a nature which they have corrupted through sin, but have nevertheless not lost. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:38-39). Sometimes the term is modified by a reference to the sin which they have sinned; that is, as those "which kept not their first estate," or by a reference to their leader, Beelebul, "the prince of the devils" (Matthew 12:24), "the angel of the bottomless pit" (Revelation 9:11). They are consequently called the angels of the devil (Matthew 25:41), the angels of the dragon (Revelation 12:7), and the messengers of Satan (2 Corinthians 12:7). In view of their nature they are also referred to as spirits. "They brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word" (Matthew 8:16). Due to their abhorrent nature they are called "unclean spirits" (Mark 3:11). "And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil" (Luke 4:33). Due to their internal activity in men they are called "dumb and deaf spirits" (Mark 9:25), "spirits of infirmity" (Luke 13:11), that is a spirit which makes one dumb, deaf, and ill. They are also referred to as practitioners of "spiritual wickedness" (Ephesians 6:12). In Hebrew the devil is called שָׂטָן and in Greek, Satan, that is, one who opposes, resists, and contradicts, since he is in opposition to God, Christ, believers, and all that is good. "... There was given to me ... the messenger of Satan ..." (2 Corinthians 12:7); "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" (Revelation 12:9). For this reason he is called Antidikos, or "adversary" (1 Peter 5:8). In Greek he is called Daimon, Daimonion (demon). These words are derived from daio, to know, since he leaves no stone unturned in his quest to know where and in what manner he can perform the ultimate in evil. He is also cognizant of many matters which are hidden from man, which he by divine permission at times reveals, and sometimes guesses on the basis of probability. He is subtle in all his evil practices. "That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11); "... as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty ..." (2 Corinthians 11:3).

He is also called Diabolos, or Devil, which is derived from diaballein, to slander. The devil is a slanderer, for he slanders God by casting fiery darts in the heart of the believer, and he slanders believers in the presence of God (Job 1:9; Job 1:11). "Although thou movest Me against him ..."

(Job 2:3). For this reason he is called Kategoros, (accuser) (Revelation 12:10). The idea that the words Satan, devil, unclean spirits, angels that sinned should be translated with words such as sin, sickness, evil moods, fantasy, imagination, and evil men, is ludicrous. Such an obvious absurdity is contradicted by the Bible, by all Hebrew, Greek, and Latin writers, as well as writers in other languages. Whenever these words occur we know that they do not refer to these abstract ideas, but rather to evil, spiritual, and personal entities. They are mentioned in contradistinction to such things. "And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils" (Mark 3:15). Knowledge, the knowledge of Christ, and the ability to reason and to speak, are all attributed to the devils. This will be abundantly evident as we proceed, all of which cannot be attributed to other abstract things. The exception occurs when the Lord Jesus once called Peter Satan, an adversary (Matthew 16:23), because he withstood him and thereby engaged in the work of Satan. Judas, the traitor, was called a diabolus or a devil (John 6:70) since the devil would enter into him and he thus would be a tool of the devil. To pagans and Christians and to both the godly and the ungodly it is very evident that devils do exist. Scripture makes mention of it so frequently and clearly that no one can doubt this truth unless one wishes to stubbornly contradict the common view of men as well as God's Word. Such a person would not deserve to be answered with one word, nor to be engaged in a discussion.

Devils do exist, and their number is very large. Scripture frequently speaks of devils, occasionally using the adjective "many" (Mark 1:34), and "seven" (Mark 16:9), as well as referring to the presence of a legion of devils in one person (Mark 5:9; Mark 5:15). Whenever the reference to the devil is singular, this occurs either because there was only one devil present; because the reference was to his identity, as one would say, "man lives by food and drink"; or because the reference is to the chief of devils.

Whatever has been stated generally concerning the angels also applies to the devils, who are angels. This means that they are personal entities, endowed with intellect and power, and interact with physical and human beings. The fact that they are personal entities is confirmed by all those texts which state that they speak, know Jesus, tempt, tear people, cast them about, kill swine, etc. It is confirmed in Mark 1:34, among other texts, that they possess intellect, "And (He) suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him." This is also shown in the following texts, "And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" (Acts 19:15). "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through subtilty ..." (2 Corinthians 11:3). The fact that devils interact with physical and human beings is confirmed first of all from all those texts which we have previously used to prove that such is true for angels, (the devils being angels), as well as from many other texts of which we merely mention the following, "Now the serpent ... said unto the woman" (Genesis 3:13, and, "The serpent beguiled me" (Genesis 3:13). The one being engaged in this activity is here referred to as a serpent. It is common knowledge that the creeping animal which bears the name "serpent" neither possesses intellect nor the ability to speak, so that it was not the animal which spoke, but it was merely a means used by another. It is also certain that Eve in her holy state was neither subject to illness, melancholy, vain imaginations, nor to any other sinful condition, nor was this an imagination, such as in a waking dream. It was a true historical event. It was also not possible for Eve, due to her holy state, to entertain evil thoughts concerning God in her imagination, to do battle against them, and ultimately to be conquered by them. Who then did speak to Eve? The text states that it was the serpent whose head would be

bruised by the seed of the woman; that is, it is the one who would be conquered by the Lord Jesus Christ -- the devil. "That through death He (Christ) might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). It was therefore the devil who spoke to Eve and tempted her, and it is he who presently lives and engages in battle against the congregation of God. "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted ..." (2 Corinthians 11:3). The Lord Jesus clearly states that it was the devil. "He (the devil) was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth ..." (John 8:44). Thus, the devils at one time abode in the truth, sinned, did not keep their first estate, and are murderers of men. He is called "that old serpent, ... the devil, and Satan" (Revelation 12:9). It is therefore undeniable that the devil knew Eve, spoke with her, and thus is capable of interacting with a human being.

Secondly, such interaction is confirmed in the following passages, "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power ... so Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord" (Job 1:12); "And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead" (Job 1:19); "so went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7). Here the active agent was neither an illness, an evil temper, a sin, nor a man, but Satan. It was Satan, the devil (he is one and the same), who caused the wind to arise from the desert, by which he smote the house and killed Job's children. It was also he who smote Job with sore boils. It is thus confirmed that Satan interacts with human beings as well as with physical entities.

Thirdly, add to this what is stated in Matthew 4:1-11, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil," etc. All this activity, such as reasoning, tempting, resisting, the showing of the glory of kingdoms, was not mere imagination, but truly historical. The agent of this activity was not an evil temper, sin, nor a man. Aside from the fact that all of the aforesaid neither are nor ever are called the devil, they obviously do not fit this context. The Lord Jesus was holy and therefore could neither tempt Himself nor imagine all these things in such a fashion that He would thus reason with His own imagination in order to prevail against that temptation. God also was not the author of that temptation, since He does not tempt man (James 1:13). The text, however, states expressly that it was the devil, or Satan. The devil, although he is a spirit, interacts with human and physical beings.

Fourthly, add to this all the histories -- recorded in the gospels -- of those possessed with devils. Those spirits are generally referred to as "devil," "spirit," "evil spirit," but never as "sickness," "sin," "madness," "imagination," or "temper." They are said to know Jesus, which was true for almost none but the disciples of Christ only, and their knowledge was but a glimmer. These devils were fearful of being tormented before their time, they prayed for permission to enter the swine -- which they did after permission was granted -- and killed them. They tore the bodies of those who were possessed, casting them about, all of which are known truths. The casting out of devils were miracles whereby Christ confirmed and manifested His mediatorial office. Paul was buffeted by a messenger of Satan (2 Corinthians 12:7). Even though Satan has neither fists nor a body, he can make use of a body by divine permission. From all this it has been clearly proven that devils do exist, are present upon earth, and interact with human and physical beings.

Fifthly, the devils are still continually engaged against man, particularly the godly. This is evident from the exhortations to manfully resist the devils. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11); "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). The methods of Satan's assaults are manifold. They can, however, be reduced to three main headings.

(1) Sometimes his activity is focused upon man's five senses. He does so either by impeding their function while simultaneously stimulating the imagination -- whereby a person is of the opinion to have truly seen those things -- or his presence is audibly or visibly perceived due to a physical appearance.

(2) Sometimes he only stimulates the imagination, be it when man is either awake or is dreaming -- during daylight or darkness.

(3) Sometimes he operates by speaking directly to the soul, which is all the more evident when he presents nonphysical matters and arguments to the soul. The Practice of Fortunetelling and Witchcraft

Thus, we have observed that devils do exist, are operative in this world, and interact with human beings. When devils practice their evil by the agency of men who surrender themselves to the devil for this purpose or otherwise willingly allow themselves to be His tools, we refer to this as fortunetelling or witchcraft.

Fortunetelling is that practice whereby man, assisted by the devil, unveils current matters which are hidden from man but known to the devil, or foretells future matters which the devil can either deduce from the course of nature -- concerning which he makes a guess -- or which may have been made known to him by God.

Witchcraft is that practice whereby man through the agency of the devil performs strange things which are beyond the capacity of human ability. Such is the case when he causes deceased persons to appear, tormenting men in their bodies. Many texts in Holy Writ confirm that he is capable of such activity, and engages in this. "And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a-whoring after them ..." (Leviticus 20:27; "A man also or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 20:27); "Now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments" (Exodus 7:11); "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus 22:18). The witch of Endor caused the form of Samuel to appear and predicted Saul's death (1 Samuel 28:9-19). Likewise we read of Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9), and of Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:6-8). We do not wish to concern ourselves with the manner in which the devil accomplishes this, nor how men accomplish these evil deeds by the devil's agency. We know from God's Word that there are witches who have performed strange things, and it is sufficiently confirmed by experience, which is the teacher of fools. This suffices us, although we must admit that very many of such accounts belong entirely to the realm of fables and fabrications.

Exhortations Relative to the Doctrine of Devils

It is not sufficient merely to have knowledge of these things, but we have dealt comprehensively with all these matters for the express purpose that it might be to our benefit. The devil is a prince of darkness and generally wishes to remain unknown and concealed as this enables him to engage effectively in his evil designs. Those who assist him in concealing himself do him a considerable service. Therefore there is profit in this doctrine for unconverted and converted alike, as both are the objects of his activity.

First of all I wish to address myself to the unconverted, stating that as long as you remain unconverted, you are subject to the power of the devil, having the devil as your father. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). The devil is lord and master over you and he is at work in you. "The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). You are his captive and in bondage to him. "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:26). He frequently moves you to commit acts, the commission of which you would have never deemed possible. He thus moved Judas to betray the Lord Jesus and afterward to hang himself. The devil often keeps you out of church, especially when he knows that the sermon to be preached could be a choice means to your conversion. During the sermon he seeks to detract you by infusing other thoughts, holding such matters before you which he knows you delight in, thereby facilitating your meditation upon them. If you hear something that makes an impression upon you, he seeks in every possible way to rob you of this impression (Matthew 13:19). The devil prevents you from comprehending the power of the gospel. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Do not think that this renders you innocent, for you yourself are also blind and of an evil disposition, willingly rejecting the gospel. The devil, however, often creates the occasion for this, stimulates you, and you then obey him.

Carefully meditate upon all this and apply it to yourself. Consider that you are a slave of the devil, that he is your lord and master, that he controls you, engages you to be active in his cause, and will soon drag you as his prey to hell to be eternally tormented there. What a dreadful condition to be subject to such an abominable tyrant -- the archenemy of God, Christ, and also yourself -- who in bitter hatred murders your soul and eternally separates you from God and His blessed Christ! Therefore have mercy upon your own soul, wake up, hate the devil and his work, flee from him, bid his kingdom farewell, and surrender yourself to the sweet, easy, and lovely government of the Lord Jesus Christ -- a government which will culminate in eternal salvation. Oh, that you would hear me! May the Lord save you. In accordance with God's declaration, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (Genesis 3:15), there is a special hatred between the devil and believers, the members of the Lord Jesus Christ. The hatred from the side of the devil is as bitter and evil as possible. It is only a lack of power which hinders him from executing his evil intent, as God continually prevents him from executing his premeditated intentions. How I wish that I could be instrumental in causing the hatred of believers towards the devil to be more lively and intense, that they may be more careful against being beguiled by his subtle temptations or cooperating with him in other ways! That all of this would motivate believers with bitter hatred for, and antipathy against, the wicked enemy of our Lord Jesus, to be courageous and to do battle against his assaults. "Whom (the devil, vs. 8) resist steadfast in the

faith" (1 Peter 5:9).

012. Chapter 10: Concerning Man, Particularly the Soul

----- CHAPTER TEN ----- Concerning Man, Particularly the Soul

Having discussed the most eminent creatures of heaven, the angels, we will now proceed to consider the most eminent creature upon earth, man. In the original language, the Hebrew tongue, man is called Adam, which is derived from a word which means “to be red,” man being of a reddish color when he is healthy and most elegant in appearance. “They were more ruddy in body than rubies” (Lamentations 4:7). The word Adamah (red earth) is derived from this. In Greek man is called Anthropos (of an erect posture). After the fall man is also called Enos (wretched one).

After the Lord had created everything and had adorned the world in a most elegant manner, He said, “Let us make man” (Genesis 1:26). Such a statement not being made at the creation of other things, we can deduce that the glory of man excels that of all other creatures. God did not address Himself to angels for they cannot be considered as being of equal stature with God. They were not “cocreators,” as the act of creation is unique to God only; man was also not created in the image of angels. This statement, made in the manner of men, is expressive of the deliberations of a triune God concerning the creation of something significant. Thus, upon the sixth day God created the final creature, man. He gave him no other name but “man,” as there was but one such creature which in and of itself was sufficiently distinct from all other creatures. God created all angels simultaneously; there is no procreation among them. He created but one man, however, and has filled the earth with men by way of procreation. “And did not He make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That He might seek a godly seed” (Malachi 2:15).

Man consists of two essential elements, body and soul. God formed the body out of the earth. “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground” (Genesis 2:15). It has not been recorded whether man was created in or outside of Paradise, and thus we cannot state anything concerning this. This, however, is recorded, “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15). When someone is appointed to a specific task in a specific location, it is not implied that he previously was external to this locality. It does say, “Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken” (Genesis 3:23). The earth within and outside of Paradise, however, is one and the same. His task was, with sorrow and in the sweat of his face to cultivate the earth from which he was formed and which now had been cursed by God, in order to support his life from it.

After Adam had been created, had been prohibited from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil, and God brought all the animals and fowl to him to be named, Adam observed that they all came in pairs. Adam perceived that he was alone and without a helpmeet. “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:21-23). Adam was thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the animals and thus gave every animal a

name consistent with its nature. How Adam knew that Eve had been taken from his rib -- whether he inferred this from Eve's nature, or whether he became aware of having one less rib than before, or whether God made this known to him -- is unknown. Thus, the first marriage became a reality. This was not a type of the spiritual marriage between Christ and His congregation, for Adam neither possessed nor knew Christ, nor was an example available to him. The apostle Paul, however, refers to the first marriage for application purposes and in order to explain spiritual marriage (Ephesians 5:29).

Together with Adam, the woman was created on the sixth day, for concerning man's creation on the sixth day it is stated, "Male and female created He them" (Genesis 1:27). "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made" (Genesis 2:2). Subsequent to this day God did not create any new creatures. The narration that follows the seventh day is only a clearer description of what God had created previously; this was but touched upon with a few words. The Body of Man

God constructed the body of man both wondrously and in an artful manner with an elaborate system of bones, arteries, nerve cells, and various other parts, all of which proportionally and efficiently contribute to whatever is required for the well-being and functioning of the entire body. He then covered it with a smooth skin, so that the external appearance greatly exceeds all other physical creatures in elegance. Thus, man can justly be referred to as a small world. The Lord has equipped man with five senses: vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. By means of these senses all that pertains to the body is communicated to the soul's intelligence, enabling the soul to exert external influence on matters related to the body, thus becoming cognizant of these things. Some matters can only be perceived with one of the senses, some by several, and some by all five. If one of the five senses does not function well internally, or if the intermediate space or distance is not proportionate, one could easily judge a matter incorrectly if he were not to research the matter more thoroughly. A square tower when viewed at a distance appears to be round, as our vision is not capable of distinguishing distant features. A straight stick of which the end is in the water appears to be crooked or broken. The color white appears to be yellow or greenish when light shines through colored glass; however, after carefully investigating everything, a correct understanding is attainable. When by means of the proper functioning of various senses, and being within reasonable proximity to the object, there is unanimous agreement among all, a definite conclusion can be drawn. Thus, from the experiential use of our senses we know that two times two equals four; one object is straight and the other crooked; one long and the other short; one hard and the other soft; one white and the other black; one heavy and the other light; and one hot and the other cold. On this basis men have been able to deduce several principles and fundamental rules, the contradiction of which would be ludicrous. So much about the body. The Soul of Man The other constituent element of man is the soul, also referred to as his spirit. In Hebrew it is called Nephesh, and in Greek Pneuma.

Both words are derivatives of "to breathe," either because it was created by a symbolic act of breathing, is the cause of nasal breathing, or due to its invisibility and mobility. The soul is a spiritual, incorporeal, invisible, intangible, and immortal personal entity adorned with intellect and will. In union with the body it constitutes a human being and by virtue of its inherent propensity is inclined to be and remain united with the body. The soul is a personal entity. This is evident, first because it possesses both intellect and will, by which it actively loves, hates, rejoices, and mourns.

“My soul is exceeding sorrowful” (Matthew 26:38); “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46-47). Secondly, since the soul is separated from the body, it continues both in its essence and existence, and will either rejoice in heaven or be grieved in hell.

It is therefore a self-contradicting heresy to maintain that the soul is a thought, thus denying the existence of the soul.

(1) If the soul is a thought, thinking being an activity, there must necessarily be a personal entity from which this thought proceeds. If it be maintained that the soul is an essential and independent thought, we have a contradiction, as much as if we were to call that which is black white. An activity and a personal entity are *toto genere*, that is, too distinctly different from each other, for whatever is an activity is not a personal entity, nor is the contrary true.

(2) Since man repeatedly thinks of new things and generates new thoughts, he would then repeatedly have a new soul, which is absurdity itself.

(3) This is also not consistent with the Word of God which never refers to the soul as a thought.

It is also incorrect to state that the soul is a rational essence.

(1) Reasoning is not the essence of the soul, for an activity cannot be the essence of a personal entity, since the former is a consequence of the latter.

(2) The soul is not always engaged in thinking, as is the case during a coma or when it first unites itself to the body prior to the birth of man. What would the unborn fetus be thinking about? And if it were capable of thinking, man would commit actual sin prior to his birth, whereas Paul states, “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil ...” (Romans 9:11). Instead, the soul is a personal entity which is capable and inclined to think.

Each human being has but one soul. There are three types of souls. There is *anima vegetativa*, which we wish to refer to as the soul of growth, whereby trees and herbs are said to exist. There is *anima sensitiva*, or the soul of sensitivity, whereby animals exist and are sensitive to their environment. This, according to Scripture, is to be found in the blood of animals. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11); “For the blood is the life” (Deuteronomy 12:23). There is *anima rationalis*, or the rational soul, which we have just described and referred to as rational since by its agency man reasons and makes decisions. Man grows, moves consciously from one locality to another, and reasons -- not by virtue of a different soul for each activity, but due to the singular activity of the reasonable soul within man. Thus, man has neither three, nor two, but one soul. This is first of all confirmed by the Word of God which, in giving a detailed description of the constituent elements of man, states nowhere that man has two or three souls. This concept must therefore be rejected.

Secondly, Scripture makes mention of only one human soul, such reference always being in the singular as is also true of the body. “... And man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7); “Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26); “... which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28); “... glorify God in your body, and in your spirit ...” (1 Corinthians 6:20). Man is only alive when the soul resides within the body. “Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him” (Acts 20:10). [Note: The Statenvertaling reads, “... want zijne ziel is in hem,” that is, “...

for his soul is in him.”] When the soul is absent from the body, man is dead. “For as the body without the spirit is dead ...” (James 2:26).

Thirdly, every animal exists independently by virtue of his soul and is thus an independent being. If man were also to have a sensitive soul apart from a rational soul, either the sensitive or the rational soul would constitute the personal entity, or, man would consist of two or three personal entities. The sensitive soul is not the constituent element of man’s personhood, for man would then be animal-like. These two souls do not constitute a human being, for then man would not be one but two persons. Since man is but one person, he consequently has but one soul.

Fourthly, if man were to possess two or three souls, this would likewise be true for Christ, “wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren” (Hebrews 2:17). Christ would thus not only have assumed the human nature, but also the nature of trees and animals, which is most absurd. While dead, Christ in His divine nature would then have been separated from the nature He assumed, while maintaining the singularity of His personhood, since these two souls are fully annihilated in death.

Fifthly, if man had two or three souls, there would be no resurrection of this body from the dead, for the two souls are fully annihilated in death. Whatever has been fully annihilated cannot be restored eodem numero, that is, in its original form. Thus, in addition to the rational soul, a new soul would have to be created, which would then be glorified or damned without prior existence or commission of a deed.

Sixthly, if man were in possession of an animalistic soul, man would be able to live without a rational soul. This is contrary to the Bible which, as we have just demonstrated, teaches that man is dead when the rational soul is absent. If man were able to live in such a condition, one would not know if children possess a rational soul or whether they would subsequently receive one. On what basis would one then be able to baptize them? One would not know whether man, giving evidence of being alive, possesses a rational soul at that time, and thus be a rational creature. The soul could be absent and away from home on a journey to the East Indies, for according to the sentiment of some, the soul is present wherever it thinks itself to be. Behold, this error is replete with absurdities and essentially is a denial of the existence of the soul.

God created this singular soul of man out of nothing and in the process of procreation, each time anew, creates a soul within the body. The fact that God brought forth the soul of Adam out of nothing rather than from some dust is confirmed in Genesis 2:7. When God formed the body of man from the dust of the earth, it was lifeless. God, however, “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” This breathing into the nostrils does not indicate that the creation of the soul occurred externally to the body and subsequently was brought into the body, but rather conveys both the manner and the symbolism of its creation. Likewise, we read in John 20:22, “And when He had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” It expresses the wind-like mobility of the soul, its invisibility, its spirituality, as well as the energy of the soul which enables man to breathe through his nostrils. “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life” (Job 33:4). Thus, the soul of the first man was created in his body out of nothing.

Question: How are the souls of men brought forth? Does this occur by seminal procreation or by transmission and ignition as one candle transmits light to another candle? Or does God create the soul whenever man by procreation comes into existence?

Answer: First, the soul is a spiritual entity, and thus is not physical in any sense. Therefore the soul cannot be brought forth by means of corporal and seminal procreation, for that which is causal cannot bring forth something which is *toto genere*, that is, of a nobler generation than the cause itself. If one maintains that the soul does not proceed from the body, but from the soul, I would ask, "Is it from the soul of the father, the mother, or from both?" It neither proceeds from both, for there is no mixture of souls, nor does it proceed from one of the two, for then the question remains, "Does it proceed from the father or the mother?" This question one will not be able to answer. In what manner would it be transmitted from the soul of the parents? If the personal soul of one of the parents would be transmitted in its entirety, the parent would be without a soul. If the transmission were partial, the soul would be divisible, and having parts it would not be a spirit but a body. If one maintains that the soul is brought forth causaliter, that is, as the effecting cause, by the souls of the parents, the question must be asked, "Out of what?" It is neither produced seminally nor by the complete or partial transmission of the soul. It would then of necessity be brought forth out of nothing, which is not possible for that is a creative act which is the proper work of God alone. The comparison of a burning candle igniting another candle and thus transmitting its flame is not applicable here, as fire is material in nature. Thus, one candle transmits its flame to the other by way of molecular transmission, since it finds matter to feed upon.

Secondly, Scripture states clearly that God creates a new soul each time within the fruit of the womb. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Thus, we have two matters under consideration, the body and the soul, and the destiny of both -- the one to the earth and the other to God. This agrees with their origin -- from the earth and from God. As the body originates from the earth, the soul has its origin in God. "The burden of the Word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundations of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him" (Zechariah 12:1). As God brought forth heaven and earth by His omnipotence and without any secondary cause, He has also formed the soul within the inner recesses of man, that is without intervention of secondary causes in this formative act. Consider also Hebrews 12:9 where God is called the "Father of spirits," in contrast to "fathers of our flesh" (cf. Isaiah 63:16; 1 Peter 4:19).

Thirdly, the soul, subsequent to the death of man, exists independently, and is therefore also independent from the body at the very beginning. The soul is immortal and cannot be killed. "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matthew 10:28). If the soul had its origin in man, it could be killed by man as is true for the body, for the effecting cause can destroy its creation, but man is not able to destroy the soul and thus he is not the effecting cause of the soul.

Objection #1: If only the body of man would be generated and not the soul, man would not bring forth another man, since man consists of body and soul.

Answer: This generation does not consist in bringing forth either matter or form. Neither matter nor body are brought forth since man does not create that which previously had been created by God, nor is the form or soul brought forth as has been demonstrated in the first proof. Rather, this

generation is an act of those who generate, and through this act substance and form are brought together; in this way the entire composition is brought forth. Thus, the generation of man is the result of human activity which results in the union of soul and body, and the fruit of the womb thus receives and is brought forth with its inherent nature, its humanity. Consequently, a man brings forth a man, although he brings forth neither the substance of the body nor the soul. Observe this for instance in the birth of the Lord Jesus, the God-man, who was born out of Mary.

Objection #2: "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins ..." (Genesis 46:26). Here it is stated expressly that the souls of Jacob's descendants had their origin in him.

Answer: It is a common, metaphorical manner of speech, in Scripture as well as in daily conversation, to refer to persons as "souls." The entire matter is named after one of its constituent parts. One also says, "so many heads," thereby referring to so many people. These persons came forth out of Jacob by generation. The union of their soul and body and their existence issued forth from him, be it immediately as with his own sons, or mediately as with his grandchildren.

Objection #3. God fully completed the work of creation in the first six days (Genesis 2:2). Consequently, God does not create the soul on a daily basis.

Answer: During the first six days God created every species, subsequent to which He no longer creates new species. Rather, He maintains His creation either by special continuation, as with the angels, or by continuing the species, as He does with the human race which maintains its stability by generation. Thus, God daily creates the souls of men which are individual, that is, unique personal entities within the same human species.

Man's Intellect This unique spiritual entity, having been created by God out of nothing, is gifted with intellect. This intellect consists of comprehension, judgment, and conscience or joint knowledge. The very essence of comprehension is perception of a matter without giving verbal expression to it. It relates to that which can be deduced with one's intellect and thus could be considered as only intellectual. Man, however, when actually understanding a matter, verbalizes it even though he is not conscious of how his intellect judges and responds to it.

Comprehension is like a mirror which reflects matters under consideration. A mirror does not reflect anything unless something is placed before it. Even if something is placed before it, it will not reflect anything in complete darkness; something will only be faintly visible if there is but a small light source, or if the mirror is covered with condensation. This will prevent one from determining whether something is crooked, upside down, or of a different shape or color. All of this depends on the condition of the glass or the manner in which it was ground. This is likewise the case with the intellect of corrupt man. Many matters which it should comprehend, it does not comprehend at all. Others are but faintly and confusedly observed, so that the intellect cannot perceive what is at hand. Many matters are perceived erroneously as to form and appearance.

It is obviously erroneous to state that the intellect of man, being in the state of sin, cannot err. This is directly contrary to Scripture, where we read expressly that man is blind (Revelation 3:17), "having the understanding darkened" (Ephesians 4:18), and that spiritual matters are hid from the wise and the prudent (Matthew 11:25). It also states that one can have a zeal, "but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2), that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:

for they are foolishness unto him" (1 Corinthians 2:14), and that there are "men of corrupt minds" (1 Timothy 6:5). This proves that the ability to comprehend clearly and discerningly cannot be regulative as far as the truth is concerned. The ability to comprehend clearly and in a discerning manner, that is, to have appropriate and fitting thoughts agreeable to the matter at hand, is certainly a reality. Simply because one is able to understand clearly and discerningly, however, does not mean that what is comprehended is truth, even though the truth is inherent in the subject under consideration. Often we cannot know whether the matter has been comprehended clearly and discerningly, since we have frequently been deceived when we were of the opinion to have comprehended clearly and discerningly. Since our darkened understanding can imagine a small glimmer of light to be as the noonday sun, a person who makes the ability to comprehend clearly and discerningly regulative for truth must remain a doubter all his life. He will not acknowledge the phenomena of the tides, the existence of the soul, and many other matters, as he is not able to understand them. Yes, if one wishes to judge the matters revealed in God's Word on the basis of one's ability to comprehend clearly and discerningly and to accept only as truth that which can be comprehended, such a person must be called an atheist. His darkened intellect will never acknowledge the perfection of God, the Holy Trinity, God's influence in the preservation and governing of all things, the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ, the Holy Spirit's operation in regeneration, nor many other matters. If we have knowledge of what God has revealed in His Word, however, then we must believe it to be true and act accordingly. It must be an infallible truth, for else all faith and religion is rendered ineffectual (cf. chapter 2).

Judgment is also a constituent element of the intellect whereby one evaluates a matter to be either true or false, good or evil. This judgment is either a cognitive judgment whereby in a general sense one acknowledges a matter to be such and such without any further response -- the matter not being pertinent to us; or it is a judgment of relevancy which does not merely indicate what is true or false, and what is good or evil, but rather what currently must or must not be our course of action under the circumstances, supplementing this with motives to persuade and stimulate the will. To make judgment a constituent element of the will is contrary to the concept of judgment itself.

(1) Let me express myself in harmony with those who hold to such an opinion. If the ability to comprehend clearly and discerningly is regulative for the establishment of truth, and if such comprehension is a constituent element of the intellect, then judgment is most certainly also a constituent element of the intellect. For the ability to comprehend clearly and discerningly gives some indication of the matter -- whether it is true or false, good or evil. Without this comprehension there cannot be a clear and discerning understanding concerning a matter, nor can it be regulative for the truth. To state a matter to be such and such, however, is to make a judgment concerning this matter. Thus, judgment is a constituent element of the intellect.

(2) Judgment very frequently opposes the will by conveying to the conscience, "This is sin; God sees it; God shall punish it," and thus causes the will to be restless and anxious. Man frequently wishes that such an impression were not so lively; however, in spite of all opposition, judgment frequently continues to make its presence felt, and thus is not a constituent element of the will.

(3) Scripture also establishes judgment as a constituent element of the intellect. "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say" (1 Corinthians 10:15).

(4) If judgment were a constituent element of the will, man would then determine a sin not to be sin. This would be to the liking of the sinner, and his deeds would then be harmonious with his judgment since it would coincide with his will. It is true that a man will not render judgment in a matter unless he wishes to do so. This does not imply, however, that judgment itself is a constituent element of the will. Man similarly does not engage his intellect unless he is desirous to understand. One would thus, by the same token, be able to say that the intellect is a constituent element of the will. The latter is absurd, however, and therefore also the former.

Man's Conscience The conscience is also a constituent element of the intellect, for the term itself implies this, knowledge being a constituent element of the intellect. "Conscience" translated into the Dutch language (*mede-wetenschap*) means "knowledge of concurrence." The conscience is man's judgment concerning himself and his deeds, to the extent he is subject to God's judgment. The conscience consists in three elements: knowledge, witness, and acknowledgement.

First, there is knowledge of the will of God, commanding or forbidding every man with promises and threats. This is not only true in a general but also in a specific sense, and not only in reference to a given matter, but also relative to the circumstances of here and now. Thus, the conscience prescribes what must either be refrained from or be done. The more clearly and powerfully it does this, the better the conscience functions.

Secondly, there is the element of witness. After man's obligation is held before him, it determines whether or not he has acted according to light and knowledge. The more painstakingly the conscience takes note of man's deeds and his conformity to the commandment held before him, the more it keeps a precise record thereof, and the more clearly and powerfully it witnesses to man, the better it performs its duty.

Thirdly, there follows an acknowledgement that the righteous God is also cognizant of this and will reward or judge him accordingly. The more clearly the conscience acknowledges the knowledge of God and is sensitive to it, and the more it either reassures itself concerning this or is powerfully affected as a result, the more faithfully the conscience performs its task. These three activities the apostle places side by side. "... the Gentiles, which have not the law ... are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts" (Romans 2:15-15). The first activity is expressed by the fact that they have knowledge of God's will and law. The second activity -- the witness to their conformity or lack of conformity to the law -- is described by the apostle when he states, "their conscience also bearing witness." This is followed by the third activity: the acknowledgement that God is cognizant thereof and shall either reward or punish, "... their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:15). These activities of the conscience can also be observed in the following texts. "My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 9:1); "For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others" (Ecclesiastes 7:22); "For if our heart condemn us ... if our heart condemn us not ..." (1 John 3:20-21). The conscience is either good or evil. It is good when it performs its duty well.

(1) This is true when it clearly and immediately reveals and represents the will of God, obligating and stirring us up to do the will of God. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5).

(2) It is true when it carefully keeps record of our deeds, and clearly and powerfully convicts us in reference to these deeds.

(3) This is also true when it either troubles or reassures us. Both of these aspects are exemplified in the following texts. "And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt" (1 Samuel 24:5); "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience" (2 Corinthians 1:12). Someone is said to have an evil conscience whenever the commission of abominable deeds fills one with anxiety, fear, and remorse. This is not to say that the conscience is evil, as it is performing its duty well, but it is called evil because it convicts of evil deeds. If the conscience does not perform these three tasks well, it is evil in and of itself, being remiss in its duty either in all three or in one or two of these activities.

Question: Can the conscience be in error?

Answer: We must presuppose the following:

(1) In this discussion we do not consider man in his perfect state before the fall, but in his imperfect state after the fall.

(2) Our discussion neither relates to adherence to nor to any reflection upon such knowledge whereby one is cognizant of his objective and activity, and is thus conscious of these deeds.

(3) Neither are we discussing here whether or not man responds to the witness of his conscience.

(4) Nor do we maintain that the second and third acts of the conscience are the first to err.

We do maintain, however, that the conscience in its first act -- which relates to man's knowledge of the law and will of God -- is capable of error. It is capable of presenting something as the will of God which is not the will of God -- yes, is even forbidden. This is the first error and when it prevails, it is followed by the second act of conscience, that is, its witnessing act. The error is not precipitated by the conscience bearing witness or man responding to this witness. The error is rather in having witnessed that man has done well, whereas in reality he has done evil, even though according to his knowledge he has done well. Someone can bear false witness before the court without speaking contrary to his conviction by testifying that a certain person has committed a given deed, being in error as far as that person is concerned. The person he mentions is not guilty, but rather someone else. He expresses his opinion, his conscience testifying that his witness is correct, and thus it is satisfied. He is mistaken, however, and his witness is erroneous even though his conscience bears him witness that in this erroneous matter he has been both correct and good. Thus his conscience is in error, acquitting him even though he should have been condemned. The conscience can similarly bear witness that a person has acted correctly in various matters when in reality he has sinned most grievously. When the conscience errs in its first act as to its knowledge of the will of God, it must err in the other two acts as well.

God's Word also confirms irrefutably that the conscience can err, as is confirmed in the following and many other passages. "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols?" (1 Corinthians 8:7; 1 Corinthians 8:10). Here the apostle does not speak of an

opinion, nor of a lust, but of the conscience, making reference to it several times. He states that the conscience is in error, for he calls it a "conscience of the idol." This leads one to believe that an idol is important and needs to be honored. Is this not a very serious error? The conscience can be "emboldened" in its error in order to persevere in the sin of idolatry with all the more freedom. Add to this that which is stated in John 16:2 : "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service," and in Acts 26:9, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." The word "conscience" is not mentioned here, but the reference is to the activity of the conscience. Whenever a matter is described, the name need not be mentioned. It was a serious and heinous sin to murder the godly and to be in battle against Jesus. This sin did not proceed from an evil principle, but from error; that is, from an erroneous understanding of God's will. This erroneous understanding motivated them to be faithful to this perceived illumination, and thus to perform the task before them. Having finished this task, their conscience bore witness that they had acted correctly, giving them peace and delight in this work. In reality, however, they had engaged in an abominable evil, and the conscience should have convicted them that they had done evil; it should have brought forth contrition and terror within them. We can thus observe that the conscience can err. Someone may object by stating that it is more correct to maintain that one errs in his views. My response is that an erroneous view is equivalent to an erroneous intellect and judgment whereby a certain course of action is suggested to be the will of God, which, however, is not the will of God. When acting accordingly, it then satisfies man that he has acted correctly. All of this is identical to the conscience being in error. One should therefore hold to common language usage, for strange expressions generally conceal strange sentiments. If there is essential agreement in this matter, all of this would at best be a matter of semantics.

The Will of Man The soul of man is also gifted with a will, which is a faculty by which we can either love or hate. This faculty is called a blind faculty. This does not imply that man ignorantly loves or hates, but rather that it is the intellect, not the will, which judges in a given matter. It is the intellect which presents a matter to the will as being either desirable or contemptible, prescribing the course of action to be taken under the current circumstances. The will embraces this practical judgment blindly and acts accordingly. If one judges erroneously, the will functions erroneously as well. At times the intellect suggests something to the will which is enjoyable and advantageous but not according to truth. The will then embraces it as such, even though it is contrary to God's law. The will is free and cannot be compelled. This freedom is not arbitrary in nature; that is, one cannot simultaneously will or not will to do something. The holy angels are free in the exercise of their will, and yet they cannot but do the will of God. Rather, this freedom is one of necessary consequence whereby one is motivated and inclined to either embrace or reject something. Even the will of a child cannot be compelled to function in a certain manner. As long as a child does not want to go to school, he will not go there, no matter what one may try. Although he may not go when considering his situation independently, circumstances, promises, or threats can, however, bring about a change of will, thus causing the child to go because he is now willing.

The Immortality of the Soul The soul of man is immortal. God could have annihilated it if He had so desired. He has, however, established an eternal ordinance that He shall not do so. The soul can neither be destroyed by any creature nor can it self-destruct by virtue of some internal principle, for the soul is a spirit and thus of eternal existence. There is an indelible impression in man that such is the case. God Himself in His Word expressly and irrefutably states this to be so in regard to the souls of both the godly and the ungodly. This is

confirmed in a general sense in the following passages: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7); "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matthew 10:28); "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32); "And I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:28); having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ (Php 1:23); "... the souls of them that were slain ... cried with a loud voice ..." (Revelation 6:9-10). Such is also stated concerning the souls of the ungodly. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46); "By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19); "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments" (Luke 16:23). We thus conclude that the soul is immortal. The Intimate Union Between Body and Soul

God neither creates the soul outside the body nor does He first cause it to exist independently. As the soul is created within the body, it is united to the body with an incomprehensible but essential union so that together they form a suppositum, that is, a person or a human being. They are not united in their manner of existence, as angels were temporarily united to bodies. Be careful not to deem the soul to be an angel when considering it independently, for such is not the case. Be careful not to view this union as a matter of indifference, it being immaterial whether or not it is united with the body, or as if it would be better or preferable if it existed independently. Also be careful not to view the union between soul and body as a marriage. All such propositions contain within them dangerous consequences and errors. Be careful not to view the body as an instrument or tool of the soul, for one essential element cannot be the instrument of the other. This union is much more intimate than can be comprehended. Together soul and body constitute a human being. It is natural to the soul to be united with the body, and contrary to her nature to be separated from the body through death. It does exist and experience joy or sorrow; however, it is not in a complete, fulfilled condition. In separation from the body, the soul is referred to as an incomplete personal entity. This does not imply that there is imperfection in the soul itself, but rather that it is a constituent element of the whole man. Neither does it cease to have the nature of a constituent element, and thus it continues to be inclined to be united with its body. The soul being so intimately united with the body, is and remains in the body as long as man lives. It is not where it imagines itself to be. This is proved by the following:

First, the body, at that moment and thus most of the time, would then be without the soul, and consequently would be dead. Both nature and Scripture teach that man dies when the soul departs, as we have proven before.

Secondly, experience teaches that when the soul is elsewhere mentally, the body is moved and affected by whatever occurs there, or by whatever the soul imagines to see and hear there. This results in change of blood pressure, heart palpitations, tears, laughter, etc. If the soul at that time were to be hundreds of miles away from the body, why would there be such emotions? Can the soul operate in distantia, that is, from a distance? It is thus certain that the soul is not in the place where it imagines itself to be.

Thirdly, if someone wishes to maintain that the soul is there where it thinks itself to be, such a person would refute himself by his displeasure which he would manifest if one were to state that he was without a soul. Distant places and matters are represented by the imagination, and the soul thus thinks upon such matters.

I cannot state where the soul resides in the body. I do not know whether it encompasses the body in its entirety, or whether in its entirety it encompasses every part, or whether it resides in the heart, the brains, or in the pineal gland. As the union of soul and body is a mystery, so likewise is its location in the body. By limiting the soul to a specific location in the body, one must be careful neither to undo the intimate union between soul and body, nor should one, in an attempt to define it more expressly, be misled by not limiting the soul to a locality at all. The Image of God

Man, consisting of a body prepared in such a skillful and elegant fashion, as well as with such a noble soul, was created in a state of perfection. All that God created was good. The goodness of every creature consisted in the measure of perfection required to function as such a creature. The goodness of man consists in the image of God. This term is sometimes used in reference to the Son, the second Person of the divine essence, who is "the brightness of His [the Father's] glory, and the express image of His Person" (Hebrews 1:3); as well as "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). In this case, however, we use this term in reference to the perfection of man, which consists in a faint resemblance to the communicable attributes of God. We use the word "resemblance," for God's attributes themselves cannot be communicated or transferred. Only their resemblance can be communicated. Scripture speaks of this when it states, "so God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him" (Genesis 1:27). In Genesis 1:26 the word "likeness" is added. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." These two words are synonymous and express as much as an image of great resemblance. The image of God does not consist in the perfection of the body, for God is a Spirit. It does not primarily consist in the exercise of dominion which was bestowed as a consequence of this image, but rather it exists in the soul. In order to have a correct understanding of the image of God, three matters need to be considered separately: the basis for, the form, and the consequences of this image. The basis, or that which is prerequisite, is the spirituality and rationality of the soul. The form relates to the quality of its inherent powers. The consequence is the exercise of dominion. Let me illustrate. If a painter wishes to make a good picture, he must first have a proper and well-prepared canvas. He cannot paint a picture in water, in air, or in dry sand. He either needs a piece of wood, canvas, or some other solid material, which in turn must have been properly prepared. Having all these, he then must have a suitable model for that which he wishes to express. The basis -- or canvas -- for this image is the spirituality, rationality, and immortality of the essence of man's soul, and more particularly the faculties of the soul such as intellect, will, and affections. The soul had to be of such a nature in order for the image of God to be impressed upon it. This does not constitute the form of the image of God, however, for man possessed these before as well as after the fall. Even the devils possess these at the present time. When God forbids man to murder, man having been created in God's image (Genesis 9:6), this refers to both what he did possess as well as the background which he still possesses, upon which the image of God at one time was impressed. God did not wish this background to be destroyed. The spirituality and the faculties of the soul belong to the image of God as a background belongs to a painting. The latter can still exist and remain, even though the image upon it has been so erased that any resemblance of the same can no longer be detected; nevertheless it can still be seen that something had been impressed upon it. The essential form, the true essence of the image of God, consists in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, they being the qualities that regulate the faculties of the soul: intellect, will, and affections.

(1) The intellect was pure and transparent, immediately beholding God in His essence and manner of existence in the Holy Trinity. This immediate beholding of God constitutes the felicity of angels and men. "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psalms 17:15); "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12); "for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Although Adam's vision was not of the same degree as that vision glorified saints will enjoy in heaven -- this having been held before and promised to him upon obedience -- his knowledge of God was nevertheless perfect and sufficient to enable him to rejoice in God, greatly excelling that which we are currently able to imagine. Adam's possession of such illumination is evident from the fact that he was created after the image of God which consists in knowledge. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:10).

(2) Additionally, the will was holy and righteous, being satisfied and delighted with God. It was joyful and fervent in love, having no desires outside of God. It readily, joyfully, and perfectly performed the will of God, doing all things in purity, luster, and glory, both in an external and internal sense. This was the image of the holy God, as it is stated, "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

(3) The affections were fully regulated, never preceding the exercise of the intellect and the will, but being an orderly consequence thereof. All desires were Godward, in order to continually enjoy Him, and toward the performance of His will.

(4) His memory was excellent and active. As he took note of everything, he likewise remembered everything; and in reflecting thereupon by comparing the past with the present he could observe God's wisdom, goodness, and power, and magnify Him in response to this.

(5) All members of his body were instruments of righteousness by which this holiness could be manifested and translated into action. In one word, all that was to be found in Adam and which proceeded from him, was pure light, holiness, righteousness, and orderliness. The consequence of the image of God is the exercise of dominion over the entire earth. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea," etc. (Genesis 1:28). Man having been created in God's image, God said to man, "Have dominion" (Genesis 1:28). Adam exercised this dominion by giving a name to every animal (Genesis 2:20). God is awe-inspiring to all His creatures, and whatever conveys a ray of His divinity is awe-inspiring as well, which is evident when a holy angel appears to men. God vested Adam with the power to exercise dominion, while endowing the animal kingdom with the inclination to be in subjection. By virtue of sin man lost this authority. Nevertheless, God said to Noah, "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, ... into your hand are they delivered" (Genesis 9:2). David praised the Lord in reference to this. "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psalms 8:6). The unconverted exercise dominion over some animals, and do so by force. God's children, however, have again received a right to all things, although the use of a part of this authority is not permitted them as yet.

Man possessed the image of God from the first moment of his existence and was not initially created in *puris naturalibus*, that is, in a purely natural state -- without knowledge, righteousness, and holiness -- having only body and soul (that is, intellect, will, inclinations, and memory), and

lacking either good or evil in them.

(1) Scripture nowhere states this, and therefore this concept is to be rejected.

(2) Man was created after God's image. A painter who intends to paint the likeness of a man does not first create something void of any resemblance and then add form and resemblance subsequently. Rather, he seeks to express the image of this man in every stroke of the brush. God created man in like manner, creating him after His image, to which he gave expression in the act of creating.

(3) This is also confirmed by the fact that the creation of man was very good (Genesis 1:31). "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Without this image man would not have been good and upright, for he would have lacked the essence of his perfection and would not have been much better than a beast. Indeed, the absence of the image of God would have been tantamount to sin.

(4) Man was created to magnify God both as He is in Himself and in His works. He could not have attained to this purpose without that image, that is, without knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

(5) What man attains in recreation, Adam must have been, and has been. Since man is recreated after God's image, Adam was therefore created in like fashion.

Although man was created with and in this image, it was not bestowed upon him above and beyond his nature -- as if this would prevent disharmony from arising between the superior and inferior faculties of the soul such as intellect, will, and affections; or (so absurd is the argument) as if this would prevent the marriage between soul and body from not becoming a contentious marriage. It was, however, a natural element of man's nature. It did not belong to the essence of the soul, and was not one of the constituent elements of man, nor an essential property. Thus, when man lost the image of God, he did not lose his nature. As health naturally emanates from the well-being of soul and body, likewise the image of God was natural to man and belonged to his well-being. This is consequently referred to as original righteousness and is evident from the following:

(1) In the state of perfection, if Adam had affections which were contradictory to his intellect, he would not have been perfect, but would have been naturally opposed to the tenth commandment which forbids dissatisfaction and covetousness.

(2) From his very beginning man was very good and possessed the image of God. His original righteousness was thus one of his natural components.

(3) Conformity to the law of nature is not supernatural to man, but natural (Romans 2:14-15). This is much more true of the perfect conformity to the law which was impressed upon the first man.

(4) Had man not sinned, whatever would have been transmitted by procreation, would have been natural to him. Since his original righteousness would have, however, been transmitted to his descendants, it was thus natural to him.

(5) Man, being deprived of the image of God, is now naturally depraved. "... and were by nature the children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). Thus, this propensity emanating from original righteousness was natural to man in his perfect state.

Man's Residency in Paradise

Man, having been created in so holy and glorious a state, was placed in Paradise which was his residence. The word "paradise" does not occur in the Old Testament, with the exception of the Song of Solomon 4:12 [Dutch Statenbijbel]. It is generally referred to as Eden, which is a derivative of "delightful." This garden was created by God on the fourth day and was the most delightful area of the delightful earth. Its apparent location is inferred by men to have been east of the Mediterranean Sea. Its actual location and size are uncertain, however. I believe that it has been so totally destroyed, either by the flood or other means, that it is no longer recognizable, even if one were to be standing on the location itself. It was so fully enclosed and impenetrable that no man or beast was able to go in or out, except by a way upon which an angel had been placed to bar entrance for fallen man (Genesis 3:24). The delightful nature of this garden was such that the third heaven is called paradise by comparison (cf. Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7). In the midst of this Garden of Eden was the tree of life, which we do not consider to have belonged to a certain species, but was a tree singular in nature. "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree ... the tree of life also in the midst of the garden" (Genesis 2:9). Thus, this tree was not to be found at other locations. This tree did not typify the second Person of the Godhead, that is, the Son, for the following reasons:

(1) There is no evidence substantiating this anywhere.

(2) It is not congruent with the Godhead to be typified by a physical image, and then especially by a tree. God has forbidden to make any physical likeness of Himself, and has not done so Himself.

(3) It would not have been advantageous to man in his perfect state, since he knew God rightly.

(4) The Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the covenant of grace, is called the tree of life (Revelation 2:7; Revelation 22:2). He is not called thus because He was typified by this tree, for Adam in the state of perfection neither had need of a Mediator nor had it been revealed to him that a Mediator would come. Although he was capable of believing everything which God would present to him as an object to be believed in, he nevertheless did not believe in Christ, who had not been revealed to him. If the tree had been a type of Christ, Adam, being in the covenant of grace, would have been permitted to eat from this tree, which, on the contrary, he was forbidden to do. Christ, however, is called the tree of life by way of application and by way of comparison due to the efficacy of his mediatorial office, by virtue of which He is the life of His people and grants them eternal life. The tree of life was a type and sacrament of this for Adam. This tree did not have inherent power to preserve man so that he would not die, for:

(1) Immortality did not originate from this tree.

(2) There is not a single word to substantiate this in Scripture.

(3) How would all the descendants of Adam -- if he had remained in the state of perfection and if they would have populated the entire earth -- have survived without this tree, there only being one located within Paradise? Would they then have died?

(4) All other trees had been given to him for food, and his body was created in such a perfect condition that it was not subject to any sicknesses and therefore had no need of medication. Thus, the tree was merely a sacrament of eternal life. In Paradise there was also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which man was not permitted to touch nor to eat from. "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it" (Genesis 2:17; cf. Genesis 3:3). As there was only one tree of life, so there was also but one tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is not stated that this refers to the type of tree, but rather to the number. It is simply referred to as "the tree." The reason for this name can be deduced from the name itself.

(1) It was a probationary tree whereby God wished to try man whether he would persevere in doing good or whether he would fall into evil, as is found in 2 Chronicles 32:31, "... God left him, to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart."

(2) Man, in eating from this tree, would know how good he had it and in what a sinful and sad condition he had brought himself. The Lord placed Adam and Eve in this garden to dress it and keep it (Genesis 2:15) so that the animals would not intrude and trample and feed upon the beautiful plants, elegant flowers, and aromatic herbs. He would also dress the garden by pruning the trees in order to make them fruitful, sow seed here, and plant something there. All these activities would neither be burdensome and tiresome, nor would he perform them in the sweat of his face, but would engage therein with pleasure and delight, for a perfect man was neither permitted nor desirous to be physically idle. The Sabbath was the exception, for then he was required to rest and refrain from labor according to the example which his Maker had given him and had commanded him to emulate.

Thus Adam had all things in perfection and to the delight of body and soul. If he had perfectly persevered during his probationary period, he would, without seeing any death whatsoever, have been translated into the third heaven, into eternal glory. We have already confirmed the immortality of the soul in this chapter. Although the body had been constructed from material elements, its condition was such that it was capable of being in essential union with the immortal soul, and capable of existing without ever being subject to sickness or death. Had he not sinned, man would not have died, but would rather have ascended into heaven with body and soul. First, this is evident from the promise of eternal felicity, the fulfillment of which was contingent upon rendered obedience. This subject we will discuss subsequent to this chapter. Man, however, upon having been obedient, would never have died, but according to God's truth would have lived eternally.

Secondly, this is evident from God's threatenings, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). If man would have died regardless of what occurred, the threatening would not have been a threat. Since death was threatened upon the commission of sin, death entered for no other reason than sin, which is confirmed in Genesis 3:17-19. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12); "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23); "... and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

Man: Created to Enjoy Felicity Eternally

God thus created Adam -- and in him human nature in all its dimensions, as well as all men as created in him -- in such a glorious and immortal manner. He skillfully prepared his body for him and promised him eternal life. Where are they now who slander Reformed doctrine by stating that we maintain God to have created one man unto the enjoyment of felicity and another unto damnation? We insist that God created all men in Adam for the enjoyment of felicity, and that man himself is to be blamed for his damnation.

Here is reason to glorify and praise God for creating man with such excellent capabilities in body and soul. For He established man in a state of such holiness and glory, to the honor of His Maker, for the purpose of exalting and praising Him for all His works, as well as for the creation of man and the manner in which God endowed him with faculties. Here we perceive the abominable nature of sin, whereas man, being endowed with such excellent faculties and being united to His Creator with so many bonds of love, has departed from Him, and despised and rejected Him. He did so in order that the Creator would not be master over him, but that he might be his own lord and live according to his own will.

Here is reason to approve of the justice of God if He requites the sinner according to his ways and condemns him. Here the incomprehensible goodness and wisdom of God shines forth in that He reconciles such evil human beings -- although not all of them -- with Himself again through the Mediator Jesus Christ. He caused this Mediator to come forth from Adam as holy, having the same nature which had sinned, to bear the punishment of the sin of man's own nature and thus to fulfil all righteousness. Such human beings He again adopts as His children and takes to Himself in eternal bliss. To Him be given eternal praise and honor for this. Amen.

013. Chapter 11: The Providence of God

----- CHAPTER ELEVEN ----- The Providence of God The Providence of God Defined

Having considered the creation of all things in general and the creation of angels and men in particular, we will now proceed to consider the providence of God concerning all His creatures. We understand this to be neither the singular foreknowledge of God nor the immutable decree of God concerning all that would transpire (see chapter 5), but rather the execution of that decree; that is, the immediate provision for, and dispensation of all things. This is to be observed in Genesis 22:8, "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Providence is also referred to as ordinance (Psalms 119:91), God's way (Psalms 77:13), God's hand (Acts 4:28), God's upholding (Hebrews 1:3), God's working (Ephesians 1:11), God's government (Psalms 93:1), and God's care (1 Peter 5:7). The Heidelberg Catechism clearly and devoutly describes providence as follows: The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by His hand, He upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand; that we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love; since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move.

Providence is a divine power. This is not merely due to providence being executed by the omnipotent One, but particularly in reference to the extrinsic execution of this power towards His creatures. It is therefore stated with emphasis, "And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him ..." (Mark 5:30).

Providence is an omnipotent power. When perceiving the magnitude of the work of creation; the innumerable number of creatures; the unfathomable diversity of their natures and appearance; the existence and continuation of each created object according to its own essential nature; the movement of animate, rational, and inanimate creatures; the precise order of all things both as to movement and the manner in which one object initiates the motion and progression of another object -- one must lose himself in amazement regarding the infinite power and wisdom of God by which all things are maintained and governed. By this power God irresistibly executes whatsoever He wills, and no one can prevent Him from doing so. "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:27); "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10).

Providence is an omnipresent power of God. This is not merely true in reference to the omnipresent Being of God, but particularly in reference to His energizing power in all His creatures. This power of God does not merely manifest itself generally in all things. Neither does it merely affect the initial secondary causes, which in turn further initiate motion and activity in all other secondary causes. This power of God penetrates the existence of every creature, and thus, in an immediate sense and via all secondary causes, affects the ultimate outcome of all things.

The power of God is therefore in all things and manifests itself in all that exists and moves. If we had clear perception, we would observe this power in everything. That the providence of God pertains to everything is so clearly revealed in nature and in Scripture that whoever denies the providence of God is no better than an atheist, or at best, must be considered as blind as a mole.

First, consider the testimony of nature as expressed by Job. "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?" (Job 12:7-9).

(1) Reflect upon whatever you encounter, viewing it from every perspective until you observe the omnipotent and omnipresent power of God in it. Every object testifies that its being and existence do not originate within itself; rather, it has been created by God and is therefore neither capable of existing by itself nor of generating itself, as the same power is needful for both. If it were independent from God, it would not be subject to Him, but would exist and function on the same level as God.

(2) Observe the orderly arrangement of the universe, and how everything has its purpose and functions accordingly. Observe how one thing does not interfere with another, but cooperates with the function of the other. Consider the absence of confusion among creatures of various sorts and mobility. Notice how inanimate objects maintain their motion in such a precise and orderly fashion without either understanding this or its purpose. How precisely do sun, moon, and stars know their courses and the time to rise and to set. How precise is the time schedule of low and high tides. The birds know when to arrive and when to depart; every flower knows when it must sprout; every species remains consistent both in its being and in its manner of procreation, so that from the creation of the world until now not one is missing. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth" (Isaiah 40:26).

(3) Consider the rise and fall of kingdoms, the outcome of wars, and unexpected occurrences which can have significant consequences. Consider also the prophecies and the manner in which they are fulfilled, the extraordinary plagues which come upon those who are particularly ungodly, the unexpected deliverances of the godly, the answers upon their prayers, and all the wondrous ways in which various matters come to pass in nature and in grace. Whoever will not observe God's hand in all these things must be entirely blind.

(4) Add to this the common sentiment and the acknowledgment of all men in whose heart, due to the innate knowledge of God, there is an impression of this. Even though by observation one person may acknowledge this more than another, and some labor to become atheists by attempting to deny everything, this awareness nevertheless remains in their heart and cannot be entirely erased.

We desire that whoever is as void of understanding as the animals of the field and cannot observe God's providence in all this, may come to his senses as Nebuchadnezzar did, and confess with him, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4:35).

(5) Yes, whoever acknowledges the existence of God must also acknowledge His providence, for the one confirms the other.

Secondly, as the providence of God is evident from nature, so it is abundantly expressed in Holy Writ. No person who considers the Bible to be the Word of God has ever dared to deny this doctrine. Some, however, twist and distort the Scriptures to such an extent that they, while adhering to the same expressions, seek to divorce the matter itself from its content. As we proceed, this will be confirmed by many texts, of which we here only mention Ephesians 1:11, where it is stated, "... who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."

Only one who is void of understanding would dare to suggest that his own government of the world would be more wise and better than is presently the case. He would not allow it to rain upon the sea, since there is sufficient water there. He would not tolerate the existence of so many mountains, rock formations, and barren territories. He would do well to those that are good, and bring evil upon the wicked. Poor man! With Icarus and Phaeton he would immediately plunge from his lofty position and turn everything up-side-down. God does nothing in vain; unsearchable wisdom may be discerned in every work of God, and every one of them has a wonderful and useful purpose. The angels observe this and magnify God for it. Those with an enlightened understanding observe all this perceptively, believe everything at once, and search it out afterwards. Everything is beyond the reach of a fool. "For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein" (Hosea 14:9). Observe what sin causes in the world, and this will confirm it for you. The acts of God's providence can be arranged under three headings: preservation, cooperation, and government. The First Act of God's Providence: Preservation

Preservation is defined as the immediate, energizing power of God whereby all creatures in general and every creature in particular is preserved in its being and existence. God does not merely preserve living creatures by providing them with their prescribed food and drink. He also energizes them immediately by bestowing upon each creature the energy needed to preserve its existence, apart from which food would serve no purpose. "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28); "And by Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17); "... upholding all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3).

If this preserving and immediate influence were to be withheld for but one moment, the creature would at once be reduced to nothing, as no creature can of and by himself exist independently from God. This is implied in the word "creature." "That He would let loose His hand, and cut me off" (Job 6:9); "Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust" (Psalms 104:29).

God has created some creatures in such a fashion that apart from this energizing and preserving power they need no other means to maintain their existence. Others He has created such that they are in need of a variety of other terrestrial means. Between these means there is a relationship of secondary causes which exceeds our comprehension. The lesser of these secondary causes is frequently the means which the superior of these secondary causes utilizes. They in turn are causal in relation to the secondary causes which are inferior to them. "I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn ... and they shall hear Jezreel" (Hosea 2:21-22).

God has ordained that living creatures be preserved by food and drink, and He himself provides this for them. "O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast" (Psalms 36:6); "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry" (Psalms 147:9). God does not need to avail Himself of means, neither can the means preserve the creature without His preserving influence. However, God uses the means to manifest His wisdom, power, and goodness, so that rational creatures would the better discern His hand, rejoice in this, and magnify God because of it.

God ordinarily uses the means, but occasionally He acts in an extraordinary manner to demonstrate His majesty and sovereignty:

(1) At times He preserves by means which otherwise are insufficient. In this manner God preserved Elijah, the widow, and her son for a long time by means of a small measure of flour and oil (1 Kings 17:10 ff.) In like manner the Lord Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes (John 6:9-10).

(2) God preserved some for a period of time without food and drink -- for example, Moses, Elijah, and Christ, each for a period of forty days (Exodus 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8; Matthew 4:2).

(3) God has preserved some by holding natural powers in abeyance. God preserved the three young men in the fiery furnace in this fashion (Daniel 3:17). He delivered Israel out of Egypt by causing the water of the sea to stand as walls on both sides until Israel had proceeded through on dry land (Exodus 14:22); this also occurred at the Jordan (Joshua 3:16). The Lord caused the sun to stand still (Joshua 10:13) and to move backwards by ten degrees (2 Kings 20:11). The Second Act of God's Providence: Cooperation The second act of providence is Cooperation, (*concursum*), that is, the concurrence of the power of God with the motions of His creatures. All creatures have received an independent and unique existence from God so as to move in a manner unique to themselves. They set themselves in motion, as man for instance walks, speaks, and works -- all of which he does of himself. Since every creature exists, however, by the energizing and preserving power of God, and would not be able to exist without this, each creature's activity comes about by the influence of God's cooperative power, without which it would not be able to move. As is its manner of existence, so likewise is its manner of motion; both existence and motion are dependent upon God.

(1) The cooperation of God must not be understood to mean the energizing power of God which preserves the existence and faculties of all creatures but then ceases to function, leaving further activity and government to the creature. We rather understand it to be a preserving, initiating, and persevering power within the moving creature that influences its motion.

(2) Neither do we understand this cooperative power to be a general, discriminating, or proportionate influence which does not determine the creature's activity, so that time, location, and manner of activity are determined by the creature, and thus would have its effect whenever it would please him. This would then be similar to the sun which has a general influence upon earthly matters, such as the growth of plants, the procreation of beasts and men, a rotting cadaver, and a sweet smelling flower. In this case the object and the effects are different, but the energizing influence is always the same. One should not be of the opinion that He who is supreme in sovereignty and wisdom cooperates with various creatures in such a general and detached manner -- not regulating the creature, but being regulated by the creature, thus giving the Creator

the opportunity to cooperate according to the good pleasure of the creature. In this fashion we use the sun, wind, water, and fire according to our pleasure. God, however, energizes by a wise, sovereign, and special cooperative act, in which His activity precedes the activity of every creature, thus determining the time, location, and manner of activity, while preserving the creature in his motions until the act has been performed.

(3) Neither do we understand cooperation to be a suggestive influence which is either positive or negative in nature, nor an operation whereby opportunities and objects are made available. It rather refers to a physical (if we may use this word in this context), natural, immediate, and powerful influence which causes the creature to move voluntarily.

(4) This cooperation is also not mediate in the sense in which a craftsman uses his tools, and as the moon by means of reflected light from the sun affects earthly objects and illuminates the earth. This cooperation is immediate; God energizes mobile creatures by His own power and by virtue of His own Being. This is not merely true for the initial secondary cause which directly proceeds from Him, leaving it to itself to set everything else in motion, but with identical power He is involved in all secondary causes. Thus He is immediately involved with all consequences of the initial secondary cause, although creatures in respect to each other must be viewed as means in the hand of God.

(5) One should also not understand this cooperation to be such as if God were collaterally involved in the activity of the creature, as is true when two horses draw a wagon. This would mean that the creature by virtue of a God-given innate ability would then function independently rather than that God would energize the creature in order for it to be in motion. This would additionally mean that God would merely join Himself to the activity of the moving creature, executing this task jointly, each by exercising power independently. God's initiative precedes the motion of the creature, however, stipulating the creature to a specific object, place, and time. Having initiated and determined the creature's motion in this manner, God then proceeds to further involve Himself in the creature and its motion, thus accomplishing what He has purposed.

We therefore understand the cooperation of God not merely to refer to His omnipotent and omnipresent power whereby He preserves the existence and faculties of all creatures but also to be a special, physical, natural, immediate, and tangible operation by which He precedes the creature in every motion, directing this motion and preserving the created object while in motion. Thus He permeates all secondary causes and their motions to their conclusive effect.

Socinians, Roman Catholics, and Arminians deny this, and therefore we must give further explanation. This truth is confirmed by both Scripture and nature.

It is first of all evident throughout the entire Bible. Consider for instance Acts 17:28, where a clear distinction is made between the being and the motion of the creature. It is confirmed that the creature both moves in God and has its being in God. To move in God is being active due to the influence of divine power. This is also exemplified in the following passages. "Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalms 139:13-14); "Hast Thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews" (Job 10:10-11); "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Proverbs 21:1). Water follows its own course, but God directs it whithersoever He wills. Although

the heart of the king may be highly exalted above his subjects, it nevertheless does not function independently from God. The king may have as many plans as he wishes, but the Lord nevertheless inclines him towards His will and causes him to act accordingly. Add to this Isaiah 10:15, where it is stated, "shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up?" The prophet says that as an axe, saw, and rod cannot set themselves in motion, but must be set in motion by someone else, so it is likewise for every creature and man. God sets them in motion in harmony with their nature by means of His cooperative influence. The Lord causes "His sun to rise" (Matthew 5:45). The Lord caused "the stars in their courses" to fight against Sisera (Judges 5:20). David acknowledged, "For Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me" (Psalms 18:39). "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:13).

Secondly, this is also evident from reason and nature itself.

(1) It is an irrefutable principle that the manner of operation proceeds from the manner of existence. Since each creature is dependent upon God in its existence, it is likewise dependent in its motions.

(2) Either man is entirely independent from God -- which is most absurd to maintain, as it would be contradictory to be a creature and yet be independent of the Creator -- or if man is dependent, then he is also dependent in all his motions. For otherwise he would be independent in this area, and if he were able to be independent in one area, he would also be able to be independent in other areas, and consequently in every area; this is contrary to the nature of a creature.

(3) If God did not energize the motions of every creature, it would not be necessary to pray, "Create in me a clean heart" (Psalms 51:12); "Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalms 143:10); "Keep the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3). There would be no need to pray for victory in war or for any other matter. Since, however, we are commanded to pray, it is evident that God energizes by His cooperative power. Then (if God did not energize the motions of every creature) there would also be no need to thank God upon receipt of a blessing for body or soul; for if God had not done it, one would not be permitted to give thanks to Him, but would rather have to express his thanksgiving either to himself or to another creature who had bestowed the blessing.

(4) Then God would not be Lord, but rather a servant of the creature -- similar to the sun which man uses as and when he pleases. God would then have to be readily available with His general influence when the creature specified it, the creature determining in which manner His influence was to be used. Then one would not be able to say, "I shall do this, the Lord willing," but rather, "The Lord will have to exercise His influence according to my will." Then it would not be as God wills, but as man wills, contrary to James 4:15.

God is not the Author of Sin The thought might occur as to whether the consequence of such cooperation would not be that there is but one cause of all motions and activities. Then God would be the only active agent and man and all creatures would be entirely passive, being set in motion as the strings of a musical instrument which are entirely passive and whose motion is caused solely by the player. My response to this is: "Not in the least!" For even though creatures function

as means in relation to each other, God using them in the execution of His work and purpose, they are nevertheless the primary cause of their motions and activities. This is not true in respect to God as if they were independent from Him, but in respect to other subordinate causes as well as the results of their activities. There is no inconsistency in the fact that two causes of a different order have the same result, especially since the result is one and the same, proceeding from both sources in a different manner. The designation of God as the sole cause of all motions, deeds, and activities, and the proposition that man is therefore passive and inactive is the result of blindness and ignorance concerning God's power and wisdom. It is an error which is refuted by both Scripture and nature.

First, since God has imposed a law upon man to which promises as well as threatenings are appended, man is therefore not passive, but is himself the moving cause of his deeds. God can neither impose a law upon Himself, make promises to Himself, nor threaten Himself. Since the law with its promises and threatenings has been given to man for the purpose of regulating his conduct, man must therefore be active himself and thus receive either what has been promised or threatened.

Secondly, if man were merely passive in all his motions, he could not be subject to punishment, for punishment is the execution of justice in response to transgression of the law. If man had not committed anything but was merely a passive object of God's activity, he would not have committed any evil, and thus, on the basis of justice, could not have been punished and condemned.

Thirdly, if man were merely passive and God was the only active agent in his motions and deeds, all motions and deeds, both natural as well as sinful (far be it from God, that He should do wickedness) would have been committed by God and would have to be attributed to Him. Then God rather than man would be walking, speaking, writing, or reading. Man would neither pray nor believe, but God would be praying to Himself, and believing in Himself through Jesus Christ. Man would not be guilty of making idols; man would not use God's Name in vain; man would not break the Sabbath; man would not be disobedient to his parents; man would not be guilty of hatred, wrath, and anger towards his neighbor, etc. Man would not be a hater of God, since he would be but passive and thus inactive. All of this would have to attributed to God which would be the ultimate act of blasphemy.

Fourthly, Scripture states plainly that man walks, sees, hears, speaks, believes, and prays. It also states that man sins, and is thus righteously subject to punishment. It is unnecessary to quote all the texts which mention this. Paul states, "For we are labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). This is also confirmed when he states, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:12-13). God is the efficient cause of this activity, but man is the subjective cause of that same work, producing these activities from within himself. These activities must therefore be attributed to man according to the following principle: The name is attributed to the formal cause. In Php 2:12-13 man is exhorted to be active towards his salvation, being convinced and stirred up concerning his duty. He is simultaneously instructed, however, concerning his sinfulness and spiritual impotence, so that he would entertain no notion concerning the goodness of his will, nor be encouraged to be active towards this in his own strength. On the other hand he ought not to be discouraged when he

perceives his weakness, but should rather be encouraged by the fact that God helps him by being the initiator of his action, working powerfully in him to take hold of this power and be engaged by virtue of this power.

Objection #1: Does not such cooperation make God a cause of sin? Answer: By no means! One needs to make a distinction between the activity itself, such as understanding, willing, seeing, hearing, speaking, working, and the context in which this activity must occur: the law of God. The activity itself is natural and as such neither good nor evil; however when viewed within the context of the law, according to which it ought to be judged as far as subject, time, and manner are concerned, this activity becomes either good or evil. When discussing God's cooperation we understand this to refer to the natural dimensions of this activity or motion itself. This is neither true, however, in reference to the misuse of this activity, to the lack of conformity to the law, nor to the evil in this activity. One person can be the cause of activity in another person, but not of the evil which accompanies it. The government causes the executioner to scourge the thief, but is not the cause of the cruel manner in which he may do so. A player causes the strings to bring forth sound, but not the dissonance; this proceeds from the string. A rider may drive his horse and thus cause progress. He is not the cause of its limp, however; this is due to a flaw in the horse. Such is the case here. The activity itself proceeds from God, but man spoils it due to his inner corruption. Consequently, it is not God but man who is the cause of sin.

Objection #2: Does this initiating and definitive cooperation of God not eliminate the freedom of man's will? Answer: By no means! The freedom of the will is not one of neutrality; that is, of indifference whether or not to do something, but of necessary consequence, coming forth from one's own choice, pleasure, or inclination to do or not do something. God's cooperation enables man to be active in harmony with his nature, that is, by the free exercise of his will. There is thus harmony between God's cooperation and the will of man. God activates the will and man then exercises his will. The Third Act of God's Providence: Government The third element of the providence of God is Government, whereby God governs all things in general and each thing in particular for purposes predetermined by Him. God's Word teaches throughout that God governs and directs all things. "The Lord reigneth" (Psalms 93:1); "... Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11); "I am the Lord that maketh all things" (Isaiah 44:24). We can organize all these things under four particular headings: the independent entities, the greatness or insignificance, the goodness or evil, and the outcome of all matters. The first heading is concerned with independent entities which are either animate or inanimate. The animate entities are either rational or irrational. The rational entities are angels and men. God governs the angels for they are "sent forth to minister" (Hebrews 1:14). God governs the entire conversation of man. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord. A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:1; Proverbs 16:9). Irrational creatures either live sensibly or merely have a vegetative existence. The Lord governs all that which is sensibly alive, such as the birds. "Behold the fowls of the air ... your heavenly Father feedeth them" (Matthew 6:26). The Lord governs the animals. "... the Lord sent lions among them ..." (2 Kings 17:25). The Lord calls the locust, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, "My great army which I sent among you" (Joel 2:25). He governs the fish of the sea. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find" (John 21:6). The Lord also governs all vegetation such as plants, trees, and herbs. "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb

for the service of man" (Psalms 104:14). The Lord governs all inanimate creation, such as sun, moon, stars, rain, hail, snow, thunder, lightning, wind, the mountains and all their natural resources, and the sea and rivers (cf. Psalms 148:1-14; Psalms 29:3; Jeremiah 10:13). The second heading concerns the magnitude or insignificance of matters. Large objects are as incapable of governing themselves as are the small objects, and therefore are in need of divine government. Small objects, to the very least of them, are governed by God in all circumstances, occurrences, and motions. It is to the glory of God that He who has created all things -- even the very smallest objects -- and causes them to exist by His influence, also governs them. This is true for the buttons on our clothing, the shoes on our feet, and the hairs on our heads. "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30); "Neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them" (Daniel 3:27); "Your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot" (Deuteronomy 29:5). The third heading concerns the goodness or evil of a matter. Whatever is good in nature or in grace is of the Lord. "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). The evil is either the evil of punishment or of sin. The evil of punishment proceeds from God. God sends and governs the evil of punishment either as a righteous Judge or as a loving Father. "Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good?" (Lamentations 3:38); "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6). The evil of sin does not proceed from God, for He is holy (Isaiah 6:3) and light (1 John 1:5). "He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4); "Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity" (Job 34:10); "... there is no unrighteousness in Him" (Psalms 92:15). Since God prohibited evil and will punish it, He is therefore not the cause of sin. This we wholeheartedly proclaim and declare before the entire world. It is therefore slanderous to maintain that the Reformed Church teaches that God is a cause of sin.

God's Government and Sin

Nevertheless God's government also encompasses sin, for otherwise the entire human race, being sinful in its deeds, would be removed from God's government. God's government regarding sin cannot be denied by someone who believes God's Word, from which we will prove this with utmost clarity. For a correct understanding of God's government relative to sin we must take notice of three matters which pertain to every sin: the natural activity, the deviation in this activity, and God's government in bringing this activity to a good end.

(1) The natural activity, considered in and of itself, proceeds from God. This has been demonstrated in discussing the second act of providence, cooperation.

(2) We shall soon demonstrate that God governs sin to a good end.

(3) The deviation, the abuse of the energizing power of God, the corruption of this power, and the irregularity of the activity as far as manner and objective are concerned -- whether such activity is internal or external -- do not proceed from God, but from man himself. Man is nevertheless not independent in the act of sin for he corrupts the energy upon which he depends for his activity. God's government concerning sin relates 1) to its commencement, 2) to its progression, and 3) to its ultimate outcome.

First, God initially permits the occurrence of sin. “so I gave them up unto their own hearts lust: and they walked in their own counsels” (Psalms 81:12); “Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” (Acts 14:16). God permits sin, but not in such a manner as if the sinner were discharged from the demands of the law, for then God would approve of sin and would not be able to punish sinners. He permits it in such a fashion, however, that He does not prevent the sinner from sinning. He is, nevertheless, capable of preventing sin, and at times also does. “For I also withheld thee from sinning against Me; therefore suffered I thee not to touch her” (Genesis 20:6). This is not a matter of indifferent observation, whereby the sinner is merely allowed to go his own way. It is rather an active permission, not relative to sin as proper object itself, but relative to the circumstances. This does not merely consist in God refusing to coerce the free will of the sinner by forcing him to renounce his will. (Even when God prevents the sinner and does not permit him to sin -- as we just observed with Abimelech -- He nevertheless does not eliminate the freedom of his will.) Rather, God influences man in a manner agreeable with his nature so that he arbitrarily acts or does not act. This active permission consists of the following acts:

(1) Man's activity as far as his faculties and activity are concerned originates with God who restricts and sustains him with His powerful influence, enabling him to exist and move so that he works and is active.

(2) God permits situations to occur, of which man would make correct use if he were still perfect. He is still under obligation to utilize such situations correctly. Due to his corruption, however, he abuses them. David's lust was kindled when he observed Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2); Ahab's wrath was kindled in response to the words of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 21:20). Lusts are even kindled by the law itself. “But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence” (Romans 7:8).

(3) In withholding from man the ability to withstand sin, God righteously and sovereignly refuses to impart new grace to man when he has the opportunity and is inclined to sin. He wills to leave him in his evil frame, rendering him capable and inclined to commit all manner of sins. “There shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour” (Jeremiah 16:13).

(4) As a righteous judgment upon past sins, God does withdraw His restraining power which is normally exercised towards the sinner, leaving him to himself. “Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon ... God left him, to try him” (2 Chronicles 32:31).

(5) As a righteous judgment, God gives the sinner over to his own lusts and thus punishes sin with sin. “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Romans 1:28); “... because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie” (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11); “Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him” (2 Samuel 16:11).

(6) God gives the devil free play to focus all his efforts upon man, whom he drives from one sin to another, taking advantage of man's lusts which have been aroused. “But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him” (1 Samuel 16:14); “Thou [lying spirit] shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so” (1 Kings 22:22).

(7) God hardens the heart, causing it to be as stone, thereby permitting the sinner to persevere in sin without being sensible of it. God Himself uses such expressions, saying that He does this. "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart. ... And He hardened Pharaoh's heart" (Exodus 7:3; Exodus 7:13). This act of hardening is not an infusion of some evil or sinful frame, but a holy and secret operation whereby common but abused gifts are withdrawn in an extraordinary manner. The Lord then fully withdraws Himself so that there is neither impression nor feeling concerning God or the conscience. God leaves the sinner over to his own raging lusts and allows the devils to have free play so that the sinner in this state cannot do anything else but sin and is hardened as a result of continual sinning. Therefore that which is attributed to God is also attributed to Pharaoh. "But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart" (Exodus 8:15). Such is God's government relative to sin at the outset of its commission.

Secondly, God's government also extends to the progression of sin. God determines the measure, time, and limitations; that is, thus far and no further, to such an extent and no more, and for such a duration and no longer. This we observe with Laban. "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad" (Genesis 31:29). Esau was determined to kill Jacob, but must kiss him instead (Genesis 33:4). Baalam desired to curse in order to earn the wages of unrighteousness, but each time he was compelled to bless (Numbers 24:1-25). The devil desired to eliminate Job, but each time the Lord determined his deliverance. "... only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (Job 1:12); "... but save his life" (Job 2:6).

Thirdly, God's government also extends to the ultimate outcome of sin. He governs sin either to declare His righteousness, to show forth His grace, longsuffering, and mercy, or to benefit His children, keeping them humble and making them careful. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20); "O Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in their hand is Mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation ... and to take the prey. Howbeit he meaneth not so ... but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks" (Isaiah 10:5-7; Isaiah 10:12). "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Timothy 1:16).

Such results do not naturally issue forth from sin; neither does God first determine to extract good results from sin after it has been committed. Having decreed to glorify Himself in such a fashion and to bestow certain benefits upon His children, God rather uses the wickedness of man in a sanctified manner to accomplish the outcome. As the sun is not defiled by the rotting of a stinking cadaver, God likewise, while men and devils commit sin, remains holy and operates in a holy manner relative to the commencement, progression, and ultimate outcome of sin. God uses sinners as if they were executioners, lions, and bears, in order to execute His judgments by means of their fury, and thus with a crooked stick He strikes with straight strokes. The fourth heading concerning the providence of God relates to the outcome of all matters. These results are either necessary consequences or are contingent in nature. Therefore these also include whatever occurs as a result of such matters as the free exercise of man's will, the outcome of wars, marriage, and the day of one's death.

First, some results are certain and a matter of course, being determined by the law and order of nature. Such is true for the circuits (trajectories) of sun and moon, for eclipses, for the occurrence of low and high tides, and for the fact that fire ascends and that whatever is heavy descends. All these are governed by God. This is confirmed in the following texts. "He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night" (Psalms 104:19-20); "They continue this day according to Thine ordinances: for all are Thy servants" (Psalms 119:91).

God can, however, intervene in this established plan and cause progression contrary to the course of nature. Upon the prayer of Joshua the Lord caused the sun and moon to stand still (Joshua 10:13) and He caused the sun to return ten degrees upon Hezekiah's request (2 Kings 20:11). The Lord caused iron to float (2 Kings 6:6), and the three young men to be unharmed in the fiery oven (Daniel 3:25). The prophecies also have a certain and determined fulfillment which God is not willing nor are His creatures able to change. "But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26:54).

Secondly, the results of some matters are contingent. This is not true in reference to God, for not the least thing happens by chance. His counsel shall stand and He will do all His pleasure. They are contingent, however, both relative to secondary causes (relative to which they could have turned out differently) and relative to the connection between causes and their effects, for which the results were neither planned, regulated, nor expected. God, however, governs all these contingent results according to His counsel and will, executing them with certainty and without any impediment. This is exemplified by unexpected manslaughter in which God caused this blow to come upon the slain person (cf. Deuteronomy 19:5; Exodus 21:13). Is there anything more unpredictable than the casting of the lot? God's government nevertheless extends to this, and He causes the result to be according to His will. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33). This is evident in the lot which fell upon Jonah (Jonah 1:7) and upon Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:42). What is more unpredictable in nature than the falling of a sparrow from the roof or a hair from the head? God's government, however, also extends to these. "One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:29-30).

Thirdly, God also governs all actions which occur as a result of the free exercise of the will of man. God does not remove the freedom of the will, nor does he coerce man to act contrary to his will. Rather, He inclines and governs this will, be it by internal inclination or by external circumstances and events, so that man accomplishes those matters decreed by God by virtue of his own arbitrary determination and inclination. This is confirmed in the following texts. "He fashioneth their hearts alike" (Psalms 33:15); "... the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord ... the Lord directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:1; Proverbs 16:9); "He turneth it (the king's heart) whithersoever He will" (Proverbs 21:1); "... God which worketh ... to will ..." (Php 2:13).

Fourthly, God governs the outcome of wars, sending one nation to punish the other or to be a punishment to each other. He does not always give the victory to the nation which is strongest numerically, most clever, and most courageous, but to whomsoever He will. "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight?" (Deuteronomy 32:30 a); "It is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power" (2 Chronicles 14:11); "There is

no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety" (Psalms 33:16-17); "The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord" (Proverbs 21:31). All texts in which God is said either to sell or give one nation into the hand of another nation, or to deliver a nation, serve to illustrate this (cf. Judges 3:8; Judges 6:1).

Fifthly, God's government also extends to marriage, directing a partner to every man. Some He joins together in judgment as punishment upon their sins, some for the purpose of chastening, and some for the mutual comfort of soul and body. How unsearchable are all those peculiar ways and unusual events relative to marriages! God, however, governs them all according to His determinate purpose, and as long as the world remains there will be some marriages in which such providences will be evident. "Lord ... send me good speed this day ... let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac" (Genesis 24:12-14); "... a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Proverbs 19:14); "What therefore God hath joined together ..." (Matthew 19:6).

Sixthly, God determines every person's age. No one will die any earlier nor live any longer than God has decreed. He will die at such a location and in such a manner as God has determined. Until that moment God will provide food and shelter, preserving his body. But then all the doctors in the world will not be able to prolong His life by one hour. "... and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26); "seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass" (Job 14:5); "Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth" (Psalms 39:5). (Cf. chapter 5.) God's Providence and the Use of Means

We have thus observed that everything, without exception, is governed according to God's decree. God generally executes all these things by way of means, however, having bound man to them. Whenever the means are properly used, God generally blesses His own ordinances. An ungodly farmer who properly prepares his land generally has a fruitful harvest, and a godly farmer who has been lax in his preparation will have to witness the harvest with empty hands. When a godly person does his best, however, God surely blesses the most insignificant means. A person tempts God when he does not wish to use the means and nevertheless desires to see results. This doctrine of the providence of God is of great benefit to those who make proper use of it. A blind, natural, and unconverted person can neither extract any benefit from this doctrine nor obtain comfort from it. He cannot do so even though he observes and believes in the providence of God and desires to strengthen himself by means of it when an extraordinary trial comes his way. His patience is a coerced patience, as he is not able to do otherwise. He resigns himself to a fatum Stoicum, that is, stoical fate, saying: "Circumstances had to be this way and nothing can change them." When he cannot do as he pleases, he tries to make the best of it. How will an unconverted man comfort himself with the providence of God, since God is against him? Whatever befalls him serves to his perdition if he is not converted. Therefore it is a terror unto him.

However, all the benefits which may be derived from this doctrine are for the children of God. The clearer they may know themselves to belong to God, the more benefit they may extract from the providence of God. Come therefore, all you who mourn greatly, inwardly, and continually over sin; who continually flee to the Lord Jesus to be justified by His blood; who yearn for communion with God; whose desire it is to love, fear, and obey the Lord, even though this is often accompanied

with much darkness and sin. Come, I say, sit beside me for a moment, listen, and let my words enter into your ears and hearts.

Practical Exhortations Concerning the Doctrine of Providence

Accustom yourself by frequent meditations, attentive observation, and diligent exercises to believingly observe God's hand in all things. As you would observe the rays of the sun entering a room through a window, observe His preservation, cooperation, and government, concerning both creatures and their activity. Accustom yourself continually to discern God's active hand when you observe the sunrise in the morning and the shining moon and stars at night in their respective circuits; as you observe everything sprouting forth from the earth; when you take note of what occurs in the earth; and when you observe both victory and defeat in time of war, as also the extraordinary events and turn of events in time of peace. Do likewise regarding your own life, whether you are healthy or ill, whether you continually encounter tribulation, one cross following another; whether you experience deliverance and prosperity; whether a person looks at you either in a friendly or sullen manner, speaks either gruffly to you or helps and comforts you; or whether someone turns his back to you, seeks to trap you, opposes you, speaks well or evil of you. All these things, from the least to the greatest, are under God's control. It is not enough merely to state this and believe it to be true, for this will have but little effect upon you.

I beseech you, however, to endeavor by constant activity and by continually focusing vividly upon and viewing it to familiarize yourself with this truth. May you thus continually perceive God's hand working in and by secondary causes in such a manner as if these causes did not exist, but as if God worked these things immediately. Endeavor by thus being continually exercised to acquire a habitual frame of mind which will make it clear and easy for you to see God at work. Believe me, this requires more effort to learn than you may think. Our atheistic and worldly hearts continually detract us from such observations and acknowledgement, and this will bring on a darkness which will hamper us. Therefore, apply yourself in this matter, praying for much light to enable you to be attentive and to be continually engaged in such observations. You will experience that your soul will derive great benefit in every way. Beware, however, of too much effort spent in searching out the manner in which God preserves, cooperates, and governs, for this would have a detrimental effect upon you, it being an unsearchable mystery. Rather, believe and observe this doctrine each time with new attentiveness. Speak about it and communicate this to others, and you will perceive that your journey through this world will be attended with more comfort and holiness.

Secondly, do not merely focus on the acts of providence, but accustom yourself to perceive therein God's majesty, power, wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. Acknowledge these attributes with astonishment and joy. All creatures are His; all activity proceeds from Him; and He governs everything in heaven and on earth. This is true regardless of how large the universe may be, how many creatures (great or small) it may contain, and how diverse all activity may be. May this acknowledgement engender a humble fear and reverence in you. Is not He, and He alone, the Lord? Are not all things in His hand to use them either for or against you? Are not all creatures His servants who look unto the hand of their Master? Stand therefore in awe of Him and bow before Him in godly fear while exclaiming, "The Lord is God," and "the Lord reigns." God demands this. "Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves

thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" (Jeremiah 5:22). Oh, how sweet it is in contemplation of the fact that God is the moving cause of all things to bow before Him and to worship Him!

Thirdly, no longer depend upon secondary causes; no longer rely upon your belongings, strength, wisdom, and ability; no longer concern yourself with friend or foe; do not depend upon naval forces, fortifications, and soldiers; do not look so much to this or that individual or to the means, as if your only expectation were to be from them. If God so pleases, He will overturn [Note: The Dutch reads: "... zoo blaast Hij in al uw afhangen ..."; literally, "He thus blows in all your dependency."] all your dependencies and expectation from the means. He will turn everything upside down; what you thought to be your deliverance will prove to be your ruination, and what appeared to be your ruination will be your deliverance. Since creatures cannot but move otherwise than through His energizing power, what can they give to you or take from you? Why then do you look to them, since everyone of them bears this testimony, "It is not to be found with me"? Moreover, to depend upon the help of creatures is to be guilty of idolatry and departure from the Lord. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (Jeremiah 17:5; Jeremiah 17:7). Oh, learn this great lesson! Let those who do not know God look to the creature and to the means and depend upon them. You, however, must expect everything from the Lord, carefully using the means as means and looking beyond all creatures to God Himself. This will engender both steadfastness and strength within your heart. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever" (Psalms 125:1).

Fourthly, be not fearful of creatures, as they cannot initiate their own motion. It is God alone who governs and controls them. If you have an encounter with them, God who controls them has sent them. They cannot do anything but execute God's will. God obstructs them in their activity and causes them to depart again. Who would fear a sword, stick, or stone when it is lying upon the ground and does not move since it is not in anyone's hand? If it is God's will, anyone desirous to curse you will bless you; if they desire to slander you, they will praise you; and if they desire to kill you, they will kiss you. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). And since He is for you, children of God, why do you fear? For all your enemies it is true that it is but as if a terrifying mask conceals the countenance of a friend. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" (Job 34:29). Therefore, "Fear not them which kill the body" (Matthew 10:28). How quiet a soul may be which, while conscious of his enemies, "dwelleth in the secret place of the most High" and abides under the shadow of the Almighty (Psalms 91:1)!

Fifthly, do not be angry and vengeful towards those who have harmed you, for it is according to the Lord's command (2 Samuel 16:11). "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" (Lamentations 3:37). It is true that they have done so with evil intention, but the Lord uses their evil deeds as a rod to chastise you (Isaiah 10:1-34). We must not act as a dog which bites the stone that has been cast at him, but must look higher to the hand of Him who uses our enemies against us and refrain from murmuring against the Lord. To be vengeful or angry against the means used is to be opposed to the One who used them. Therefore never focus upon the evil-doing of man alone, as if he functioned independently, but rather "hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it" (Micah 6:9), and turn to Him who chastises you (Isaiah 9:12).

Sixthly, possess your souls in patience. This is so needful, for evil things do not come upon you by chance even if they are caused by people. Yes, even if your own foolishness and sin are the cause, it is nevertheless of the Lord who hath decreed this concerning you, who controls it, and who executes it. Therefore with quiet submission say, "For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (Job 23:14).

(1) Is He not the absolutely sovereign Lord? Do you begrudge Him this? Do you not rejoice that He is so? Would you not defend Him if anyone were to challenge His absolute right to govern? Would you desire that the link of His providence would break for your sake, desiring that His will not govern you, but that your will would govern Him? If so, how do you dare to resist Him? Be quiet therefore, and let His will -- simply because it is His will -- be fully accomplished towards you.

(2) Is He not your Father? Has He not loved you with an everlasting love? Behold, in love He caused this evil to come upon you. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19). He has compassion upon you, is merciful towards you, is with you in your affliction, knows your distress, sees your tears, and hears your cries. He will deliver you at His time and in His manner.

(3) The result will be to the further glorification of His power, faithfulness, and goodness. This will cause you to be that much more humble and holy. The more abundant the tribulation will have been, the more abundant the comforts will be.

Therefore, deny yourself and take up your cross, and follow Jesus (Matthew 16:24). Do not be fretful and "despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction" (Proverbs 3:11). "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him" (Psalms 37:7). Say with David, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Psalms 39:9). Surrender yourself as clay in the hands of your Maker, and let Him mold you as it pleases Him. He shall guide thee with His counsel, and afterward receive thee to glory (Psalms 73:24). Is all not well then, regardless of whether He has led you in a way of sorrow or joy? To be blessed is to be blessed indeed. [Note: The Dutch reads, "Zalig is zalig." The profound dimensions of this statement are simply not translatable. à Brakel implicates that eternal felicity is the ultimate outcome of all God's ways with His children, regardless of what these ways may be.]

Seventhly, the proper use of God's providence will render you an exceptional measure of gratitude and will teach you to end in the Lord as the only Giver of all the good which you may receive for soul and body. It will cause you to observe God's goodness, faithfulness, and benevolence. This will cause you to rejoice, to praise and magnify God, to speak to others about His attributes, and to place yourself with a willing heart in God's service. He it is who, out of pure love bestowed His goodness upon you. At times He has done so in a most remarkable way and a marvelous manner. Since it came from God, we must also end in Him. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Romans 11:36). "In every thing give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Continually follow David's example and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psalms 103:2). Oh, how sweet it is when contemplating upon former affliction, helplessness, and our unworthiness to receive anything, to then perceive that the Lord Himself thinks upon us and delivers us! What desire this engenders to magnify the Lord in it and to rejoice in Him!

Eighthly, such proper use of providence yields to the soul a proper perspective and a quiet confidence in God concerning the future. The passionate lusts of the flesh are held in check, and the cross will not be feared. One will cease with the intense, immoderate, and sinful use of the means and surrender the matter in the Lord's hands. One will then be satisfied with the manner in which He performs it, knowing that it will be well. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5); "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7); "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me" (Psalms 138:8). Behold, such benefits may be derived from the providence of God. Therefore, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Psalms 107:43); "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them" (Hosea 14:9).

014. Chapter 12: The Covenant of Works

----- CHAPTER TWELVE ----- The Covenant of Works In the eighth chapter we have depicted Adam in his eminent, holy, and glorious nature. We shall now speak of him as being in covenant with God -- the covenant of works. Acquaintance with this covenant is of the greatest importance, for whoever errs here or denies the existence of the covenant of works, will not understand the covenant of grace, and will readily err concerning the mediatorship of the Lord Jesus. Such a person will very readily deny that Christ by His active obedience has merited a right to eternal life for the elect. This is to be observed with several parties who, because they err concerning the covenant of grace, also deny the covenant of works. Conversely, whoever denies the covenant of works, must rightly be suspected to be in error concerning the covenant of grace as well. The Covenant of Works Defined and its Existence Verified The covenant of works was an agreement between God and the human race as represented in Adam, in which God promised eternal salvation upon condition of obedience, and threatened eternal death upon disobedience. Adam accepted both this promise and this condition.

Question: Was such a covenant between God and the human race represented in Adam?

Answer: Our answer is an unequivocal "Yes!" In order to consider a matter in an orderly fashion, it is necessary first to determine whether the matter exists and then to consider its nature. In this situation, however, we need first to consider the nature of this covenant, since the truth of the existence of such a covenant must primarily be proven from its nature. In that way we must seek to arrive at a conclusion.

Proof #1: If God gave Adam a law which is identical in content to the ten commandments; promised him eternal life (the same which Christ merited for the elect in the covenant of grace); appointed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for him as a means whereby he would be tested and the tree of life to be a sacrament of life to him; and Adam, having accepted both the promise and the condition, thus bound himself to God -- then a covenant of works between God and Adam existed. Since all of this is true, it thus follows that such a covenant existed.

We shall first consider the one party and His engagement, and subsequently the other party and his engagement. The one party is God who, in this covenant, manifests Himself as follows:

(1) as being the foremost, eternal, supreme, and sovereign Lord, who has power over His creatures to prescribe, command, and promise as He pleases. He is the "one Lawgiver" (James 4:12).

(2) as being holy and righteous, not being able to be pleased with anything other than holiness in His rational creatures, and cannot allow unholiness to remain unpunished.

(3) as being infinitely good, having a desire to communicate His goodness to man. His participation in the covenant consists of the issuance of a law, the promise of felicity and the threat of damnation, and the appointment of a sacramental tree and a probationary tree. The Covenant

of Works and the Law of God The first matter to be proved is that God gave a law to Adam, this being such a law which in content is identical to the ten commandments. The law is given of God to be a regulative principle for man as far as his inner man and actions are concerned. It declares what is good and evil, and by virtue of its divine authority obligates man to obedience.

Man's rational intellect, be it ever so perfect and capable of a proper perception of the requirements of the law, is not a rule for good and evil. A matter is neither good nor evil merely because a proper perception determines it to be so. A proper perception does not obligate man to obedience; it is merely a means to know and acknowledge both the law and one's obligation. The divine law and its divine authority are the rule for good and evil, and obligate to obedience. As I previously remarked, God gave a law to man. It is only His prerogative to do so. Question: Are the laws which God issues the expression of His nature or of His free will? Answer: They proceed from His will in harmony with His nature. They do not arbitrarily proceed from the will of God, as if God were able to command that which is contrary to Himself: to hate God and our neighbor; or that wrath, envy, hatred, vengefulness, and other sins would be holy in nature -- God being able to promise eternal felicity upon the commission of sin. All of this would be contradictory to God's nature and thus also to His will. It would also be contradictory for Him to let a rational creature exist without a law. That God gave Adam a law is confirmed as follows: First, "... these (the heathen), having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts" (Romans 2:14-15). If men even after the fall have a law written in their hearts and are thus a law unto themselves, be it imperfectly and in obscurity, much more so would Adam in the state of rectitude have had a law. The reason for this conclusion is that the law of nature proceeds from the knowledge of God. Since Adam, after the fall, had a far superior and clearer knowledge of God than the heathen, he therefore also possessed the law in a far superior way. Knowledge of the law and conformity to it is a perfection of man's nature. He, who after the fall has the most knowledge of and is most conformable to the law, is superior to others. Since Adam was perfect, he consequently was superior in knowledge of and conformity to the law, and thus a law was given to him.

Secondly, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:3-4). The apostle concludes that there is a law which pertains to all men, this law having the inherent potential to justify a man which it finds to be perfect. He declares, however, that the law is weak, and that it is impossible for the law to justify, the reason being that through the flesh, that is, through sin, it has become weak. Wherever there is transgression of the law, it cannot acquit from transgression, for the law is truth. If the law has become weak, it implies that at one time it was strong. This however was never the case subsequent to the fall, and therefore was true prior to the fall, when sin was absent.

Thirdly, the nature of God as well as the nature of Adam requires that Adam have a law. By virtue of His nature God is the foremost and supreme Lord who is worthy to be honored and served. As soon as a creature appears upon the scene, He stands above that creature and the creature is subordinate to Him. This is also true for man as a rational creature, not merely because He has created man or has entered into a covenant with him or even because man has sinned, but more particularly due to God's nature, since He is Jehovah. Adam, being a creature, was of necessity

dependent upon His Maker in all things, for otherwise he would be God himself. One cannot view the nature of the creature as being anything but dependent.

If Adam is dependent upon God, this is not only true for his being, but also for his motions. This is not merely true in relation to the motions he has in common with the animals, but also relative to his rationality enabling him to function intelligently. If God by virtue of His nature is supreme and independent, worthy to be honored, served, and feared (“Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to Thee doth it appertain”) (Jeremiah 10:7), and since man is dependent in his nature, activities, and intellect, then man in his perfection had a rule by which his nature and activities had to be regulated, that is, a law. This law was embedded in Adam’s nature so that he did not have to search for it as one who was ignorant of his obligations, or be concerned that being weak he would be led astray by his lusts to do otherwise. Knowledge of and conformity to the law were embedded in his nature.

Objection #1. “The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient” (1 Timothy 1:9).

Answer: The law can be viewed as a desirable, obligatory rule, or as a tool of coercion to generate fear and terror in view of punishment. The righteous view the law as a desirable, obligatory rule, and acknowledge with joy that they are subject to it. They are free from terrifying coercion, for, “... perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18). The unrighteous, however, are subject to the terrifying coercion of the law, which demands punishment upon their deeds. *Oderunt peccare boni virtutis amore; oderunt peccare mali formidine poenae*; that is, the good, out of love to virtue, desire not to sin, but the evil refrain from sin out of fear for punishment.

Objection #2. Adam had a perfect love for God and thus there could not have been a law since he did everything spontaneously, voluntarily, and naturally.

Answer: (1) The law is love (Matthew 22:37-39). If Adam had perfect love, he necessarily had the perfect law.

(2) The law is liberty. “... the perfect law of liberty ...” (James 1:25). Being in a state of holy liberty, Adam was thus subject to the law of liberty.

(3) There is no contradiction between doing something naturally and doing it in harmony with a law. The heathen also by nature do those things contained in the law.

(4) Is not the violation of love a sin and unrighteousness? Therefore, the law is intrinsic in perfect love.

(5) In the state of perfect love, Adam was threatened with death; whenever there is a threat upon transgression, there is a law. It thus follows that Adam had a law. The question now presents itself, What law did Adam have? My response is that Adam, except for the prohibition pertaining to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, had, as far as content is concerned, the Law of the Ten Commandments.

First, Adam doubtlessly had the most perfect law. The most perfect law is the law of love, however, and that is the law of the ten commandments (cf. Matthew 22:37-39). Adam therefore was in possession of the law of the ten commandments.

Secondly, all agree that the law which is embedded in the nature of the heathen and is a remnant of that law which Adam had embedded in his nature, is identical to the law of the ten commandments. Thus, Adam's law is the law of the ten commandments.

Thirdly, this is confirmed in Romans 8:3, which has already been quoted. Paul speaks there of a law, referring to it as "the law" without any further description. Without a doubt "the law" is the law of the ten commandments. This law Adam possessed in full strength, which after the fall had become weak, as has been demonstrated. Adam was thus in possession of the law of the ten commandments.

Fourthly, there is but one holiness, for holiness is the image of God, which is singular in nature. The law is thus also singular in nature, for man's perfect conformity to the law of the ten commandments is holiness. Therefore, as far as content was concerned, Adam in his perfection had the ten commandments as his law. In addition to the law of nature God gave Adam a command which in His sovereignty He could or could not have given: the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the name of which we have referred to previously. This may readily suggest the question, Why did God give this commandment to Adam? Had God not given this commandment to him, he would not have sinned. My response is:

(1) That it does not necessarily follow that he then would not have sinned. Adam was holy, but mutable, and thus he could also have sinned in a different situation.

(2) God does not always give an account of His deeds. If anyone wishes to meditate somewhat upon this commandment, it will become evident that much is comprehended in this commandment. It declared that God alone was the Lord and thus entitled to command Adam as He pleased, and that Adam was thus required to obey blindly without asking why

(3) In it was also comprehended that man should desire nothing else but the will of God, and that everything should be defined as desirable or undesirable in relationship to God only.

(4) This commandment comprehends man's felicity consisting in the enjoyment of God Himself -- an enjoyment not to be found in anything outside of Him. Therefore, Adam had no need of what would seem to be most desirable, but could do without it.

(5) It also implies that man was to be satisfied with the present degree of perfection which God was pleased to confer at that moment. The question, Why did God give such a commandment? cannot be answered by man other than by saying, "It was God's sovereign good pleasure." We have thus observed that Adam had a law. The Covenant of Works and the Promise of Eternal Life. The second matter which must be proven is that Adam had the promise of eternal felicity. First, this is confirmed by contemporary heathen. As God has impressed upon the human heart that He exists, as well as the manner in which He wishes man to conduct himself, it has likewise been impressed upon the heathen that there is a reward for them that are good and punishment for those that commit evil. The diaries of seafaring men confirm this. When they came into heathen territory where Christians had never been, such heathen, by gesturing either upward or downward with their hands, would indicate that those who are good would go to heaven and those who are evil to hell. Paul testified that the conscience of the heathen either accuses or excuses them (Romans 2:15). If the heathen have knowledge of the fact that reward and punishment are related to their behavior as measured by the law impressed upon their hearts, how much more is this true

for Adam who had a perfect knowledge of the law and the promises of reward.

Secondly, in the foregoing we have shown that the law given to Adam was the law of the ten commandments. The law of the ten commandments has the promise of eternal life appended to it, as can be observed in Matthew 19:1-30. A young man asked, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Christ answered, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:16-17). This is also confirmed in the following texts: "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them" (Leviticus 18:5); "The commandment, which was ordained to life" (Romans 7:10); "... and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalms 19:11). Thus Adam had the promise of eternal life.

Thirdly, this is confirmed by the fact that Christ has merited eternal life for the elect by subjecting Himself to the law, satisfying it by bearing the punishment of the law and by perfect holiness in both nature and conduct. This is evident in Romans 8:4, where the apostle declared that by virtue of Christ's satisfaction "... the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us (the elect)." This is also stated in Galatians 4:4 : "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Notice that here reference is made to a law -- the same law Adam had. To this law the Lord Jesus subjected Himself, and in doing so He merited redemption and adoption of sons for the elect. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ... that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17). Thus, eternal glory necessarily follows upon obedience to the law. Consequently, Adam, having the same law, had the promise of eternal felicity.

Fourthly, the same life which is granted upon the receiving of Christ by faith is promised upon perfect obedience to the law. Since eternal life is granted to the elect upon faith in Christ, this is likewise true for perfect obedience to the law. The apostle confirms that the same promise applies to both matters. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart ... thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:5-6; Romans 10:9). "... The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them" (Galatians 3:11-12). Here is one and the same promise: life, eternal life. This is stated in Matthew 19:16-17 as explained above. Concerning faith it is stated in John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The apostle demonstrates that there are two ways by which this goal can be reached, one being the law, and the other faith. From this follows that Adam, having the law, had the promise of eternal life, which now is obtained by faith.

Fifthly, this is confirmed by the threat. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Death is threatened here without any limitation. Someone who insists that here death is limited to temporal death must prove that this is necessarily so. He will never succeed in doing so, as no trace of such evidence is to be found. Moreover, it is common knowledge that

(1) death refers to eternal damnation as well as to temporal death. "To the one we are the saviour of death unto death" (2 Corinthians 2:16); "There is a sin unto death" (1 John 5:16); "On such the second death hath no power" (Revelation 20:6);

(2) the death threatened was a punishment upon sin. The punishment upon sin is not only temporal, however, but also eternal death, which is placed in contradistinction to eternal life. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23); "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46);

(3) the apostle states expressly that by eating from the forbidden tree condemnation has come upon all men: "The judgment was by one to condemnation ... by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans 5:16; Romans 5:18). No one can deny that this offense was the eating from the forbidden tree. Upon this eating, however, condemnation would follow, and thus condemnation was threatened by the word "death." Let us reverse this argument. If upon transgression Adam was threatened with eternal condemnation, then, by applying the rule of opposites, eternal life was promised upon obedience. This threat of death contained in it the promise of life if he did not sin. This reason is all the more credible, for who is able and would dare to think that a good God would threaten eternal punishment upon disobedience and not at the same time promise eternal felicity upon obedience? Who would dare to think that His judgments are incomprehensibly greater than His goodness? The Covenant of Works and the Tree of Life

Sixthly, this is also confirmed by the tree of life. Here two trees are contrasted with each other. Since the one symbolizes eternal death, why would the other one not symbolize eternal life? The name also indicates this, for it is expressly called the tree of life. What else can be deduced from this than that it was a sacrament, that is, a sign and seal of life? There is not the least indication that the meaning here is limited to corporal life, and thus we may not do so either. Moreover, if Adam lost corporal life, he at once also lost the spiritual life which he possessed. Therefore, by the word life we must understand both the corporal and spiritual life which he then possessed, as well as eternal felicity which generally is comprehended in the word "life," even though the word "eternal" is not added to it. "If thou wilt enter into life ..." (Matthew 19:17); "Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life" (Matthew 7:14). This is stated in many other texts as well. For this reason, after Adam had lost this life, the Lord no longer wanted him to be a partaker of this seal of eternal life. By means of an angel the Lord expelled him from Paradise, "... lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (Genesis 3:22). When he had sinned by eating from the one tree, which he had no right to do, God was not willing that he should also eat from the other tree. Would he have lived eternally if he nevertheless would have been able to gain access to this tree and have eaten from it? Most certainly not, for there was no inherent power in this tree to restore the spiritual life and communion with God which had been lost. Adam certainly knew this. What could corporal life have benefited him without spiritual life? Neither was there any inherent power in the tree to nullify and rescind God's threat, "Thou shalt surely die." Even if he were able to preserve his corporal life, Adam knew very well that he would not be able to do so. Why then did God say, "... and live forever"? My response is that this is a rebuking and reprimanding manner of speech, as is evident in that same verse, "Behold, the man is become as one of us" (Genesis 3:22). It is as if God said, "Behold the man, who thought that by eating of the forbidden tree he could become as one of us. Behold, how he now resembles us!" God said as it were, "How he has been deceived in his objective, for instead of becoming like one of us, he has become unlike us." This is also the manner of speech in the phrase, "and live forever," meaning, "for he would again be deceived in his objective and opinion, if he were to think that by eating of

this tree he would live forever.” “And live forever” therefore refers to that which he would imagine, as if after having sinned this tree would continue to be a sacrament of life. God did not want him to abuse the sacrament since he had forfeited the matter itself, that is, eternal life. It was the Lord’s will that he would now turn away from the broken covenant of works, and, being lost in himself, would put all his hope in the seed of the woman, which was promised to him immediately after the fall.

Adam’s Acceptance of the Conditions and Promises of the Covenant of Works

We have thus observed the activity of the one party: God giving the law to Adam, which in content was identical to the ten commandments, promising him that same eternal felicity which Christ has merited for the elect and grants unto them upon faith. We have observed that God gave the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a sign of a probationary nature, and the tree of life as a sign of a sealing nature. Thus all the required conditions have been shown as far as the one side of the covenant is concerned. We must now in addition bring into view the other party and his engagement, this being a prerequisite for a covenant transaction. The other party is the human race in Adam who was adorned with the image of God, consisting of a flawless knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. He therefore certainly knew both condition and promise, and was capable of fulfilling the condition. Since nothing is written concerning this, the question is, “Did he acquiesce in this covenant?” My response is that even though it is not expressly stated in Scripture, it can nevertheless be clearly deduced from it.

It is evident that Adam accepted the condition and the promise. First of all, it occurs in Scripture that the promise of the covenant is mentioned relative to one of the parties, even though the reference is to the entire covenant. For Genesis 3:15 states, “It (the Seed of the woman, Christ) shall bruise thy (the serpent’s) head.” It is certainly known that the covenant of grace was established here, and yet there is not one word mentioning Adam and Eve’s acceptance of this covenant. Since all the conditions of a covenant are mentioned as far as the one party is concerned, this necessarily implies the acquiescence of the other party.

Secondly, Adam was perfect and therefore, since God could rightfully command, and Adam, due to his perfect obedience could not refuse, he could not do otherwise than accept this condition and promise. Could a rational creature, having a perfect knowledge of communion with God in a lesser degree, be anything but in love with and desirous for a higher degree of this most blessed communion? He could not do any differently -- unless he were dehumanized through loss of intellect and love for his own well-being. Therefore, when such matters were promised to him, he could not but delight in, desire, and embrace them with all his heart -- matters which, as we have just observed, were indeed promised to him. This is likewise true for the condition, for this was not only the way leading to felicity, but was his present felicity itself. This consisted in a perfect love for a most amiable God and subjection to a sovereign Lord who was worthy of obedience. This Adam possessed and this was his love, joy, and delight. Since he could not but accept the promise for the reason just mentioned, he also could not but accept the condition, since the promise and the condition did not differ in essence but merely in degree.

Thirdly, this is also evident from the conduct of all men. Human nature teaches us to speak as follows: I approve of the law as holy, just, and good. I approve of it; I conclude that I am obligated toward it, and acquiesce in this obligation, and deem this to be my duty. I willingly obligate myself

to it, embracing the promise that upon obedience I shall receive heaven. Thus in seeing that natural man after the fall as yet acquiesces in both the promise and the condition, therefore much more could man in his perfection not do otherwise than accept both condition and promise.

Fourthly, the fact that Adam and Eve accepted the promise and condition is also evident in their refraining from and refusal to eat from the forbidden tree, the Lord having forbidden them to do so. When there is obedience in response to a prohibition and a refusal to transgress, there is an acceptance of promise and condition. Such is the case here, as is evident from the history in Genesis 3:1-24. Consequently Adam and Eve accepted the condition and promise, and it therefore follows that there was a genuine covenant between God and man.

We may thus draw the conclusion which we have sought for and found. Whenever there is a law as a condition, promises related to the fulfillment of that condition, signs of a probationary as well as a sealing nature, namely, the acceptance of both condition and promise, there is then a covenant. All of this is true here, and thus there was a covenant between God and Adam. We make no mention here of Paradise nor the Sabbath, since we do not acknowledge either of these, nor the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to be sacraments.

Additional Proof to Verify the Validity of the Covenant of Works

Proof #2: Having established the former, the following proof is that much more clear. We base our proof on Hosea 6:7, "But they like men [Note: The Statenvertaling reads as follows, "Zij hebben het verbond overtreden, als Adam," that is, "They have transgressed the covenant as Adam." The argumentation which follows focuses on the fact that in à Brakel's opinion the English translation "as men" is incorrect, and should have been translated as "as Adam."] have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me." Here mention is made of a covenant -- a covenant with Adam -- and the breaking of a covenant. Two difficulties must be removed here: whether the word "Adam" ought to be translated as "man" here, the reference not being to Adam but rather to other men, and whether the word Berith should not be translated as "law"; so that there is no reference to a covenant here at all. My response to the first difficulty is as follows: Since the word "Adam" can be and frequently is translated as "man," it does not therefore follow that it must be translated in such a manner here. Whoever insists on this must prove it, and this he will not be able to do. We maintain that in this text the word "Adam" is the proper name of the first man. Our reasons for this are as follows:

(1) If one were to translate it with the word "man," it would take away the emphasis of this text, for the words "as Adam" are added here to maximize rather than minimize the crime. What force of emphasis, yes, what purpose would there be to state that they had broken the covenant like other men who also are but members of the covenant. In order for them to transgress a covenant, they of necessity must be in the covenant; that is, they would have to transgress the covenant as they or their fellow members of the covenant did. This certainly makes no sense, and therefore Adam here refers to the first man.

(2) Frequently in the first book of Moses, and in Deuteronomy 32:8 and 1 Chronicles 1:1, the Holy Scriptures use the word "Adam" as the proper name of the first man, and we find this coalescence especially in Job 31:33. "If I covered my transgressions (ke Adam) as Adam ..." This is an express reference to Adam's covering up his crime, and since the reference is to the first man, the proper

name Adam must be used here. Since the reference in Hosea 6:7 is to a sin which Adam had committed, that is, a sin of a similar nature, why then not translate ke Adam as “Adam”?

(3) The original text also does not present any reason to prevent us from using the proper name. No? (emphaticum, a symbol for emphasis) may be placed next to a proper name. If, however, this word means “man” it is frequently accompanied by an. An? is not used here, which would be most appropriate if the reference were to other men, whereas the word “Adam” is used with great emphasis here.

(4) The matter in question is true in regard to Adam. He was involved in a covenant as we have observed above. He has broken the covenant, and therefore we must maintain that the reference is to Adam as long as necessity does not compel us to conclude otherwise.

(5) It fits the context very well. It is God's intent to demonstrate the magnitude of the sin of Judah and Ephraim by identifying the origin as well as the example for this sin. This sin was not only evil in and of itself, but it also had an evil origin, which made it all the more evil. This also amplified David's sin, as is recorded in Psalms 51:1-19. This breach of covenant was a sin proceeding from the original covenant breach in Adam, and therefore all the more abominable. Having been abundantly blessed both corporeally and spiritually, Adam lightly, recklessly, and faithlessly broke the covenant. They, whom God had blessed so abundantly in body but also in soul by granting His Word and all the means of grace, followed in the similitude of Adam's transgression by treacherously breaking God's covenant. Thus, the words “as Adam” cause us to focus upon the first covenant breach of Adam, which is referred to here in order to amplify the sin of Judah and Ephraim. The second argument, namely, that Berith can be translated as “law” is also invalid, for we cannot logically conclude the actual meaning of a word from a possible meaning. Apart from this, however, I deny that the word Berith means “law.” Until this moment I have not encountered any example of this, although I do admit that it is called a covenant, viewing the law as a rule of the covenant. To my knowledge, however, this word never means “law.” This therefore confirms that the reference here is to covenant -- a covenant which has been transgressed as Adam transgressed the covenant. Hence there was a covenant between God and Adam.

Exhortation to Reflect upon the Covenant of Works

Meditate frequently upon this covenant, in order that you may perceive to what a blessed state God had appointed the human race -- and thus also you as far as your original state was concerned. How perfect, fitting, and even desirable are its conditions! How glorious are the promises, and how glorious it is to be in covenant with the allglorious and infinitely good God! The dimensions of this are infinite. Then proceed to the breach of the covenant and the needless, reckless, and wanton nature of the same. What an abominable deed it was! From this perspective proceed to the righteousness of God and let the punishment and rejection of such covenant breakers meet with your approval. When considering the glory of this covenant, seek to amplify your actual and original sins. This beautiful covenant has now been broken, and an unconverted person who as yet has not been translated into the covenant of grace is still in the actual covenant of works. Therefore, as often as he sins, he breaks the covenant by renewal, remains subject to its curse, and increases it time and again. Therefore look away from the covenant of works. It has been broken and salvation is no longer obtainable by it. This exhortation is necessary since even God's children are often inclined to dwell upon their works, and accordingly, are either encouraged

or discouraged. The unconverted are always desirous to perform something, being of the opinion that all can be made well with prayer and reformation; however, in this way they shall be deceived. Let the covenant of grace be precious to you. Turn to the Mediator of this better covenant. Enter into this covenant, give heed to it, and consider the first man to be dead.

015. Chapter 13: The Breach of the Covenant of Works

----- CHAPTER THIRTEEN ----- The Breach of the Covenant of Works The fact that Adam sinned and thus broke the covenant of works needs no other proof than the sinful condition of all men as well as the Scriptures, which bear witness to this fact everywhere. The Time of Adam's Fall

However, the question arises, when did Adam fall? Man, having been created so magnificently, and being in such a blessed covenant with His God, in all probability did not remain long in this holy and blessed state. The duration of this state is not recorded and is thus unknown. That he did not fall immediately on the day of his creation is evident for the following reasons:

First, the seventh day is added to the sixth in the same manner as the previous days are joined together. There is no mention of any interval, or of the fall of either devils or man. The imposed chapter divisions have no bearing on this matter at all, for the chapter divisions did not originate with the holy writers themselves, but were established by others as a memory aid and for instructional purposes.

Secondly, the fall is recorded as having occurred after the seventh day. The first seven days and what occurred on those days, are described in chronological order in Genesis 1:1-31; Genesis 2:1-25, whereas the fall is recorded subsequent to this in Genesis 3:1-24.

Thirdly, upon conclusion of the sixth day, everything was still very good. "And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day" (Genesis 1:31).

Fourthly, when God saw man's sinfulness, "it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart" (Genesis 6:6). However, on the seventh day the Lord rested; that is, He ceased creating new creatures. He observed all His work with delight, rejoicing in His own works, and humanly speaking, was refreshed by this. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:17). This proves that man neither fell prior to nor upon the seventh day.

Fifthly, it is also not conceivable that man, who had just opened his eyes upon this world, would immediately have fallen, and thus not have had time to delight himself in God, rejoice in his holy and glorious state, and magnify God concerning all this. He then would neither have had time to be experientially acquainted with his blessed state, nor have been able to reflect upon it after the fall. From this it may be deduced that God allotted him some time to experience that which is good, and that man did not fall until after the seventh day. It is unknown, however, after how many days, weeks, or months it did occur.

Satan's Role in the Fall

After a large number of angels had sinned and become devils, the devil conspired to cause Adam and Eve to fall in order to prevent them from glorifying God, whom he hated with a dreadful hatred

as He had rejected the devils and eternally excluded them from grace. The devil first attacked Eve when she was alone, probably standing near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There he deceived her, and she, having been deceived although not yet conscious of it, also deceived her husband Adam. He was not deceived due to love for his wife, but rather due to her deception, and only then the eyes of both of them were opened (Genesis 3:7). The devil was thus the suggestive cause of the fall, and for this reason is called “a murderer from the beginning” and “a liar” (John 8:44). For this purpose the devil used a serpent, judging it to be a suitable instrument for him. He spoke to Eve through the serpent. He was neither invisible when he spoke, nor did he simulate a speaking voice. He did not communicate personally with the soul of Eve, but spoke through the serpent, of which he had taken possession. One should neither view this matter as being a metaphor, nor as a parable or an illusion. Neither did the devil appear as an apparition in the similitude of a serpent, but this is genuine history -- an event which has truly occurred. Both the devil and the serpent were actively involved in this matter. It was a serpent in the true sense of the word, that is, a genuine animal. This is evident:

(1) From the history itself. “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field ... And he said unto the woman ...” (Genesis 3:1);

(2) Also from verse 14 where the following is stated concerning the serpent, “Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle.” It cannot be contradicted that the serpent was an irrational creature, and thus incapable of making intelligible and intelligent speech. It is therefore certain that a rational creature spoke through the serpent, and that this intelligent creature was evil and sinful. Hence it could not have been anyone else but the devil, who for this reason is frequently called “serpent,” “dragon,” or “that old serpent” in Scripture. “... the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan” (Revelation 20:2). It was he who deceived Eve: “... as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty” (2 Corinthians 11:3). It is his head which was bruised by Christ, “that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).

Since Moses is very brief in recounting the events of the first world, the method of deceit is not recorded. Therefore all conjecture in this case is but idle speculation, such as whether the devil spoke only once or on several occasions with Eve; whether he dealt with Eve in an entirely different manner; whether he came as a messenger of God, declaring that the time of probation had been concluded, and therefore they were now permitted to eat; whether he came as friend and teacher to counsel and convey to her what benefit could be derived from eating from this tree; or whether he came as an enemy of God, wishing to deprive her of that which would make her happy and equal to Him. These are all conjectures. It is also possible that he produced other pretexts or deceptive rationale. I would rather be silent about these and similar matters than to mislead you with what only appears to be rational. Whatever the wisest and greatest teacher has not been pleased to reveal to us, we should not be desirous to know. This is a safe practice by which one will avoid many temptations.

I am convinced that Eve knew very well that animals, also the serpent, have neither a rational intellect nor are capable of speech. Though she was ignorant of the fall of the angels, she could have deduced that this occurrence was of an extraordinary nature. I am also convinced that Eve was permitted to desire a higher level of knowledge and communion with God, this having been

promised to her in the covenant of works. She was also permitted to aspire after increased knowledge concerning the realm of nature, which she could gain in the way of experience, just as the manifold wisdom of God might be known to the angels by the church (Ephesians 3:10).

I am also convinced that she did not ignorantly eat from this tree, but knew very well that she was neither permitted to eat from it nor touch it. Being desirous to increase in understanding, Eve was seduced to eat from this tree. She was not coerced but did so of her own free will. Eve was not immediately conscious of this deceit, but became aware of this only after she had deceived Adam. Furthermore, Adam was neither the first to be deceived nor was he deceived by the serpent, but as the apostle states in 1 Timothy 2:14, by a deceived Eve -- and thus subsequent to her. I am convinced that had Adam remained standing, Eve would have borne the punishment alone. Since Adam also sinned, however, the entire human nature, the entire human race, became guilty, as Paul said, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world ..." (Romans 5:12). He does not merely refer to Eve's sin, but to the sin of the entire human race, which is fully and entirely comprehended in Adam and Eve who were one by virtue of their marriage. Rather, he specifically refers to the sin of Adam who was the first man, the first and only source, both of Eve and the entire human race. The eating from this tree was not a minor sin, even though the eating of the fruit itself was a small matter. Rather, it was a dreadful crime in which the breaking of the entire law was comprehended. It was a breach of love, obedience, and the covenant, resulting in the perdition of himself and all his descendants. This sin is aggravated by the fact that,

(1) it was committed against God Himself whom they knew in His majesty and His glory, and who in His manifold goodness had united them to Himself;

(2) it was committed by a holy person who had the necessary ability to refrain from doing so, and to resist all temptation;

(3) to refrain from eating from this one tree was but an insignificant and easy requirement, since they had everything in abundance in this beautiful garden;

(4) the felicity or condemnation of himself and his descendants hinged upon it. Therefore, in Romans 5:1-21 this eating is correctly denominated, "sin" (Romans 5:12), "transgression" (Romans 5:14), "offence" (Romans 5:15), and "disobedience" (Romans 5:19).

Unbelief Identified as Man's Initial Sin When we consider this sin and its commission comprehensively, it is evidently a fusion of all sins. This is not merely so because whoever transgresses in one commandment is guilty of all -- every sin being an act of apostasy towards the lawgiver and a transgression of the law -- but also because many specific sins are combined in this sin. If someone were to ask, "Which was the first sin?", I respond that a particular sin may not have been first chronologically, but first in order of importance. Also, before the external deed manifested itself, a fusion of various sins had already occurred. Thus the initial sin is neither to be found in the external act, in the emotions, affections, and inclinations, nor in the will. In a perfect nature will and emotions are subject to the intellect, as they do not precede the intellect in their function but are a consequence of the same. The initial sin must be sought in the intellect, which by deceptive reasoning was prompted to conclude that they would not die and that there was an inherent power in that tree to make them wise, a wisdom which they were permitted to desire without being guilty of sin. This tree bore the name of knowledge, which was desirable to them. It

also bore the name good and evil, even though it was hidden from them as to what was comprehended in the word evil. The serpent makes use of this name as if great matters were concealed in these words. As the intellect focused on both the desirability of becoming wise, as well as the tree by which either as a means or as a cause this wisdom could be transmitted to them, the intense and lively awareness of the prohibition not to eat and the threat of death tended to diminish. The faculty of judgment, suggesting that it would be desirable to eat from this tree, aroused the inclination to acquire wisdom in this manner. Added to this was the fact that "... the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes" (Genesis 3:6). The deception of the intellect was not in consequence of the nature of the tree and its fruit, but due to the words of the serpent and the words of the woman to Adam. Thus, the issue at hand -- namely, not to die, but to gain in wisdom by eating of this tree -- was confirmed by faith, this being the act whereby one holds the words of someone else for truth. Therefore the first sin was faith in the serpent, believing that they would not die but instead gain wisdom. This act implied a disbelieving of God who had threatened death upon eating from this tree. Thus Eve by virtue of unbelief became disobedient, reached out, and ate. In doing so she believed the serpent and was thus deceived and beguiled, this sin being denominated as such in 1 Timothy 2:14 and 2 Corinthians 11:3. In like manner she beguiled Adam. Therefore, the first sin was not pride, that is, to be equal with God, also not rebellion, disobedience, or an unwarranted appetite, but unbelief.

Adam's Fall not due to Imperfection in His Nature

Question: How was it possible that a perfect person, who was entirely free from the principle of sin, could fall into sin?

Answer: Tell me first of all how it was possible that the angels, who had a higher degree of perfection, could have sinned? If you respond by saying that you know they have sinned, but not how they sinned, you have already answered your own question concerning Adam. The fact that Adam sinned is a certainty. That he was free from the least innate inclination towards sin is also certain, for 1) if that were not true, God would be designated as the author of sin; 2) such an innate inclination towards sin is inconsistent with being created perfectly and in the image of God; and 3) such an inclination is contrary to the tenth commandment.

Secondly, God created man as a rational creature, gifting him with intellect and a free will, thus enabling him to govern his actions and refrain from yielding to external temptations and guile. Instead, man permitted himself to be deceived in the manner stated earlier. Since we are now subject to it, let us be more concerned how we may be delivered from sin rather than how we became involved in it. The fact that God from eternity foreknew the fall, decreeing that He would permit it to occur, is not only confirmed by the doctrines of His omniscience and decrees (chapter 5), but also by the fact that God from eternity has ordained a Redeemer for man, to deliver him from sin: the Lord Jesus Christ whom Peter calls the Lamb, "who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20).

Question: Did Adam in sinning act independently from God, and did the fall therefore occur apart from the providence of God?

Answer: My answer is an emphatic "No." We have dealt comprehensively with this matter in chapter 11. There we have shown that no creature can be independent from God, neither in its

existence nor in its actions. We also confirmed that the cooperation of God controls man and activates him relative to each specific deed, while supporting and sustaining him in this. Thus God, as far as natural motion is concerned, energizes man's intellect, will, and activities in a manner agreeable with his human nature, causing him to act by his free will. This will, though sustained, controlled, and governed by virtue of God's cooperation, is itself the initiator and cause of his deeds. In sinning, man abuses all this, by not engaging himself in conformity to the law appointed him. Such was the case with Adam. God had given him sufficient strength to resist all temptation, but God did not prevent him from sinning. He could have done the latter, but was not obligated to do so. God did not withdraw this given strength from Adam, but permitted man to be active in the exercise of his freewill. Consequently the blame is man's and not God's. He who wishes to penetrate this matter with his puny, darkened understanding, summoning God before the bar of his intellect and judgment, to declare Him guilty and man innocent (which in all probability such a person would desire to do), attributing to man an innate inclination towards sin, or declaring him independent from God -- such a person shall be rewarded for such audacity with great darkness and will fall victim to foolish and sinful notions about God. Therefore, I wish to advise you to acquiesce in what we have stated and to consider that the Lord's thoughts and ways are not as ours. God's ways are holy whether we understand them or not. The Covenant of Works and its Obligations After the Fall By sinning, man has broken that glorious covenant and has forfeited the promise. It is therefore now impossible for the law to justify him and to grant him the right to, and possession of, eternal life, "in that it was weak through the flesh ..." (Romans 8:3).

Nevertheless this covenant remains in full force, obligating the entire human race (that is, all who have not been translated into the covenant of grace) to obedience and subjecting men to punishment, since the fulfillment of the promise continues to be contingent upon obedience. "This do, and thou shalt live." Although man cannot obtain the promise since he does not fulfil the condition, the promise nevertheless remains part and parcel of this covenant.

First, this is evident by the fact that God by His very character obligates man to obedience, also that the creature is naturally obligated to obey, even if there were no covenant. God, however, created man in the covenant relationship, having embedded the knowledge and approbation of this covenant in his nature so that from the very first moment of his existence he never was outside of this covenant. Therefore the human nature remains under the original obligation towards this covenant.

Secondly, also among men, covenants remain in force even after the first transgression. A succession of kings and authorities will not merely recall the initial transgression of a covenant by others, but will also bring out how frequently the existing covenant has been transgressed. A woman, having committed adultery, remains in covenant with her husband and is not released from it. As often as she involves herself with someone else after the first commission of sin, so often she commits adultery and each time again breaks the covenant. This clearly proves that transgression of a covenant does not release the transgressor from the covenant relationship. Thus also the covenant of works remained in force after the transgression.

Thirdly, it is naturally understood by all men, and Scripture teaches likewise, that the law, the promise, the threatenings, and the acceptance of the covenant remain in force; therefore the covenant of works also remains in force. Every man knows that there is a God and is conscious of

the law written in his heart. He judges this law to be good and concurs with his obligation to be obedient to it. He acknowledges that he shall be rewarded if he obeys and be punished if he disobeys, which is confirmed in Romans 2:14-15 and Romans 1:32. Since such a conditional law is in force, a covenant also is and remains in force. The sinner therefore continues to be obligated to this covenant, since he is a debtor to the entire law (Galatians 5:3). "The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth" (Romans 7:1). Therefore, as often as he transgresses the law, so often he transgresses the covenant.

However, when God permits man to exit this covenant of works and enter into the covenant of grace, he is no longer under obligation to that covenant. "For ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). "For if the (first) husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband" (Romans 7:2). To the believer the law is no longer a condition of the covenant of works, but a most desirable rule of life. Thus, when he sins, he no longer breaks the covenant of works, as he is no longer obligated toward it. Rather, he sins against this most desirable rule of life which has been given to him in the covenant of grace. Such sin is not committed by the new man within, but by the flesh which remains in him. And although these sins themselves are worthy of punishment, believers shall not be subjected to punishment since the Surety has taken their sins upon Himself and has fully paid their debt.

One might think that since at the very first sin the promises were cancelled and the punishment was meted out, the covenant of works can therefore no longer be in force. Our reply is as follows:

(1) Both promises and threatenings are inherent in the covenant, and it continues to retain them. Therefore, the covenant remains in force, since in reality the promises and the threatenings already constituted the covenant.

(2) Neither the promises nor the threatenings, considered independently, constitute the essential nature of the covenant, but rather the interdependent relationship of the covenant. And since this remains in force, the covenant remains in force.

(3) There are also degrees as far as reward and punishment are concerned. This already having been conceded, the covenant can remain in force.

(4) Man continues to be under obligation to delight himself in God, to believe in Him, to view Him as his highest good, and to seek Him in the way of obedience. No one wishing to be called a Christian would dare to deny this. Therefore, the covenant which obligates man to all this also remains in force. The Misery of Man due to his Breach of Covenant

Numerous sinful and painful miseries have resulted from Adam and Eve's breaking of this covenant. First, man was immediately deprived of the image of God, the reformation of which begins in regeneration (Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24). These texts confirm that this image was lost, which immediately manifested itself by the consciousness of shame.

Secondly, there was consciousness of shame. Due to the shame of their bodily nakedness, they did not dare to come nakedly into the presence of God (Genesis 3:7; Genesis 3:10). They were also ashamed of themselves and in each others presence. This is not indicative of impure lusts in these married persons, but their consciences made them aware that their members were too shameful to be seen. They therefore attempted to conceal them, finding no better and more

appropriate means than the leaves of fig trees. These leaves probably were not as small as here and in Spain, but lengthwise reached from a man's chin to his knees. Similar size leaves still grow today in Ceylon. These they attached to each other as best as they could, and girded themselves with them.

Thirdly, added to this was a terrified conscience. The Lord revealed Himself in the cool [Note: In Dutch: "de wind des daags," that is, the breeze of the day.] of the day which arose at sunrise to moderate the heat -- which especially occurs in many countries where it is hot. It is possible that at that time the Lord normally revealed Himself to Adam in a special manner, something with which he already was experientially acquainted. It is also possible that something extraordinary occurred, whereby Adam became aware of the Lord's arrival. At any rate, Adam and Eve were now conscious of having committed sin; hence they also feared the punishment of sin. The presence of God, which previously rendered them such joy, now caused them to fear, so that they fled, hiding themselves among the nearest trees (Genesis 3:8).

Fourthly, Adam manifested a sinful self-love by seeking to excuse himself, as well as his lovelessness by accusing his wife, Eve (Genesis 3:12). Job spoke of this. "If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom" (Job 31:33). Eve also excused herself by stating that she had merely been deceived, blaming the serpent.

Fifthly, this was followed by 1) the sentencing of the serpent, which had been misused. "Thou art cursed above all cattle," etc. (Genesis 3:15), and 2) the sentencing of Satan who was the cause of the temptation: the seed of the woman "shall bruise thy head" (Genesis 3:15). This was accomplished by Christ (Hebrews 2:14).

Sixthly, after the Lord had announced the covenant of grace to Adam and Eve by testifying of the seed of the woman (rather than of the man) -- which is Christ, who would come to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8), who is "the fruit of (Mary's) womb" (Luke 1:42) and who was "... made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4) -- it was the Lord's will that man would always remain conscious of sin. Thus He announced to him the chastisement of miseries which would remain upon him and which for the unconverted would be punishment resulting in death.

(1) The special plagues with which particularly the female sex would be afflicted are: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16).

(2) The special punishments which God imposed upon the male sex are as follows: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Genesis 3:17-19).

(3) The common punishment to which both the man and the woman would be subject was death. "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).

One might think: Not one word is mentioned here of eternal damnation; it appears that this was neither threatened nor merited. I reply: first, in the above we have shown that eternal damnation was threatened upon sin. We will subsequently show how it has been merited by all sins, and that upon death it shall be the portion of the unconverted. Secondly, the reason eternal damnation is

not mentioned here is because the covenant of grace by virtue of the seed of the woman, which is Christ, was announced to Adam and Eve (vs. 15) prior to the announcements of the sorrows to which they would be subject (vss. 16-19). Adam and Eve therefore had already been delivered from condemnation, and the sorrows imposed upon them were as chastisements.

Objection: There is no proof that Adam and Eve were saved by Christ. The very opposite appears to be true in Hebrews 11:4, where Abel is presented as the first believer, as well as in Matthew 23:35 where he is presented as the first righteous man.

Answer: First, Abel is indeed mentioned in these texts, but not as the first righteous man, neither as the first believer. Thus, Adam is no more excluded there than when Abraham is called the father of the faithful -- as if that were to exclude all believers before him. Secondly, in these texts Abel is placed in contrast to the ungodly, since there is reference to the superiority of his sacrifice over Cain's and he was the first martyr. Thirdly, that Adam believed in the promised seed is proven

(1) by virtue of the established covenant which could not exist without there being a partaker of this covenant. If Adam had not been a partaker of this covenant, it would have been without a partaker until Abel and Seth, who was born 130 years after Adam's creation. When God established a covenant with Abraham, he was himself included. Would God establish the covenant of grace, referring to the seed of the woman which would bruise the head of the serpent, and not include Adam and Eve in this covenant? Would this covenant then not be efficacious for so many years in the absence of partakers of this covenant? Would God have made announcement to Adam and Eve concerning the covenant of grace, and then have excluded them from it?

(2) It is evident from the enmity between man and the serpent, for wherever there is enmity with the devil there is peace with God.

(3) Eve immediately focused upon the promise after she bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man from the Lord" (Genesis 4:1).

(4) Add to this the godly upbringing and faithful instruction of Adam's children, which was the means whereby Abel received faith. The Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace

Having established the covenant of grace with Adam and Eve, and having imposed upon them as chastisements the various trials and tribulations of this life as well as temporal death, the Lord clothed them with better garments than those made of fig leaves, namely, coats of skins. Prior to the fall Adam killed no animals. Not meat, but herbbearing seed and the fruit of a tree yielding seed was given to him for meat. I cannot tell you where these skins came from. We do not read that they came from sacrificed animals, and it is of no profit to know this. It was God who made coats of skins for them, clothing them in order to cover and warm them. In doing so, however, He sharply rebuked them concerning the breach of the covenant of works and their objective in transgressing it, by saying, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Genesis 3:22).

Whereas the covenant of works had been broken and rendered impotent so that felicity was no longer to be obtained by it, and the covenant of grace had replaced this covenant for believers, God did not want Adam to yearn for the covenant of works or its sacrament, the tree of life, as this covenant was no longer efficacious. Rather, the Lord wanted them to turn from this covenant,

putting all their hope and seeking all their comfort in the promised seed of the woman. "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life ... lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (Genesis 3:23-24;Genesis 3:22).

We have already shown that there was no efficacy in the tree of life to preserve life eternally. It no longer served a function as a sacrament of the covenant of works since the promise no longer could be obtained by way of this broken covenant. Why then was the way to the tree of life barred so that Adam would not approach it to eat of it? It is possible that the devil had given Eve a wrong impression concerning this tree of life, or that afterwards the devil might convince man that if he were to eat of the tree of life, he would not die -- doing all of this to draw man away from the covenant of grace and to direct him by renewal to the covenant of works as the way in which felicity was to be sought. It is also possible that Adam himself would have such inclinations by having a wrong objective and impression in view. From this God wished to keep him and therefore not only forbade him to eat of this tree, but also prevented him from coming to this tree.

Thus the covenant of works has been broken and it would be to the advantage of God's children to look away from this covenant. How much yearning there still is for the covenant of works! This becomes evident both in the manifestation of unbelief when falling into sin -- as if sin would nullify all the promises and as if one must find something within himself before coming to Christ -- and by secretly resting in our own works, being more encouraged when things go reasonably well. Therefore one must make Christ in the covenant of grace the foundation for all rest and comfort and seek holiness from Him as a principal element of salvation.

016. Chapter 14: Original and Actual Sin

----- CHAPTER FOURTEEN ----- Original and Actual Sin

Sin Defined

Having broken the covenant, Adam did not only become sinful himself, but also all his descendants with him. We understand the word “sin” here to refer neither to the punishment of sin nor to the sacrifice for sin (even though these are occasionally denominated as sin), but to that which both in essence and in deed is contrary to God’s good pleasure. Scripture refers to this as: revolt, iniquity, wickedness, disobedience, unrighteousness, transgression, treachery, rebellion, etc. Each particular sin has its own particular name.

Sin is not something that has essence and exists independently. Whatever has essence has been created by God and as such is good. Furthermore, the essence of man’s personhood was not changed due to sin. Sin, however, has polluted and corrupted the essential, moral character of the faculties of the soul. The essential nature of sin also does not consist of the voluntary and immediate acquiescence of the will, as if sin were absent as long as there is no immediate acquiescence of the will -- an idea which has been construed to deny original sin:

(1) Lot was guilty of incest, and Paul blasphemed Christ and persecuted the congregations. They, however, did so without their wills acquiescing in the commission of incest and blasphemy, since they did it ignorantly.

(2) The sin of covetousness (Romans 7:7), prohibited in the tenth commandment, is already present in the soul prior to the will’s acquiescence.

(3) In fact, all sins which are committed ignorantly (which are many) are committed without the will’s acquiescence, for the will in the act of acquiescence responds to the application of man’s judgment. In tracing back this voluntary acquiescence to its origin, however, we conclude that man’s nature and will are not opposed to sin, but rather are favorably disposed towards it. This is already true from the very first moment of man’s existence, as yet having neither acquaintance with sin nor any real inclinations towards the same. The essence of sin also does not consist in guilt, that is, to be worthy of punishment, for guilt is a consequence of sin and as such can be removed, while sin remains. This occurs by virtue of the atonement of Christ for the sins of believers.

Sin also does not merely consist of actions, but is also inclusive of the propensity toward sin and a deviant disposition; that is, not having the faculties which ought to be present but instead having a disposition which ought not to be there. The essence of sin consists in anomia -- lawlessness, unruliness, and unrighteousness, “... sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). In relation to this a distinction must be made between man’s sinful nature and his sinful acts relative to the law. In this respect a distinction is made between inherited and actual sin. Inherited sin is that sin which, by way of inheritance, has been transmitted from Adam to his descendants, having come

forth from him by natural generation. Christ is the exception here, who came forth from Adam, but not in the way of natural generation. Inherited sin is also referred to as original sin, having its origin in Adam; it is in man from the moment of conception and origin. The other type of sin is called actual sin, since it is committed either in thoughts, words, or deeds.

Original Sin

Original sin consists of imputed guilt and inherent pollution. We do not understand imputed guilt to mean that man, due to his inherited corruption, must be viewed as being in the same condition as Adam; that is, as if he in actuality had committed the same deed which Adam had committed. This would not be the imputation of someone else's crime, but rather of one's own. This would be nothing more than a comparison between specific sins of specific people, and a comparison between sins as far as guilt and punishment are concerned. Then our sinfulness could just as well be measured against the sins of others, instead of against Adam's sin. Rather, by imputed guilt we understand the imputation of the original breach of the covenant itself, as was committed by Adam. By denying or distorting this truth the foundation is laid also to deny the pollution of sin as inherited from Adam, and thus of all original sin. This in turn leads to the denial of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

Imputation occurs because of a personal crime, whereby he who personally commits a sin by virtue of the deed righteously makes himself worthy of punishment commensurate therewith; or, this imputation occurs because of the crime of another person with whom one exists in a relationship, and thus by virtue of this relationship participates in the same sin. The sin of someone with whom we have no relationship whatsoever can also not righteously be imputed. The relationship with someone else can exist in three different aspects. (1) There can be a natural relationship, such as between a father and his children. (2) There can be a civil relationship, such as between a government and its subjects. (3) There can be a voluntary relationship, such as is established by a contract or mutual agreement between a creditor, debtor, and guarantor. The latter relationship is not applicable here. The second relationship, that is, the civil relationship, when viewed per definition, is also not applicable here. It is true that Adam, by divine ordinance, without any necessity that descendants designate him as such, was the head of the human race. However, to say that Adam in sinning brought eternal condemnation upon his descendants solely on the basis of being head of the human race, places us before a dilemma, since Adam, also after the fall, remained the head of the human race. Consequently, in addition to the first covenant breach, all sins which Adam committed after the fall should then for the same reason also be imputed to his descendants. The apostle denies this when he speaks of one offense in Romans 5:18. This leaves us with only the first type of relationship, that is, the natural relationship. This relationship, when considered in and of itself, is also not applicable to this situation. It is true that all men have come forth from Adam, who as it were was the trunk from which the human race has proceeded. With Adam, all are partakers of the same nature. To maintain, however, that Adam's sin is imputed to us solely because we are partakers of Adam's nature presents us with the same difficulty. Since Adam is the father of all men both prior to and after the fall, and all are therefore partakers of the same nature, then by the same argument all Adam's sins which he has committed after the fall would have an equal effect upon man as the original breach of covenant. This would be contrary to Romans 5:18. Then why wouldn't all the sins of our ancestors subsequent to Adam be imputed to us, since we were also in their loins, they also being our ancestors as well as

Adam? Here it holds true, however, that “the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father” (Ezekiel 18:20).

The Imputation of Adam's Sin due to Our Covenant Relationship to Him The relationship with Adam consists in this, that the human nature of the human race, at that moment solely existing in Adam, was created as being in the covenant of works. Adam did not enter into the covenant of works subsequent to his creation, but was created in this covenant, being in this covenant from the very first moment of his existence. At the very moment that he formulated his first thought, he was conscious of God and the covenant, and could not but approve of this covenant. Therefore, the human nature in its totality, as well as the entire human race in Adam, were created in that covenant. For this reason all men are still born within this covenant of works discussed above. Upon Adam's breach of covenant, the human nature in its totality, that is the entire human race, broke the covenant. It is therefore righteous that this nature of the human race is rendered guilty, and that every human being, every person, by virtue of having this same nature, has the covenant breach imputed to him, and is deemed worthy of condemnation. From this it is clear that only Adam's breach of covenant and not his subsequent sins are imputed to his descendants. This is not merely because they are partakers of the same nature but because they were created in the covenant of works in Adam and have broken it in him.

Question: Is Adam's deed, that is, the original breach of covenant, imputed to the entire human race, and thus to every human being which has naturally proceeded from him, so that they are considered guilty of the covenant breach?

Socinians and Anabaptists deny this. They maintain that Adam's sin only affected him and not his descendants. Arminians also lean in that direction. We maintain, however, that this is certainly and irrefutably true. The righteous imputation of the covenant breach to all men is evident from the following: First, it is confirmed in Romans 5:12; Romans 5:15-18, a passage containing several proofs.

Proof #1: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

(1) We do not read that all men are sinful, but that all men have sinned. The reference is not to propensity, but to the commission of an act. This text therefore can not be applicable to the corruption of the human nature, nor that man by means of his corruption would be subjected to the same punishment. Since the reference here is to a deed, that which follows also refers to this one deed (or offense).

(2) It is clearly stated here that sin is the cause of death, also of corporal death, and it is therefore not true that death is the result of man's sinful nature, even if no sinful act had been committed (cf. chapter 10).

(3) It is thus evident that little children prior to birth also must be guilty of sin, for they die. According to verse 14 they are not guilty of actual sin. They are therefore guilty of a sin which has been imputed to them, and no other sin is imputed to them than Adam's covenant breach.

(4) All men have sinned “in him,” eph hoi. These little words can have numerous meanings, depending upon the manner in which they are used. In a context such as this, they mean “in him.”

Consider the following examples: *ep autois* -- "and in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias" (Matthew 13:14); *ef hoi* -- "the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay" (Mark 2:4); *epi toi onomati* -- "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38); *epi bromasi* -- "in meats and drinks" (Hebrews 9:10); *epi nekrois* -- "For a testament is of force after [Note: The Statenvertaling translates this as "in de dooden," i.e., "in dead men".] men are dead" (Hebrews 9:17). Such is also the case here, that is, men having sinned in him. All men were comprehended in Adam in the covenant, and therefore when he sinned, all men sinned in him in consequence of being in him.

Some might ask why these words *ef hoi* could not be translated as "therefore," or as "because," since they are translated as such in other texts. My reply is: The reference is here to the antecedent noun "man," which is a masculine word. The relative pronoun *hoi*, refers to this, and therefore it may not be used in the neuter (such as "that," "because," "therefore"), but rather in the masculine gender, in him, that is, in a man (a human being). It is also evident that these words, "for that all have sinned," are part of Paul's argument, namely, that by virtue of Adam's sin, death has come upon all men. It cannot be Paul's argument here that death, due to Adam's sin, has come upon all men because all men have personally sinned. This would merely prove that every man must die because he has sinned, which is not the argument of the apostle. Rather, the apostle argues that all men die by virtue of Adam's sin. If men die due to Adam's sin, however, there must be participation in Adam's sin as well as in his punishment. The apostle establishes the fact that all men are partakers of Adam's sin by these words, "for that all have sinned." The apostle first of all asserts participation in Adam's punishment, and then gives the reason for this: participation in his sin. All men die in Adam, and therefore all have sinned in him. Since no one has personally committed Adam's sin, however, there is therefore an imputation of Adam's sin by virtue of being comprehended in the covenant in him.

Proof #2: The imputation of Adam's covenant breach is also confirmed: "For if through the offence of one many be dead" (Romans 5:18); "For the judgment was by one to condemnation" (Romans 5:18); "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one" (Romans 5:18); "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans 5:18). It is clear that the reference is here to one single sin, and thus to a deed rather than a propensity, and that sin was committed by only one man. By that one sin committed by one man, that is, Adam, judgment to condemnation has come upon all men. Since these are the very words of the text, this point needs no further proof. In what manner does all this transpire?

(1) Not by imitation, for no one witnessed Adam's sin, for according to Romans 5:14 small children, who are also "men," had not sinned after the similitude of Adam. Imitation does not render anyone guilty of the sin of the person he is imitating. He is guilty of his own personal sin, which he commits by way of imitation.

(2) "Judgment to condemnation" is also not the result of natural corruption, which we receive from Adam for the same reason. This corruption does not render one guilty of the commission of Adam's sin, from which this corruption arises. Rather, one incurs guilt by virtue of personal corruption.

(3) "Judgment to condemnation" is also not due to the actual and personal activity in conspiracy with Adam. We did not then exist as yet and it would also not have been the one offense of one, but the offenses of many.

(4) Judgment to condemnation upon all men is rather due to the one offense of the one Adam by way of imputation, since they were created in the covenant in Adam.

Proof #3: It is clear beyond all controversy that in this chapter the apostle continually contrasts Adam to Christ. Adam is the cause of judgment to condemnation for all who are in him. Christ is the cause of redemption and salvation for all who are in Him. Since justification through Christ occurs by imputation (which we will prove at the appropriate moment), therefore, by virtue of the contrast, judgment to condemnation comes upon all men by imputation of Adam's breach of covenant.

Secondly, the imputation of guilt is also confirmed by 1 Corinthians 15:22, where we read, "For as in Adam all die ..." It is not merely stated here that all men die. We also do not read that they die in their fathers or grandfathers, but only that all die in Adam. To die "in someone" means to be a partaker of the judgment resulting in the death and condemnation of this individual. If all men die, all have also sinned, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Furthermore, if all men die in Adam, they have also all sinned in him. Since they are punished, they must necessarily have sinned. If all men are justly subject to the threatened punishment -- that is, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" -- they are also truly guilty of the same sin upon which the punishment was threatened. Since it is evident that all men are subject to the threatened punishment and not only die, but are also all subject to all the miseries due to the breach of covenant as enumerated in Genesis 3:1-24, all men are guilty of that sin. It is true that no one, neither by imitation, nor due to having inherited his corruption, has committed this sin personally along with Adam. In this manner no one can be said to sin or to die in someone. It thus remains certain that since all men die in Adam, they have sinned in him by way of imputation.

Thirdly, if all men were not guilty of Adam's breach of covenant, sin thus not being righteously imputed to them, each man would necessarily enter this world as perfectly as Adam did, that is, adorned with the image of God. Such would have to be the case since God creates the soul immediately, and in creating an innocent rational creature, does so in harmony with His holy nature. What relationship would then exist between Adam and subsequent human beings, since every one would be on his own? All men would then have a perfect existence as Adam had, and thus every man would be able to remain in this state of perfection. What reason would there be that many could not continue in this state of perfection? How can it be explained that all men, without exception, are in the same sinful state? Their corruption could not be derived from Adam if they had not sinned in him, for how else could they derive their corruption from him? It does not emanate from the body, for when viewed strictly in a physical sense, it is not subject to sin; otherwise the Lord Jesus could not have been formed in a holy fashion from the seed of the woman. This corruption also does not proceed from the soul, for the soul is created by God, and if there were no guilt, men would enter this world in a holy state, adorned with the image of God. Where then, I ask, does sin originate? Since man, however, is corrupt in his very nature and enters this world in a sinful condition, it is certain that he is guilty of the covenant breach in Adam.

Fourthly, add to this that the sins of the fathers' nearest of kin would be visited upon the children, and they would be punished for their fathers' sins. "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me" (Exodus 20:5); "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth,

from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar” (Matthew 23:35). This is also confirmed by the examples of Achan (Joshua 7:24-25); Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:9-10); Ahab (1 Kings 21:21); and Manasseh (2 Kings 24:3). This is also confirmed by a proof to the contrary when Levi, who was still in the loins of his father Abraham, paid tithes. It is true that the children themselves were sinful, and thus worthy of all manner of punishments. It is recorded here, however, that they were punished with temporal punishments for the sins of their forefathers. This is much more true than for all men, who, being in the loins of Adam, were comprehended in the covenant of works in him.

Objection #1: It is contrary to God’s will that earthly judges should punish the son for the crime of the father. God even declares that He Himself does not do so. “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deuteronomy 24:16); “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son” (Ezekiel 18:20). Thus, the sin of Adam cannot be imputed to his descendants.

Answer: Deuteronomy 24:16 is a law which God has given to man. From this we may not draw a conclusion as far as divine justice is concerned. The text refers to violations of the law and not to a breach of covenant. The one is not a necessary consequence of the other. The text refers to the sins of specific individuals. Adam, however, was the head of the covenant which was established in him with the entire human race. This sin was the sin of the entire human race, for outside of Adam and Eve there were no other human beings. The entire human race was comprehended in Adam, and thus that same human race bears the punishment of their own sin.

Ezekiel 18:20 also speaks of specific sins of specific people, and is therefore not applicable to Adam and his descendants who are in covenant relationship with him. The text refers to adult children who do not follow the footsteps of their parents. God convinced them that they themselves were committing these sins, and thus would be punished for their own sins with the same manner of punishment. It is incontrovertible that God punishes children for the sins of their parents, as is to be observed in the flood, in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in the children of Eli. God very expressly states the following about Himself: “... visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation” (Exodus 20:5).

Having considered original sin as far as the imputation of guilt is concerned, we will now proceed to consider the inherited corruption. The Corruption of Sin as it Relates to the Absence of God’s Image

Inherited corruption consists in the absence of the image of God and in a propensity towards sin. Let us first of all consider the absence of the image of God. Man is without the image of God, not merely by way of denial, nor due to a lack of original righteousness, but due to being deprived of something which presupposes the prior possession of a propensity to the contrary. All men, having sinned in Adam, are robbed of the image of God, so that every man is born void of spiritual light, love, truth, life, and holiness.

All glory and holiness are absent in man. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23); “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18); “... dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1); “Having the understanding darkened,

being alienated from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:18).

Secondly, this is confirmed by the fact that the image of God is restored in regeneration. Whatever is restored was once lost, and whatever is given was not previously in possession. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:10); "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:23-24). This inherited corruption also consists in a propensity towards sin. Original sin does not only consist in the absence of original righteousness, but also in the possession of a propensity to the contrary. As an illness does not merely consist of the absence of health and good circulation of blood, but also in having an indisposition of character and mobility, such is also the case in the realm of the spiritual. In view of this, original sin is called the old man (Romans 6:6), flesh (John 3:6), sin (Romans 7:23), the law of sin (Romans 7:23), covetousness (Romans 7:7), lust (Galatians 5:17), uncleanness (Colossians 3:5), filthiness (James 1:21), and filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1). This original sin, found in all men who have proceeded naturally from Adam, is present from the moment of their conception. There are no exceptions -- not even Mary. Even though God's children are born again, they are not regenerated to perfection in this life, but much corruption still remains within them.

Question: Do all men, by virtue of Adam's fall, have a propensity towards sin and a corrupt nature from the moment of their conception and birth, entering this world in a sinful condition?

Answer: Socinians and Anabaptists deny this entirely. Even if they are convinced by corruption manifesting itself in small children before they can learn by imitation of an evil example, they resolve this by saying that something is evidently present, but refuse to acknowledge this "something" to be sin. Arminians minimize original sin and lean towards denial. We, however, wholeheartedly answer this question in the affirmative. That all men from the moment of their conception are in a state of degeneracy and corruption is evident: First, from clear passages of Scripture which express this truth in a variety of ways.

(1) "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5). There is no evidence that David here referred to the sin of his mother. This is equally clear in both the original text and in our translation. David was referring to himself: "I was." He humbled himself before God about the commission of his sin. However, in order to view the nature and magnitude of this sin and be humbled even more by it, he focused on the origin of this deed, confessing that his sin was not an incidental act, but that it proceeded from the wicked condition of his heart. He confessed to having this wicked condition already from the first moment of his conception, and thus was naturally inclined towards this sin. He acknowledged that from this evil condition nothing but pollution could come forth, and he was thus abominable in nature and in deeds. He was a man as all other men, and all other men are as he. Together they have the same origin, and therefore are in the same sinful condition. Each person must therefore say the same about himself.

(2) Add to this such texts in which it is demonstrated that it is impossible to enter this world in any other condition but a sinful one. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job 14:4); "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). Adam was sinful, and therefore could not do otherwise than bring forth a son in his own likeness rather than in the likeness of God (Genesis 5:3). All men are sinful, and no cause is capable of generating something which is superior to

itself. Consequently, a sinner will bring forth a sinner: “neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Matthew 7:18).

(3) This is also confirmed by those texts which declare that man from his earliest childhood is nothing but evil in thoughts and deeds. “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5); “For the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21). Such evil thoughts are very clear evidence that the fountain is corrupt (James 3:11).

(4) This is also confirmed by the apostle: “and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Ephesians 2:3). There we see that all men are children of wrath, being so by nature. They are therefore not children of wrath only due to their sinful deeds, but are already the objects of wrath prior to that. Man’s nature, as soon as it comes into existence, is the object of and the reason for divine wrath. Since they have this nature, they are children of wrath. However, no one is an object of God’s wrath but by virtue of sin. Man is therefore by nature sinful, guilty in Adam, and has in himself a propensity towards evil.

Secondly, experience teaches that man by nature is corrupt. One can detect crossness and anger in children when they cannot have their way even prior to the use of their intellect. They also manifest vindictiveness before they can understand language, and before they can be taught even what it is. Children are pleased when others are scolded or receive corporal punishment -- yes, they will even show delight by laughter. When it is admitted -- since this cannot be denied -- that something like this does exist, I respond that this is sin (Romans 7:7-8). They are rational creatures and are subject to a law, and this law forbids wrath and vindictiveness. Moreover, if a child were to be educated without seeing any evil example, yes even if such were done by a holy person in a desert, this child would spontaneously commit every kind of sin, as experience will verify.

Thirdly, it is a known fact that children die even prior to their birth. However, death is a judgment upon sin, as is confirmed in Romans 5:12 and has been demonstrated above. It is therefore a certainty that they are sinful.

Fourthly, it is also confirmed by the fact that children are in need of Christ, for without Christ there is no salvation. All who are in need of a Redeemer are of necessity sinful, and this is therefore also true for children. Circumcision was a clear proof of this, for this sealed the putting off of the body of sin (Colossians 2:11). This is also confirmed by the necessity of the new birth, for if all were well at the first birth, there would be no need for a second birth. This second birth, however, is a necessity if one is to be saved (John 3:5).

Objection #1: All sin must necessarily be committed consciously and with the acquiescence of man’s free will. Original sin is not committed consciously and with the acquiescence of the will. It can therefore not be considered a sin.

Answer: It is not true that all sin is committed consciously and with the acquiescence of the will. Not only is this idea extra-biblical but it is also contrary to Scripture. It is one thing to do something against one’s will and another to sin without the conscious acquiescence of the will; and indeed, the first sin was committed with the full acquiescence of the human nature.

Objection #2: It is written in 1 Corinthians 7:14, "Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." Children are therefore without original sin.

Answer: This text expressly declares all children to be unclean, and thus as having original sin. It also states, however, that children of members of the covenant are holy. This holiness is not the holiness of God's image, but consists in being separated from other children, and in being incorporated in the church and the covenant of grace, so that they must be viewed as true members of the covenant until the contrary manifests itself. [Note: To understand this statement correctly it is advisable to read à Brakel's treatment of infant baptism in chapter 39. [Vol. 2, p. 487]] In Ezekiel 16:21 they are called, "My children."

Objection #3: Children are harmless and cannot discern between their right and left hand (Jonah 4:11). They are innocent (Psalms 106:38), and have done neither good nor evil (Romans 9:11). The man who was born blind, was blind neither because of his sins nor the sins of his parents (John 9:3).

Answer: These texts refer to sinful deeds and not to the sinful nature which already begins to manifest itself from the very outset. Neither the man born blind nor his parents were without sin, nor were they perfectly holy. It was not the Lord Jesus' intent to infer this, but He wished to state that they were neither greater sinners than others, nor that it was for that reason he was born blind. The Transmission of Original Sin from Adam to His Descendants

We have thus considered original sin relative to its imputed guilt as well as its inherited corruption. This surfaces the following question: How is original sin transmitted from Adam to his descendants? The manner in which guilt is imputed we have already demonstrated earlier so that the only question remaining is to show how man's natural corruption is inherited. One could be of the opinion that this cannot occur via the body, since it is not the actual object of sin. It also cannot occur via the soul, which, having been created by God, is good. It can also not occur via both body and soul, and thus not by generation. Since the soul is not generated, and since whatever is not true for either part can also not be true for the whole, it could not have come forth in this manner. My answer is: First, why do we need to know how sin is transmitted, since Scripture and experience confirm so clearly that such is the case? A fool can ask more questions than many wise men are able to answer. Tell me then how the body is formed with all its component parts; how the soul is united with the body; how by generating sound with the tongue one can cause someone else to understand abstract concepts; and how high and low tides return at a set time? You will reply that you do not know this, and that you cannot comprehend the "why" and "how." Who would be so foolish to deny something which he can visibly confirm, simply because he cannot understand it? Such is also the case with original sin.

Secondly, it is certain that God neither is nor can be the author of sin. It is also certain that souls are not reproduced, but are created by God.

Thirdly, the obscurity of this matter is often the result of separating the generation of soul and body too much, as if God created a soul apart from the body, causing it to exist externally to the body for some time, and then uniting it with the body subsequent to this. God, by virtue of His cooperative providence, being the energizing cause of man's generation, forms the soul in union with the body so that it does not exist for one moment apart from the body. From the very first moment of the

soul's existence, a man exists -- a man who is guilty of the covenant breach in Adam. From this it is clear how the imputation of guilt is transmitted to descendants.

Fourthly, the soul, being formed during the generative process in union with the body, has the essence of a soul and thus is very good and without sin. However, the soul, coming into existence in union with the body and from that first moment forming a human being, is not more noble than the souls of the generating parents and thus is without the image of God. God was not obligated to restore this image to the soul after man had cast it away. It is therefore written in Genesis 5:3, "And Adam ... begat a son in his own likeness, after his image," and thus not after the image of God.

Fifthly, man now being guilty of the covenant breach, not having the image of God according to his soul, and the body (which influences the soul and is united to the same) by generation having an evil state of mind, is in a state of separation from God. As such, man is subject to inner emptiness, and being dissatisfied with himself, is unfulfilled, miserable, craves for something, is restless, and lacks purpose in his activities. He is desirous, but not after God, for he has separated himself from Him; his desires are without restriction, focusing on whatever may appear to be desirable. Such a condition cannot but spawn a variety of lusts as man grows and develops. These lusts in turn spawn self-love, sorrow, wrath, hatred, and envy, which focus on a variety of wrong objects without restraints. Thus one human being generates another human being of like passions, and one sinner another sinner; in like manner the sin of Adam is transmitted to his descendants.

Actual Sin

Original sin produces all kinds of actual sins. This is confirmed in James 1:14-15, where we read, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." Since lust draws away, entices, and brings forth sin, it is sin itself. That which is not sin cannot generate sin. The apostle also expressly denominates covetousness as sin (Romans 7:7). When covetousness is said to bring forth sin, this refers to actual sins.

Actual sin is unrighteousness or a deviation from God's law by an internal or external act of omission or commission. Relative to this sin a variety of distinctions are made.

First, there are sins against the first table of the law, requiring love towards God, and against the second table of the law, requiring love towards our neighbor.

Secondly, there are sins of omission and commission. A sin of omission is committed whenever one does not perform that which is commanded. Although many neither give heed to this nor are disturbed hereby, it is a great sin, for it proceeds from unwillingness and lovelessness in relation to the will of God. The apostle denominates both omission and commission as sin. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). It is noteworthy that only sins of omission are recorded as causes for damnation in Matthew 25:42-43. A sin of commission is committed when one does that which is forbidden, or whenever one performs that which is good in and of itself in an evil manner or with an ulterior motive. "He that committeth sin is of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

Thirdly, there are sins which are committed:

(1) in thoughts, which are not concealed from the all-seeing eye of God, and are hated by Him: "An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations" (Proverbs 6:18);

(2) in words, "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36);

(3) in deeds, "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23);

(4) in gestures made with eyes, face, hands and feet, "A naughty person, a wicked man ... winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers" (Proverbs 6:12-13).

Sins committed in thoughts are the most numerous; however, those committed in deed excel in magnitude, since they occur in conjunction with the thoughts, doubling the magnitude of the sin. They are committed with more premeditation and are injurious to others.

Fourthly, there are sins which are committed presumptuously, and those which are committed ignorantly. "And that servant, which knew his lord's will ... shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not ... shall be beaten with few stripes (Luke 12:47-48)." In a certain respect all sins can be said to be committed in ignorance, since no one -- unless he is a devil -- commits sin with the perception of it being sin, but does so under a pretense of necessity, honesty, advantage, and delight. By ignorance we understand here that darkness in and carelessness of the sinner by which no attention is paid to whether his actions are sinful or not -- that inattentiveness which fails to reckon with God and gives no heed to his actions. This is the reason that there is neither acknowledgement nor remorse concerning the committed sin. However, ignorance does not provide one with an excuse. He should have had knowledge concerning the matter, and in many instances he could have been knowledgeable about a particular sin, but with ignorant passion, yielded to his lust. "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults" (Psalms 19:12); "For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8). "... because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:13) -- otherwise it would have been the sin against the Holy Ghost. Such is true for all heresies.

There are degrees of wickedness relative to sins which are committed consciously, this being contingent upon the measure by which the light of either nature or Scripture illuminates the sinner. The most grievous of sins is committed when God immediately reveals His presence and omniscience, thereby discouraging and warning the sinner who is inclined to sin, and when, in spite of this, he proceeds with the commission of this sin.

Fifthly, there are secret sins which one commits either alone or in the presence of a few. There are other sins which are committed publicly, that is, in the presence of many. "For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun" (2 Samuel 12:12).

Sin's Dominion over the Ungodly

Sixthly, there are sins which have dominion over a man, and sins which are committed due to weakness. Only the unconverted are under the dominion of sin.

Sin, first of all, has dominion whenever there is no union with Christ by faith. When one is without Christ, he is without God (Ephesians 2:12), dead in trespasses and sins (vs. 1).

Secondly, sin has dominion when there is not that internal resistance of the heart towards sin resulting from union with God in Christ -- and thus not proceeding from true faith, love, fear, and obedience; and thus in turn not from the Spirit. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13). Natural man can be controlled and be resistant towards the commission of a specific sin as the result of the illumination of the conscience, and also due to a love for natural virtue. This virtue is truly desirable to someone who sees but a glimmer of it, although he neither perceives the spiritual dimension nor the required spiritual parameters. This love for natural virtue may also be due to fear of punishment, fear for shame and disgrace, or upbringing and habit. All of this can result in a virtuous life in the natural sense of the word. Those who know of no other virtue but this, consider it to be godliness. Hence proceeds the illusion that one is capable of converting himself. However, a heartfelt resistance towards sin, proceeding from the mentioned union and advancement in this area, which would restrain them from the commission of sin, is not to be found in them. They are then not motivated to be virtuous, and therefore all is of no value, and they are thus under the dominion of sin.

Thirdly, sin has dominion when the heart fully and willingly acquiesces to a life without God and Christ, being ignorant thereof and not desirous for nor seeking this union. It is satisfied without this union, and thus is united to the world and sin. All life outside of God and Christ, which from a natural perspective may appear to be as civil and religious as one could imagine, is purely sin. From such a frame proceeds lust, love, desire, and sinful meditation -- the measure thereof being dependent upon one's state of mind, inclination, habit, and opportunity. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" (Romans 8:5); "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

Fourthly, sin has dominion when there is an outpouring of sinful lusts, a succession of sinful deeds, and a complete and voluntary yielding to one's lusts as far as possible, and when one is not hindered even by the natural motives mentioned above. Peter refers to this as "the same excess of riot" (1 Peter 4:4). Consider also the following texts: "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:19); "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope" (Isaiah 5:18); "And they ... sold themselves to do evil" (2 Kings 17:17). This is referred to as being "servants of sin," and to yield "your members servants to uncleanness" (Romans 6:20; Romans 6:19).

Fifthly, sin has dominion when there is immediate inner resistance towards those who are genuinely godly, who give evidence that they neither belong to this world nor are under the dominion of sin, but who are united with God in Christ and walk in the light. Natural men do find delight in natural virtue, this being consistent with their own nature. Even if one corpse appears to be more attractive than the other, death remains death. When, however, the regenerate not only lead a virtuous life, but in their speech reveal their light -- it being the basis for and the essential nature of their virtue, as well as their excellency above others -- then the heart is at once repulsed by this and there will be hatred towards this first and foremost by temporal believers, and in those who lead a civil life. Scripture states this plainly, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:20); "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). This hatred and heartfelt opposition is clear

evidence of the dominion of sin, for it uncovers a contradiction as that which exists between light and darkness, and between life and death. By way of the five matters we have presented, the unconverted can examine themselves and be convicted of their unconverted state. They may also serve to the discovery of the converted in order that sin may not have dominion over them.

Sin Has no Dominion over the Godly The converted detect much of the old Adam within themselves. They observe how they frequently fall -- indeed, even continue in sin, being captured and captivated by sin. By this their faith easily falters, fearing that sin still has dominion over them. In order that they may know that sin has no dominion over them, but that it merely battles them as an enemy, we will further demonstrate when sin does not have dominion.

(1) Sin has no dominion when there is a union with Christ by faith, be it that this union manifests itself more clearly, strongly, and sensibly; or that it primarily manifests itself in activity to be reconciled with God in Christ consisting in desires, prayers, embracing, believing reception, and wrestlings, so that the soul cannot be at peace apart from the sensible enjoyment of this reconciliation and union, even if it cannot attain to the sensible assurance of this union. Since truth, love, and spiritual exercise manifest themselves, however, the essence of this union exists. Christ is the life of the soul (Colossians 3:4). Being thus united to life itself, death has no dominion, but rather life, as feeble as it may be.

(2) Sin has no dominion when this union results in lively, spiritual exercises. All exercises which do not proceed from this union are deemed of no value by a converted person. All his efforts are focused on living by virtue of this union, be it in the enjoyment of this union, or in seeking after and focusing upon this union. Such a person desires to do everything out of God, through God, for God, before God, and unto God. They are only refreshed when all their deeds "are wrought in God" (John 3:21). This union cannot be passive, for faith "worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6), purifies the heart (Acts 15:9), "overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4), resists the devil (1 Peter 5:9), and is fruitful unto good works (James 2:17). The issue here is not the measure of faith, but its genuineness.

(3) Sin has no dominion when this union brings forth internal opposition and hatred towards all that is sin (by virtue of its very nature) whether it be great or small. This attitude does not only pertain to that which is external, but especially concerns itself with what they perceive in their own heart. As a result of this they abhor themselves more than anyone else. "For that which I do I allow not. ... If then I do that which I would not ... it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:15-17); "I hate vain thoughts ... I hate every false way" (Psalms 119:113; Psalms 119:128). This will bring forth sorrow and humiliation concerning the inner condition of the heart, the sins of omission, and sinful deeds. The soul is immediately wounded and experiences sorrow. This is an evidence of the presence of a living principle which is diametrically opposed to sin.

(4) Sin has no dominion when, due to said union, internal resistance and hatred towards sin translates into actual opposition and strife against sin. Time and again there is a new resolve to do battle against sin; there is prayer for strength, and, desiring to be strengthened, there is a receiving of Jesus by faith unto sanctification. The godly fear that sin may take them by surprise and thus they seek to be watchful. They seek to avoid opportunity to sin, resisting it when it does occur. At times there is victory and at other times they will be overcome by one particular sin. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the

other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). It cannot therefore be denied that where there is a battle against sin, sin has no dominion.

(5) Sin has no dominion when this union results in a delight, a love for, and a desire to do whatever pleases the Lord. This opposition towards sin is all-inclusive, no sin being excluded. Similarly, the acquiescence with the will of God is also all-inclusive. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22); "O how love I Thy law!" (Psalms 119:97). Yes, not only is there a love for and acquiescence with the will of God, but also a love for all those whom one deems to be loved of God and who love God. They are repulsed by and displeased with those that belong to the world, since at heart they are separated from the world. "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord" (Psalms 15:4); "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

Consider all these evidences together and compare them with those which are evidences of the dominion of sin. If someone comes to the conclusion that the evidences of being under the dominion of sin are not present, but perceives those evidences to the contrary, be it not in the measure which he would desire, he can be assured that sin has no dominion over him. Such a person should rejoice and not permit his faith to falter due to the power of internal corruption which still remains. Rather, he will persevere in that inner life -- however feeble it may be -- with sincerity and cheerfulness in order that he might increase in sanctification. The Unpardonable Sin: The Sin Against the Holy Ghost

There are pardonable and unpardonable sins. Some sins are called pardonable, but not because their nature is such that they neither merit punishment nor can be forgiven without complete satisfaction. Such a sin does not exist, however seemingly insignificant it may be. Even though sins differ in degree and merit punishment commensurate with this degree, the least sin is worthy of eternal damnation. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23); "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10); "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). They are called "pardonable" simply because they are forgiven to all who believe and repent.

Unpardonable are all the sins of those who have lived in sin and die in it. For them there is no ransom, and thus eternally no forgiveness. Such sins are unpardonable in view of the ultimate outcome. In addition to these sins, however, there is one unpardonable sin, called the sin against the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:31). The sin against the Holy Ghost is spoken of in Matthew 12:31, where we read, "The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:29-30); "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he (someone other than the person who has committed it) shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16). Thus a godly person, in praying for others, ought not to pray for a sin unto death, (that is, if he knows that someone has committed such a sin). This can be none other than the sin against the Holy Ghost, even though it is not identified as such in the last text. The sin against the Holy Ghost is not so much against the Spirit's Person, but against His operation; that is, His illuminating, sanctifying, and comforting work in God's children, as well as His mighty operation in the occurrence of miracles, by which true doctrine and personal convictions are confirmed. This

sin does not consist in lack of repentance, as every sinner who dies in sin did not repent of even one sin. It also cannot be said that there should be no prayer for such a sinner, since there is no prior knowledge whether such a common sinner shall repent or not. From 1 John 5:16 it is evident that this sin was not only committed during the time of Christ, but also afterwards. This sin consists in a complete rejection of confessed truth and in hatred and opposition towards the truth and godliness, all proceeding purely from bitter enmity. A truly converted person can never commit this sin, since he is kept by the power of God unto salvation (1 Peter 1:5), and it is impossible for the elect to be deceived (Matthew 24:24), the foundation of God being sure (2 Timothy 2:19).

It is also not a sin commonly committed by the unconverted, but is of an extraordinary nature and thus infrequently committed. We nevertheless believe that some take a step or two in the direction of that sin, even if not perceived by others. It is believed to be most frequently committed where the power of the Holy Ghost in the conversion of sinners manifests itself the most. In order to understand the very nature of this sin, take notice of the following propositions.

First, there is clear knowledge and conviction in such a sinner that what he opposes was of God and was the truth. I do not dare to maintain that for the commission of such a sin there needs to be a clear and powerful conviction of the heart concerning all points of true religion. Neither do we maintain that such a sinner is a professor of this truth and a member of the church. I do maintain that at least there must be a knowledge and conviction of the heart that the doctrine and life, as well as the religion of those with whom he has fellowship, is according to truth and godliness, and thus from God. As far as we know, the Pharisees and scribes who committed this sin never were disciples of Christ. They also did not know that Christ was truly the Messiah (1 Corinthians 2:8). It is also not certain whether they had a proper knowledge of the divine persons. The Holy Spirit, however, had convinced them that Christ's doctrine, life, and miracles were from God and performed by God. Christ was acknowledged to be "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19). Pilate himself "knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy" (Mark 15:10).

Secondly, such a sinner becomes filled with wrath and hatred against those in whom God's Spirit works mightily by granting them illumination, joy, holiness, zeal, and much opening in speaking, etc. This wrath and hatred can express itself against the congregation of Christ in general, a specific congregation, a specific company of godly persons, or a specific person, be it a minister or a member. This opposition is neither related to temporal matters nor to a general or specific difference of opinion, but is in response to the truth and to that life and activity which this sinner knows to be from God and to occur by His agency. This was evidently the case in the entire behavior of the Jews towards Christ recorded throughout the gospels (cf. Matthew 12:1-50; John 8:1-59). This enmity also manifested itself towards Stephen. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth" (Acts 7:54).

Thirdly, in such a sinner there is an evil opposition towards and a desire for the persecution of those in whom the Holy Spirit is so mightily at work. If this person previously functioned within the community of the church or within a specific fellowship of godly people, he will depart from them, not being able to endure them any longer. He wickedly opposes them, and persecutes them as much as possible because of the truth, godliness, and activity manifesting themselves there. This he accomplishes by slander, defamation, offending, contradiction, and by calling the work of the

Holy Spirit in them the devil's work, the work of the flesh, hypocrisy, pride, etc. If he is in a position of authority, he will oppose them, try to root out the work of God, rob them of their good name, their possessions, and even life itself. All of this can be observed in the Pharisees and scribes as they continually slandered and tempted the Lord Jesus, and sought to kill Him -- in which they finally succeeded. To this the apostle refers when he writes, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:26-29).

Fourthly, this is followed by an irreversible absence of remorse and a refusal to repent. I have stated that this is a consequence of this sin, for it does not belong to the nature of this sin. They do not come to themselves, for God gives them over to themselves and to their evil inclinations. Their anger propels them as a turbulent sea, and as chaff driven by wind, and they proceed in the manifestation of their hatred as long as they live or have the opportunity. Even if they settle down to some extent (which will cause them to perceive their sin), this is immediately accompanied by a feeling of despair. They perceive that heaven is closed for them and that Christ is not for them. For this reason there is no sorrow, no seeking, and no prayer. Instead, they feel the pangs of hell, and the terror of God consumes them. They either end their lives as Judas did, or they die, as Julian, with curses upon their lips.

Fifthly, added to this is the fact that this sin is unpardonable. This is neither due to the sin viewed in itself, nor because the mercy of God or the merits of Christ are insufficient, but solely because God wills not to forgive this sin. "The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven" (Matthew 12:31); "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness" (Mark 3:29).

One may wonder: how is it possible that someone can fall into such a sin -- that man can behave himself thus in response to revealed truth, godliness, and the operation of God's Spirit?

I answer: It is indeed true that no one either will challenge the truth as truth, or commit sin as sin, for then he would have to be the devil in the flesh. However, it can be that a graceless person, who is nevertheless illuminated by and convinced of the truth as the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit, may join himself to the godly, giving the impression of being one of them. However, when he perceives that his deception is evident and that he, contrary to his will and to his grief, is not accepted when he perceives that, due to the light by which he becomes acquainted with himself, he is not honored and esteemed as others or above others, but that his influence is curtailed, so that others are esteemed and loved above him; when others reckon him to be ignorant of spiritual mysteries, to yet be unconverted, and to be in a state of misery as a hypocritical, temporal believer and an imposter; when he is continually rebuked and is of the opinion that everything which is spoken applies to himself, or that people, whenever he speaks or acts, despise him in a nasty and provocative manner, ridiculing and continually correcting him -- then, I say, his wicked heart will stir itself in anger and envy, will be stimulated, will begin to manifest itself, and he will engage in active opposition. Such a person will first take issue against persons as having been wronged by them,

after which he will take issue with these persons for the matter at hand and the power of the Holy Spirit which manifests itself in them. From this proceeds the avoidance of God's people and of the truth of God he confessed and it is followed by slander, defamation, opposition, and persecution -- due to the light, truth, godliness, and activity of the godly. Thus the first cause of this sin is generally self-love, and a desire to be honored and esteemed. If the latter is not attained, and such a person instead is discovered, rebuked, and rejected, his wickedness gradually increases until he commits the sin described above.

People may think that since all the unconverted hate the light of truth and oppose it, that therefore the sin against the Holy Ghost is something different from what we have explained. My answer is:

(1) The seed of all sin, and thus also of the sin against the Holy Ghost, is to be found in all men by nature. If circumstances were favorable and if the restraining power of God were not to prevent it, this sin would be committed by all. The sin against the Holy Ghost is therefore a sin which in principle is rooted in the nature of man.

(2) All men do not come to the acknowledgement of the truth and of godliness, neither do they become acquainted with the powerful operation of God's Spirit, nor come to the conviction that this is of God.

(3) This hatred and the inclination to oppose all these do not burst forth in every person, but is controlled, either due to absence of opportunity, to other natural convictions, or to the restraining power of God.

(4) The sin against the Holy Ghost is not common hatred and opposition, but an extraordinary explosion of hatred and wickedness, accompanied by slander and persecution.

Instruction for Those Who Fear They Have Sinned Against the Holy Ghost. From that which has been said, the misunderstanding of some concerning this sin becomes evident. Being ignorant of the nature of this sin, and perceiving within themselves that they frequently sin against better knowledge and a speaking conscience, they imagine that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. Therefore they do not dare to pray for forgiveness, their reason being that prayer for such a sin is not permitted, and that this sin is unpardonable. All this greatly terrifies them, causing much anxiety. Such persons need to be instructed on the basis of what has been stated.

(1) The sin against the Holy Ghost is not directed to the sinner himself as being the object, but it focuses upon others who manifest truth, godliness, and the powerful operation of God's Spirit, all of which humbles the godly, but grieves such a sinner.

(2) The injunction forbidding prayer for such persons does not pertain to oneself, but to others. Yes, even he who commits this sin remains under obligation to pray and to repent, but is not willing to do so.

(3) This sin is accompanied by a great explosion of hatred and anger towards others due to the light emanating from them, as well as by persecution of them through slander and oppression.

(4) There is neither sorrow over this sin, nor a seeking of forgiveness and repentance. Therefore those who are concerned can perceive from this how mistaken they are, and that they have thus not committed this sin. They are merely being deceived by their darkened heart, even though their

concern proceeds from a tender disposition. Moreover, the devil joins in to cast such souls to and fro and if possible to bring them to despair.

How each person ought to take warning in view of all this -- that when meeting with opportunities which could give rise to this sin, he ought not to give free reign to his heart. One must refrain from impetuously assaulting someone who has spirit and life, or appears to have, but whose behavior may perhaps be unbecoming, lest by way of gradual progression one would come to the commission of this sin. Under such circumstances a person should always remind himself of the dreadful judgment upon those who commit this sin. In view of this, how careful everyone ought to be of dealing imprudently by neither continually rebuking a person who opposes him, nor by despising and provoking him. One should also not attempt to passionately and forcefully bring such a person to repentance, whether this be one's spouse, children, parents, relatives, or others with whom one has a familiar relationship, lest they be afforded an opportunity to commit this sin. The application concerning the doctrine of sin in general, which ought to humble all men, will follow in the next chapter.

017. Chapter 15: Man's Free Will or Impotency and the Punishment Due Upon Sin

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Having considered original and actual sin, we must also consider man's total inability to lift himself out of this sinful state and to restore himself in a state of holiness. This subject is generally considered under the heading "free will." In Greek Free Will is referred to as *autexusia*. This word is not to be found in Scripture, but was introduced into the church by Platonic philosophers who had been converted to Christianity. In its essential meaning it means as much as self-determination, self-worthiness, or to be one's own master. As such it can only be properly used in reference to God. However, in some respects it may be used in reference to man as well. In Latin the words *liberum arbitrium* are used, which translates as free judgment or free will.

God has gifted the soul of man with intellect and a will. The intellect consists of comprehension, judgment, and conscience. The faculty of judgment makes either a general determination about the validity of a matter and what sort of a thing it is, or it applies itself to the will of man suggesting and determining what is or is not to be done, or what is to be loved or to be hated. The will of man consists of the ability to either love or hate something. A comprehensive treatment of these matters is to be found in chapter 10, where the nature of the soul, the intellect, and the will are discussed. The Freedom of the Will: Not Neutrality but One of Necessary Consequence In our discussion of free will it should be noted first of all that man's free will is not independent from God. Man is totally dependent upon God in regard 1) to his being, 2) to his activity, 3) to God's prerogative to obligate him to His will and laws (so that His commands must be loved and what He has forbidden is to be hated), and 4) to the foreknowledge and decree of God, for He infallibly knows and has decreed that every matter and deed will have a certain outcome and none other. This foreknowledge cannot be thwarted; and this decree cannot be changed. These matters have been discussed comprehensively in chapters three, five, and eleven.

Secondly, the will does not function independently from the judgment faculty of the intellect. The will cannot possibly function apart from the intellect, neither can it do otherwise than follow the dictates of the intellect, for man is a rational being and therefore functions rationally. Otherwise the will would be able to reject that which is good as well as that which is perceived as being good, and find delight in sin as sin -- all of which is irrational.

Thirdly, the will of man is not free from human peculiarities, for man functions according to his nature. A man who is perfectly holy in his nature will be a servant of righteousness, and the will shall respond likewise (Romans 6:18). However, if man is nothing but sin in all his characteristics, he is a servant of sin (John 8:34). The will responds and functions in harmony with man's sinful nature. To a holy nature belongs a holy will, and to a sinful nature a sinful will.

Even though the will is necessarily dependent upon the matters mentioned, this necessity does not eliminate the freedom of the will, nor is this necessity compulsory in nature, since the will responds spontaneously.

(1) The will is free from external compulsion. All the people on earth cannot force someone's will or cause him to do something which he is not willing to do. In order to cause someone to do another's will, however, the matter must be presented in such a manner that the person voluntarily chooses and wills, and thus functions according to his own will.

(2) The will of man is also free from natural instinct, by which animals, without being conscious of it, are motivated to function according to their purpose, for the will responds to the intellect and functions rationally.

Having considered in which respects the will of man is either free or not free, the question now presents itself: Wherein does the freedom of the will actually consist? Does it consist in neutrality so that it makes no difference whether or not we do something, or whether we do a certain thing or act to the contrary? Or is this freedom one of "necessary consequence," man doing what he does by virtue of personal choice, personal desire, and thus spontaneously?

Roman Catholics and Arminians respond by saying that this freedom consists in being neutral as far as either doing or not doing something, or doing a certain thing or acting to the contrary. Our response is that the will of man when considered in its essential nature, not being subject to any conditions, is neutral and unrestricted as far as doing a certain thing or the contrary thereof. It remains in this neutral position until the faculty judgment determines what ought or what not ought not to be done. Once such a determination has been made by judgmental application, the will can no longer remain neutral, can no longer but will to do this, and cannot refrain from willing to do the one thing rather than the contrary. Thus, the freedom of the will does not consist in neutrality; that is, the ability to will or not to will, or to will either one thing or the contrary, even if all requirements and restrictions were in place. Rather, the freedom of the will is one of necessary consequence. This is first of all evident from the nature of God, the angels, the glorified in Christ, and also the devils. God cannot but be holy, righteous, and true. His will cannot but desire this and cannot act to the contrary. However, is not God's will free to the superlative degree? The holy angels and glorified saints cannot will to either do good or evil. They can only will to be good and to do good. Is not their will entirely free? The Lord Jesus Christ could not will to be either obedient or disobedient to His Father. He could not do anything but be willing to obey His Father. Was not His will absolutely free? It is impossible for devils to will that which is good. They cannot but will to do that which is evil. In all these things there is an absolute freedom of will, but there is no neutrality as far as being willing or not willing to do something, or to will a certain thing or just its opposite. Thus, the freedom of the will does not consist in neutrality, but is one of necessary consequence.

Secondly, even though one can speculate about the will in its abstract nature, the will at no time functions outside the parameters of God's providence, the faculty of judgment, and natural inclinations. Therefore, even when all requirements for its functioning are present, the will cannot arbitrarily function or not function, or do a certain thing or the contrary. Rather, it voluntarily embraces that to which it is limited by God and the faculty of judgment, and thus it does not remain neutral.

Thirdly, it is entirely absurd to define the freedom of the will as consisting in neutrality. If this were so, man could desire his damnation and to be eternally miserable, never to partake of supreme felicity; or he could choose the opposite: to acquire this felicity, the will being neutral towards both options. It would then be in vain to pray for conversion, for then even by divine operation the will could not be nudged from its neutral position, and man would always be able to will that he remain unconverted. Then God would have no power over the human will, but the will would remain independent, having as much control over itself as God does. This of course is absurdity itself.

Since the freedom of the will does not consist in neutrality, it is therefore clear that the freedom of the will is one of necessary consequence. This is not an irrational instinct as in animals, but by one's own intelligent choice, willing, desiring, and embracing that which one by way of the faculty of judgment perceives as necessary or desirous at this particular place and time.

Man's Free Will After the Fall

Now the question is: Is man such a slave to sin that he wills nothing else, and cannot will, but to live in sin? Our reference here is to the will and not to desire. Also, can man both will to convert himself and to keep the law by powerfully and actively engaging his will? Or is man's will after the fall still neutral as far as repenting or not repenting, doing good or doing evil? In short, did sinful man retain sufficient natural ability to enable him to truly repent?

Roman Catholicism and Arminians answer affirmatively; we respond negatively. In order to understand this clearly, we must distinguish between various kinds of goodness and various states of man. There are four types of activity which can be considered good.

- (1) There is natural goodness: eating, drinking, walking, standing, speaking, sleeping, etc.
- (2) There is civil goodness: being courteous, friendly, helpful, sincere, and upright in daily conversation.
- (3) There is external religious goodness: hearing and reading God's Word, offering of a mentally formulated prayer, the giving of alms, etc.
- (4) There is spiritual goodness proceeding from internal union with God in Christ, and thus from the principle of spiritual life. This consists in faith, love, godly fear, obedience towards God as Father, complete submission to and acquiescence with God's will, and the performance of this will. The question does not relate to the first three kinds of goodness, but to the latter.

There is also a fourfold distinction in regard to man's state. There Isaiah 1:1-31) the state of perfection prior to the fall, 2) the unregenerate state after the fall, 3) the regenerate state, and 4) the state of glory. The question neither pertains to the first nor the last two states, but only to the second one. The question therefore is: Is an unconverted person able to convert himself, regenerate himself, truly believe in Christ, and live a truly holy and spiritual life? We emphatically deny this. This is evident first of all from man's evil condition prior to conversion, being blind, ignorant, evil, and unwilling. He is hostile, unable, unwilling to subject himself to the law of God, and spiritually dead. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7; cf. chapter 30).

Sin and Punishment

Conversion is a work of God, consisting in creating, regenerating, drawing, the removal of the stony heart and the giving of a heart of flesh, etc. (cf. chapter 30).

Having considered man's misery relative to his first fall, original sin, actual sin, and his spiritual impotency, we will also consider his misery in respect to deserved punishment.

Punishment presupposes the existence of a rational creature which is subject to a law. Thus, the evil which comes upon animals in reality is not a punishment inflicted upon them, but either is executed in regard to man as proprietor of the animal, to prevent them from being able to harm man, or due to the curse resulting from the first sin, God thereby revealing His just wrath against the sin of mankind. For this reason the pushing ox had to be killed, Achan's cattle were killed along with him, and all the animals died in the flood.

All punishment proceeds from God. God does not punish a holy creature -- He punished Christ only because He as Surety had taken sin upon Himself -- but punishes the sinner as a righteous Judge. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Romans 1:18); "... against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:5-6). To that end God uses all such creatures as pleases Him, such as the sun, moon, and stars (Judges 5:20), rain and wind (Psalms 148:8), angels (Acts 12:23), devils (Job 1:1-22; Job 2:1-13), man (Isaiah 10:24), and insects (Joel 1:4; Joel 2:25).

Sin is the cause of and reason for this punishment. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23); "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee" (Jeremiah 2:19). Yes, every sin merits eternal condemnation. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Every sin is a complete rejection of the eternal God, and by its very nature causes the sinner to remain in an eternally sinful condition. This is the reason for the righteous threatening found in Galatians 3:10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

We can make a twofold distinction relative to punishment: temporal and eternal. Temporal punishments are either corporal or spiritual in nature. There are many corporal punishments, such as bodily want, sickness, discomfort, pestilence, war, times of scarcity, and death. For the godly these are fatherly chastisements which proceed from love and are inflicted for their welfare. For the ungodly they are judgments which proceed from the avenging justice and wrath of God. "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes" (Psalms 50:21).

Spiritual judgments include:

(1) The withdrawal of abused spiritual illumination. "... their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21); "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).

(2) The giving over of man to himself, whereby he falls from one sin into the next. "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels" (Psalms 81:11-12); "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts" (Romans 1:24).

(3) The hardening of the heart. "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart ... and Pharaoh's heart was hardened" (Exodus 7:3; Exodus 7:22). From these texts it is evident that God in His holiness punishes sin with sin.

Eternal punishment is referred to as death (Romans 6:23), the second death (Revelation 20:6), the damnation of hell (Matthew 23:33), hell fire (Matthew 5:22), and everlasting fire (Matthew 25:41). It is also expressed by way of the place where this punishment will be endured, such as, the place of torment (Luke 16:28), the deep (Luke 8:31), and the lake of fire burning with sulfur and brimstone (Revelation 19:20). This place is generally referred to as "hell." In Greek two words are used, one of which is *hades*, which is also used by pagans to refer to hell. The other word is *gehenna*, which is used in Scripture only. This word is derived from "the valley of the children of Hinnom," which was an accursed place where the Israelites burned their children in the fire in honor of the idol Moloch, and which Josiah transformed into a valley of horror by causing all manner of abomination to be brought there, so that, due to this horrendous sin, this valley would be abhorred (2 Kings 23:10). (In Hebrew hell is called *sheol*, which is a pit.) The place where eternal punishment will be endured is not fictitious, merely existing in man's imagination. It is a place which truly exists at this very moment and does not still need to be created. The devils are exiled to this place, even though they will be released prior to the final judgment (2 Peter 2:4). The Sodomites suffer the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 1:7). The souls of the ungodly upon departing from the body at the moment of death are always sent to this place (Luke 16:23). The Punishment of the Ungodly Does not Consist in Annihilation This raises the following question: Does eternal punishment consist in the annihilation of soul and body? Will the essence of both soul and body of the ungodly continue to exist and be in inexpressible pain to all eternity?

Socinius held to the first view, whereas we hold to the latter. This is first of all confirmed by the resurrection of the ungodly. "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). All men upon the face of the earth will be divided into two categories, there being no third category. The unjust will be resurrected as well as the just. They will together appear before the Judge of all the earth, being resurrected for that purpose. "... and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29). The Father has vested Christ with the authority to execute judgment. Since Christ will judge all men, it must be that all men will be present, and since most have already died, it follows that they must be resurrected. The Lord Jesus testifies of this in John 5:28, "For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves," etc. This is true for all who have died, in whatever manner it might be, even if they have returned to dust and their dust has mingled with the earth. In vs. 29 He identifies both the person and his destination. No mention is made here of a spiritual resurrection, as there is in vss. 24-25. Rather, mention is made of those who have no part in the spiritual resurrection. All men are not regenerated, and those who are resurrected spiritually cannot be resurrected unto damnation, as is stated for those who have done evil. Thus it remains certain that mention is made here of a corporal resurrection and also of the resurrection of those who have done evil. Since the ungodly will be resurrected and also appear in the judgment, they were not annihilated in death. This is true of the souls of Cain and Judas who went to their own place. Likewise all the souls of the ungodly still exist in their essence, and are in prison with the spirits of the ungodly of the first world (1 Peter 3:19). Neither have they been annihilated subsequent to their entering this prison.

Secondly, the soul of man is immortal in nature. Man cannot kill it, and God will not kill it. "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). When the soul is joined together with the body, or contrasted with it, this indicates nothing else than the one essential element of man. (The nature of the soul was discussed in chapter 10.) This essential element of man cannot be killed by men. All human violence is directed towards the body, and the ultimate possibility is the killing of the body. If the soul were to be annihilated at death, man would be able to kill the soul as well as the body. Since man is not capable of doing this, however, it remains clear and certain that the soul continues to exist after the body dies. This is the force of Christ's argument: one need not fear man, but must fear God, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. The verb *apoktainai*, that is, to kill (which refers to a human act) is not used here, but rather *apolesai*, that is, to destroy in hell. The body will be resurrected and united to the soul, upon which the ungodly with body and soul will be cast into hell to be tormented there, this being an everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9). At first glance the meaning of Matthew 10:28 appears to be this: God ought to be feared more than man, since man can harm the body but not the soul. God, however, can punish both body and soul eternally in hell, the place of the damned. Thus the soul is not annihilated at death, but the ungodly will be tormented eternally.

Thirdly, Matthew 26:24 also confirms that the ungodly will not be annihilated, but will be in eternal misery. We read there: "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." Nowhere do we read about Judas' misery in this life, for in the end he even received money which could have fully rewarded him. He could have enjoyed the favor of the enemies, and his death was sudden and accompanied with little pain. If this were to have annihilated him, why would it have been better if he had never been born? Rather, these words clearly indicate that his miseries after death would be dreadful and unbearable. Thus the ungodly continue to exist after death in torment.

Fourthly, this is also confirmed by all the texts which state expressly that the ungodly will eternally endure pain. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," "... and these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:41; Matthew 25:46). Fire in Scripture does not always refer to physical fire, but to pain of the severest sort. The devils are subject to this, upon whom physical fire has no effect. They themselves understand it to be so. "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29). The Lord Jesus Himself explains it as such. That which He calls "fire" in vs. 31, He refers to as "punishment" in vs. 46. This fire, this punishment, is referred to as being eternal. The word "eternal" occasionally refers to a very long period of time, but it generally refers to infinity. Even if one were to use the first meaning, it still would be evident that the ungodly are not annihilated -- neither in death nor in the judgment. The reference here is to infinity, as is indicated by way of contrast. Eternal life unquestionably refers to an endless state of felicity, and it is contrasted with another state, namely, of punishment. Therefore the Sodomites are said to suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 1:7). Sodom was completely destroyed by fire; her inhabitants, however (the name of the city refers to its inhabitants who were guilty of fornication), will eternally suffer punishment.

Add to this Mark 9:43-44, where we read, "... go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not." It is obvious that this does not refer to what man encounters in this life, but to what he will experience after his death in hell, in the place where the

rich man was after his death (Luke 16:1-31). Hell, the place of the damned, is referred to as fire due to the severity of the pain. It is said to be unquenchable since it will endlessly endure. Without end it will torment the ungodly who will also endure forever. The worm of the ungodly, that is, their conscience, will never die. If the conscience of the ungodly endures forever, this is necessarily true also for the ungodly themselves. Therefore, the word "unquenchable" neither means "until it has accomplished its task" nor "as long as there is something on which to gnaw," that is, during this life. Rather, it is written that this will not occur here, but in hell, that is, after this life. Christ contrasts pain caused during this life by the cutting off of hands and feet, with eternal pain, exhorting to endure the first in order to be delivered from the latter. No one enters hell in this life, but only after death.

Fifthly, if eternal punishment were to consist of annihilation, the animals would also be enduring eternal punishment and it would be correct to join with the Epicurians in saying, "Let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die," which is contrary to 1 Corinthians 15:32. Then the following would not be a true statement: "seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you" (2 Thessalonians 1:6), since this does not always occur in this life.

It thus remains absolutely certain that eternal punishment does not consist in the annihilation of soul and body, but that both will endure while experiencing eternal torment. The Infinite Duration of God's Judgment upon Sin

Objection #1: God's mercy cannot permit His creatures to be tormented eternally. Such punishment would not be commensurate with sin, and thus even God's justice could not demand eternal punishment.

Answer: Such thoughts are the result of ignorance concerning God's character and the nature of sin, as well as from an attitude of disrespect and unbelief concerning God's Word. Since God's Word states it to be so, who are you to argue against it? God's avenging justice is natural to His character, so that He, as we have demonstrated in chapter three, cannot but punish sin. Sin is inherently infinite due to being committed against an infinite God. It is a total rejection of God and a radical act of divorcement from Him. The sinner will eternally continue in a sinful state, and therefore God's wrath will also justly continue to rest upon him. There is no contradiction between God's mercy and His justice, for both have different objects. The sinner, due to his sin, is the object of God's justice; believers, for whom Christ has satisfied divine justice, are the objects of God's mercy.

Eternal punishment consists in deprivation and sensibility. The damned will have an eternal and essential existence; however, they will eternally miss all that which constitutes felicity, such as all light, communion with God and Christ, peace, rest, joy, love, and holiness. Yes, they will one day be deprived of all good things which God in His longsuffering permitted them to enjoy in this life. Then the damned, who will continue to exist as rational creatures, will no longer be insensitive to the fact that they are without God -- as is currently the case because they now divert themselves with the enjoyment of temporal things. Since, however, they will then be deprived of all things and be unable to find satisfaction within themselves, they will be in a most horrible and grievous condition. Since there will neither be any expectation of fulfillment of their needs nor of refreshment throughout eternity, they will be filled with unrest and anger towards God who will deprive them of all things, as well as despair, since this will endure forever without the least

expectation of relief. Even if hell were to consist only of deprivation, it would already be unbearable. We cannot comprehend this now, since here we are never without some measure of relief. Paul spoke of this state when he wrote: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Eternal punishment also consists in sensibility, which we have already demonstrated extensively above. However, the nature and dreadfulness of that which will be experienced is incomprehensible. Paul expressed it as follows, "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish ..." (Romans 2:8-9). Daniel refers to it as "shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). It is generally referred to as "fire," "pain," "weeping and gnashing of teeth." God, in the totality of His Being, will be against them, and they will forever be filled with the wrath of God. We will demonstrate shortly how unbearable this will be. What an utter despair this will generate, since there will be no relief and no expectation that this will be diminished in the least unto all eternity! Along with this the body will endure pain of the severest degree, the nature of which, however, is not known to us. To the question, "Will there be fire in hell?", we answer affirmatively, for Scripture states it to be so. The manner in which it will be present is not known to us, however, neither do we gain anything by knowing it. Happy is he who will not have to experience it. The location of hell I do not wish to investigate. To the question, "Will one person endure more pain than another?" we also answer affirmatively, for Scripture clearly states this to be so. Even though it is common to all that there will eternally be neither annihilation, refreshment, nor deliverance, hell will be more unbearable for the one than for the other, all of this being commensurate with the degree in which they have sinned. "But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you" (Matthew 11:22); "Therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Matthew 23:14). In Luke 12:47-48 few or many stripes are mentioned in relation to the degree of sin. Our Misery: A Reflection upon our Sinfulness

Thus we have demonstrated to you the misery of man from various perspectives. We have done so in reference to the fall of Adam, original sin, actual sin, man's impotency, and punishment upon sin. Do not rest in a mere external knowledge of all this, but make practical use of it, applying it all to yourself, and view yourself as such. Be it known to you, and impress it upon your heart, that you are the most miserable creature upon the face of the earth. If you could but perceive a glimmer of your misery, your hair would stand up straight from terror, your eyes would never fail to weep, and you would continually gnash your teeth and wring your hands. Therefore listen attentively to me as I address you. May the Lord cause you to see and feel all this, for you are miserable in many respects.

First, you are miserable in respect to your sinfulness. Go to Paradise and behold how ingeniously and gloriously you were created in Adam, enjoying sweet communion between God and your very own nature. Behold how willfully you have fallen away from God and have joined ranks with the devil. Having thus sinned, you have forfeited the glory of God. The image of God in which you were created in Adam has departed from you. Neither life, truth, love, holiness, nor glory are to be found in you. Instead, the appearance of a wretched black devil is within you. Your soul is in an evil, devilish condition, and is blind and unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God. It is alienated from the life of God through ignorance, dead in sin, capable of devising and committing all manner of evil, having no other desire but for that which God hates, and having no contempt for anything but that which God delights in. Your soul wallows in filth, stench, abomination, and in that

which is despicable and intolerable. Your soul is a pool teeming with all manner of hateful, envious, wrathful, evil, impure, unrighteous, deceitful, and proud thoughts -- thoughts by which you forget, depart from, and despise God, all of which are abominable in nature. Your throat is an open sepulcher; with your tongue you use deceit. The poison of asps is under your lips, and your mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Your eyes, ears, hands, feet, and all the members of your body are instruments of unrighteousness; you are a servant of sin in the fullest sense of the word. You are of your father the devil, a prisoner of Satan, and the property of the devil. You are thus separated from God, desiring also to remain separated from Him, finding delight in your evil frame and deeds. In one word, inwardly and outwardly you are in a state of direct opposition and enmity towards the high, holy, and glorious God.

What aggravates the abominable nature of your existence, however, is that there is not one honest person to be found in your generation, but rather you belong to a generation which is despicable, hateful, evil, and impure. There is not one single individual in your entire genealogy -- even if you trace back your genealogy for five thousand years, and thus to Adam -- who by nature is not a liar, a murderer, a thief, a fornicator, and a horrendous monstrosity at heart. You are an unclean thing out of an unclean (Job 14:4), of the earth earthy (1 Corinthians 15:47), by nature a child of wrath (Ephesians 2:3), evil from your youth (Genesis 8:21). Give careful attention to these and similar passages of Scripture, and come into the presence of God. Hear these words as coming from the mouth of the Lord, hearing Him declaring you to be such a person. Impress this upon your heart, and be convinced beyond any doubt that this is descriptive of you, since He declares you to be such.

It is necessary that the view of your sinfulness exceeds that view which is the result of a mere believing in the Word of God. In order to be truly humbled and to be a suitable recipient of grace in Christ, there must be a sensible perception of this. For this purpose it is essential that you do not merely examine yourself in the mirror of the law of nature, measuring your deeds by that which nature teaches to be good or evil, but that you seek to acquire a thorough knowledge of your virtues and vices in light of the law of the ten commandments. For this purpose you should carefully read Lord's Days 34 through 44 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Do not merely seek to acquire an extensive knowledge of the subject matter itself -- that is, do not merely seek to discern what are good or evil thoughts, words, and deeds -- but also consider their very nature as commandments, and consider that every deed must proceed:

- (1) from a consciousness of being reconciled and united to God, so that one does not serve Him as a strange God and provoked Judge, but rather as an appeased Father;
- (2) from a conscious submission of one's self as creature to Him who only is Lord, who by virtue of His and our natures obligates us to be subject to Him in all things;
- (3) from joyful willingness and obedience;
- (4) from pure love;
- (5) from a view and consciousness of His supremacy and majesty, and thus in the fear of His Name;

(6) from a joyful embracing of His will, solely because it is His will, so that our will is also swallowed up in His will;

(7) from an intense yearning that He alone be glorified, and that He alone is worthy of all honor and service, this being our sole objective;

(8) from an earnest zeal and devotion, until each deed be accomplished in all its particulars. In one word, all things must be performed as proceeding from God, in dependence upon Him, and as before His countenance; and all must end in Him. With this in mind one will not be satisfied with the mere performance of one good deed, but will perceive how dreadfully one has fallen short -- even in his best deeds, and thus how dreadful every sin is. Be frequently engaged in this fashion, and examine your entire conversation both as to its internal and external dimensions. During the entire day give heed to your thoughts, words, and deeds, and sit down every evening to review the history of your behavior on that particular day. Proceed from hour to hour, from place to place, from one person to the next person with whom you have been in contact, from incident to incident as it occurred, and then consider your behavior in all these circumstances in view of each commandment. Identify the corruption of your nature as the fountain of all these things, and consider all that would have proceeded from this fountain if opportunity and inclination had given occasion for this. Add to this the aforementioned qualifications which are required for every action, in order that you may become acquainted with yourself. However, even that will not engender a truly perplexed, sensitive, and contrite frame, unless the Lord were to give you a view of His majesty, holiness, righteousness, and truth. He must cause you to see that sin is an act of denial, rejection, and contempt towards God, while simultaneously giving you an impression of the dreadfulness of its punishment. Only then will sin truly become a reality, and the sinner be perplexed. Only then will he need help and be driven to the Mediator, Christ. Behold, thus you are a horrendous and abominable monstrosity smothered in your sins. Our Misery: A Reflection Upon the Punishment to Which We Are Subject

Secondly, you are miserable in view of being deserving of punishment. Proceed further to the consideration of the temporal and eternal punishments which are the consequences of sin. Contemplation upon the state in which you have come due to sin ought to make you shudder and tremble, considering that therefore you are not worthy to walk upon the face of the earth. It is a wonder that the earth still bears you and does not open its mouth to devour you alive. It is a wonder that fire does not come down from heaven to consume you with Sodom and Gomorrah and that the devil is not permitted to tear you to pieces and to drag your soul to hell. You are not worthy of inhaling air through your nostrils, of seeing the sun, and of having the canopy of heaven stretched out over you. You are not worthy of having a piece of bread to put in your mouth, nor a thread to cover your skin.

Lift up your eyes and think for a moment about God, the majestic, holy, and glorious God who is a terror to the sinner. Consider what David said regarding Him: "For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with Thee. The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (Psalms 5:4-6). Paul spoke likewise: "But unto them that ... do not obey the truth ... indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish [shall come]" [Note: The words inside the brackets are printed in italics in the Statenvertaling. Since they clarify the meaning of the

quote they have been included.] upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Romans 2:8-9). Hear the thundering declaration in Galatians 3:10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written ... to do them." Consider also 2 Thessalonians 1:8, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Oh my unconverted fellowman who does not wish to be drawn and wooed by the goodness of God, may God once cause you to perceive what His wrath is, to which you are subject, in order that you may be saved with fear!

Let me present this in more detail to you, hoping that in some measure it may move you.

(1) Take note of God's own expressions in this regard. "Thou, even Thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?" (Psalms 76:7); "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath" (Psalms 90:11); "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

(2) Consider the anxiety of the saints when God hides His countenance from them and when He causes but a glimpse of His anger to be seen by them. David feared this and therefore prayed, "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure" (Psalms 6:1). Jeremiah could endure anything, but he feared the wrath of God, for he said, "Be not a terror unto me" (Jeremiah 17:17). How Job complained of this! "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me" (Job 6:4). Heman expressed his anxiety as follows, "Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; Thy terrors have cut me off" (Psalms 88:16).

(3) Observe and consider how the Lord Jesus, the Surety of the elect, became a curse, and how He endured all misery and anxiety. Consider how He was assaulted by the devil, was rejected, despised, and mocked of men, was condemned and put to death on the cross. Consider how the wrath of God pressed Him down and caused Him to be sorrowful unto death. He was engaged in a fierce battle, and was sorrowful and very heavy. He sweat an abundance of blood which fell in drops from His face to the earth; He crawled as a worm upon the earth. He prayed and mourned, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Such was the heaviness of His task in atoning for the sins of His elect.

(4) If this does not move you, proceed to observe the dreadful pit of damnation, and listen to the gnashing of teeth, the weeping, the frightful shriek, "Woe, woe, woe," the terror, and the violent raging of the conscience of the damned in the eternal fire. Consider that to all eternity they will never enjoy one beam of light, nor one quiet moment, but will eternally be overcome with inexpressible despair knowing they will never be delivered as well as be subject to an inexpressible perception of the wrath of God. In all quietness you ought to meditate upon the state of damnation. First of all, what will it be to have a soul and body which cannot find fulfillment within itself and thus cannot be satisfied unless this fulfillment comes from elsewhere, which, however, will be lacking to all eternity. There will not be the least refreshment, neither will there be food, drink, light, sleep, nor companionship by which one could find some delight in conversation. On the contrary, there will be an infinite separation from God, angels, the godly, joy, and glory. At the present time one may be able to forget his unhappiness and sorrow by a variety of means and thus feel no sorrow concerning that of which he is deprived. Then, however, it will be unbearable when these various means are removed. What dreadful despair will this yield for the unfulfilled and

sorrowing soul!

Secondly, consider how the soul, against its will, will continually be compelled to think upon all the benefits which it had received of God in this life as far as the body is concerned. He will also be compelled to think upon the means of grace received, and the sermons and ministers by which he was admonished and rebuked, exhorting him to repent, and indeed, constraining him to do so. The soul will think upon all divine conviction within the conscience, as well as the deliberate rejection, despising, opposition towards, and contradiction of all the means of grace, as well as towards those who with words and deeds convicted them.

Thirdly, consider how dreadful it will be when all committed abominations will continually come to mind, and when these, one by one, will be vividly recalled together with all the abominable circumstances attending each of them.

Fourthly, consider what it will be when the ungodly will blame God for not having converted them as others, and for not having ushered them into heaven as others, but instead depriving them eternally of all grace. Consider what it will be when, in their wickedness, they will lash out at God with every imaginable blasphemy.

Fifthly, consider how dreadful and terrifying it will be when the eternal wrath of God will continually overwhelm the soul, causing it unbearable pain, and all the perfections of God will simultaneously manifest themselves against the soul. How dreadful and terrifying this will be! What eternal despair this will engender!

Behold, you who hear or read this, you have deserved all this. Perhaps many of you, due to your failure to repent and the hardness of your hearts, will experience this and have your portion in this lake which burns with sulfur and brimstone. Perhaps this will be your portion within a few days. Be alarmed, tremble, and repent, in order that you may escape the manifestation of this wrath.

Perhaps all of this may not even affect you. This one or that one may perhaps think that he is too strong mentally to be seriously disturbed by all these things. Perhaps such a person can rationally respond to all this and quiet his conscience. I assure you, however, that when God causes one's heart to tremble, he most certainly will become aware that a terrified conscience alone will cause him unbearable distress. Even a rustling leaf will cause him to tremble. Oh that you would quietly and intelligently consider and believe these things, applying all this to yourself if you are still unconverted -- in order that your heart might be appalled by all this, as to whether it would please the Lord to grant you conversion!

Perhaps someone else, in response to the presentation of these matters, may think, "since God is gracious and merciful, I hope for better things. I hope that He will keep me from hell." My response to this is that, first of all, mercy must have an object which is pitifully miserable. You, however, are hatefully miserable, and there is nothing in you which would move God to be merciful. You are Loruhamah: no more to have mercy (Hosea 1:6), hateful (Titus 3:3), "the generation of His wrath" (Jeremiah 7:29), to be loathed and not to be pitied by anyone (Ezekiel 16:5), an abhorrence (Psalms 5:6), and a generation of vipers (Matthew 3:7). Who would have compassion upon an injured toad or snake? Man either continues to kill them or at least gets rid of them. In like fashion you are hateful and abominable, and therefore you are not to comfort yourself with the mercy of God. God is just and cannot allow any sin to go unpunished. God's grace does not consist in

permitting any sin to go unpunished. Grace is God's ordination and sending forth of a Surety whom He has punished in the stead of His elect. It is grace that He, by means of the gospel, causes this Surety to be proclaimed and offered. It is grace that He bestows the gift of faith on someone, enabling him to receive this Surety. It is grace when He converts someone and sanctifies him. It is grace when He, by virtue of the merits of this Surety, leads someone to eternal felicity in the way of sanctification. Therefore you who are not upon this way have no reason to comfort yourself with grace, for that is deceiving yourself to your eternal damnation. In addition to your hatefulness, God can also not tolerate you because you neither cease from sinning, nor from provoking, reviling, and despising Him continually. Furthermore, you also exalt yourself above God. By all this you demonstrate that you ignore God's threatenings, and rather continue boldly in sin. It is as if you are saying, "God may do whatever He wishes, but I don't care. I will live as I please, and I will refrain from or do whatever I wish." In addition to this you show that you desire to be honored, feared, loved, obeyed and served by men -- desiring that with all these deeds they would end in you. Do not you thus establish yourself as a god? Therefore, abominable and intolerable creature, do not imagine that your misery will move God to be merciful.

Secondly, God's justice will not permit sin to go unpunished. God's majesty, which you have trampled under foot, His holiness, and His truth demand satisfaction by the bearing of punishment. Therefore the sinner can neither hope for grace, nor for mercy -- and he will certainly find himself deceived in his hope -- unless he has an interest in the Surety Jesus Christ. Therefore, oh man, be alarmed about your condition and be convicted of your abominable and damnable nature, for to be sensible of this is the initial manifestation of grace. Our Misery: A Reflection upon our Impotency

Thirdly, you are miserable in view of your impotency. Your condition is that you are abominable, condemnable, and forsaken of God and all creatures. Come then, be a hero and save yourself if you can. This is, however, absolutely impossible, for your salvation requires the perfect satisfaction of God's justice by the bearing of all temporal and eternal punishments, and a perfect holiness. This the justice of God requires, for God can only justify a just man and can by no means clear the guilty. He cannot grant the right to eternal life to a man unless the conditions of the covenant, upon which eternal felicity was promised, have been fulfilled. And now, oh miserable one, what will you do? What can you give as a ransom for your soul? You cannot bring that which is eternal to a conclusion, neither by suffering punishment can you make full satisfaction and be acquitted as one who has satisfied the requirements of justice. You are not able to deliver yourself from the pollution of your sinful state and adorn yourself with internal and external holiness which is both perfect and pure. Thus you cannot present yourself before God as pleasing in His sight, saying with boldness, "Here I am; enter into judgment with me and judge me according to Thy justice." If only you may perceive this to some degree (I do not even mention the things which precede this), you must be convinced of your impotency and cry out, "Oh, wretch that I am! I cannot help myself, and I sink away in my misery. Where must I go? Woe unto me!"

Now consider all this together, and take some time to meditate on how completely abominable, condemnable, and hopeless your situation is. If you are unconverted, it may be a means to stir you up to seek and to ask, "Is there yet help? Is there no hope? Is there yet a way whereby I may be saved?" If you are then directed to Jesus Christ as the way, He will become precious, and you will earnestly seek to become a partaker of Him by faith. If you are converted, the contemplation upon the state of sin, no matter what it may have been for you prior to your conversion, will make and

keep you humble; it will teach you to esteem Christ highly and to make use of Him continually. It will motivate you to glorify God, this being an expression of gratitude for sending His Son to deliver poor sinners through Him and to lead them to eternal felicity.

019. Chapter 16: The Covenant of Grace

----- CHAPTER SIXTEEN ----- The Covenant of Grace In previous chapters we have depicted man in his holy nature, and as being in relationship with God in a glorious covenant of works. Subsequently, we have depicted man in his misery, being subject to sin and its punishment as a result of breaking the covenant of works. We will now consider man as being subject to grace, and therefore we will first discuss the covenant of grace. The Word "Covenant" in Old and New Testaments The Hebrew word for "covenant" is berith. It is more consistent with the nature of that language to view this word not as a derivative of bara, that is, to create, but rather of barah, that is, to elect, for in a covenant there also is a selection of persons and conditions. It was customary to dedicate and confirm such a covenant with various ceremonies, to which also belonged the slaughter of animals. These animals would be hewn in half, and the pieces would be placed opposite each other. The covenanting parties would then walk between the pieces, thereby testifying, "Thus must I be hewn in pieces if I break this covenant." This is to be observed in Genesis 15:9-10 and also Jeremiah 34:18; Jeremiah 34:20 where we read, "And I will give the men that have transgressed My covenant ... which they had made before Me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof." This is why the act of covenanting in Hebrew is called karat berith (cf. Psalms 50:5), and in Latin percutere foedus, that is, to cut a covenant. It was also customary to eat a meal in conjunction with the act of covenanting (cf. Genesis 31:44-46). For this purpose salt was used, which is pure and stable and keeps food from spoiling. This may possibly be the reason why a sure and desirable covenant is called a covenant of salt in 2 Chronicles 13:5. The Greek refer to a covenant as diatheke. The Septuagint uses that word to translate berith. In the New Testament it is either translated as covenant or as testament. There is no basis for -- and it is contrary to the Greek writers, the Septuagint, and several texts in the New Testament -- insisting that diatheke is not to be translated as covenant, but solely as testament. In a subtle manner this undermines the covenant transaction with God and the exercise of faith. The difference, among others, between a testament and a covenant is that in the making of a testament there is no permission needed from the heir, whereas mutual acquiescence of both parties is a necessary prerequisite to a covenant. Diatheke is most certainly very suitable to describe the covenant of grace, for it is a covenant which has the element of a testament in it, and it is a testament which has something of a covenant in it. It is a covenantal testament, and a testamental covenant. In our language "covenant" is derived from the verb "to bind," [Note: In Dutch the connection between the noun and the verb is more obvious: "Verbond in onze taal komt af van binden." This agrees with the English definition of covenant: "a formal, solemn, and binding agreement."] whereby things which previously were not connected, are joined together and united. In a covenant, parties which previously were not one but existed separately, are bound together and thus united. The word "covenant" has many connotations in God's Word, due to the nature of the agreement or covenant:

(1) It can refer to an immutable promise. "And I, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of

every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth" (Genesis 9:9-10). No mention is made of any acquiescence by the animals, but it is nevertheless stated that the covenant was made with them. This is nothing less than a promise, at least as far as one of the parties is concerned, promises being a constituent element of a covenant;

(2) It can refer to a sure and unbreakable ordinance. "Thus saith the Lord; if ye can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season ..." (Jeremiah 33:20).

(3) Peace is a result of a covenant, and therefore, by way of comparison, "covenant" is used to designate peace. "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee" (Job 5:23).

(4) He who partakes of a covenant must take great care not to conduct himself contrary to the covenant. Therefore the act of careful observation is referred to as a covenant. "I made a covenant with mine eyes" (Job 31:1).

(5) A covenant includes laws which are conditional requirements, and therefore a command is called a covenant. "And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments" (Deuteronomy 4:13). Actually, these ten words did not constitute the covenant, for the covenant already had been established earlier. However, they were laws to which members of the covenant were obliged to adhere.

(6) The administration of the covenant is occasionally also referred to as the covenant. "This is My covenant. ... Every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Genesis 17:10). Thus, the new administration of this singular covenant, which already was established with Adam and Eve immediately after the fall, bears the name "covenant." "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31). These are all the figurative meanings of "covenant." The Covenant of Grace Defined In its literal sense a covenant consists in a mutual, binding obligation between two or more individuals, who, contingent upon certain conditions, promise certain things to each other. Between God and man there is therefore such a covenant of grace in the true sense of the word. This covenant is a holy, magnificent, well-ordered, and eternal agreement or treaty between the all-sufficient, good, omnipotent, righteous, faithful, true, and immutable God on the one side, and on the other side with the elect, who by nature are sinful, condemnable, impotent, abominable, hateful, and intolerable. In this covenant God promises deliverance from all evil and the bestowal of full salvation by grace through the Mediator Jesus Christ. Man, fully delighting himself in these promises, with all his heart acquiesces in and accepts the way revealed in the Word of God, whereby these promised benefits are to be obtained. In doing so, the sinner, by way of the covenant, surrenders himself to God, which God, for the assurance of covenant partakers, seals by means of the sacraments, all this to the magnification of His free and unfathomable grace.

It will be necessary and profitable for us to analyze these matters a bit more carefully. In order for someone to have dealings with God by way of a covenant, and to extract the proper advantage from this established covenant, this person must be clearly convinced in his heart that God establishes a covenant with man; invites man to enter into a covenant with Him; and that man is permitted to have, can have, and indeed does have covenant dealings with God. In order to

convince your soul of this, pay careful attention to all those texts in Holy Writ where reference is made to a covenant, establishment of a covenant, and entering into a covenant. It is true that these covenant transactions are comprehended in the acts of believing, receiving Christ, and surrendering to Him. The upright who in this manner have dealings with God through Christ, are thus partakers of that covenant and its benefits. Therefore the delineation of the covenant transactions should not hinder and grieve them if they perceive that they have not conducted themselves as being conscious of all this, and thus not in an entirely proper manner. Such covenant transactions with God yield more clarity, steadfastness, comfort, and consistent growth. We wish therefore to exhort everyone to proceed to transact with God in the consciousness of entering into a covenant with God, since the Holy Scriptures so clearly and frequently make mention of this.

Scriptural Evidence for the Existence of the Covenant of Grace

Genesis 15:1-21 describes, along with various noteworthy circumstances, the covenant transaction between God and Abraham. In it God, accommodating Himself to the manner of men, commanded Abraham to slaughter animals, cut them in half, and place the pieces opposite each other. Abraham was obedient, acquiesced, and prepared everything. God then allowed a smoking furnace and a burning lamp to proceed between these pieces, and thus established a covenant with Abraham. "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:7); "... I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ... this shall be the covenant ... I will put My law in their inward parts ... and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:31;Jeremiah 31:33); "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them" (Jeremiah 32:38-40). The New Testament also makes frequent mention of this covenant. Among others, this is confirmed in the following texts: "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant" (Luke 1:72); "... being aliens from the covenants of promise ..." (Ephesians 2:12); "By so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament" (Hebrews 7:22); "the Mediator of a better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6).

Consider also those texts which speak of men entering into that covenant. "Yield yourselves unto the Lord" (2 Chronicles 30:8); "And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul" (2 Chronicles 15:12); "and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant" (Ezekiel 20:37); "And because of all this we make a sure covenant" (Nehemiah 9:38). This is also the meaning of Isaiah 44:5 : "One shall say, I am the Lord's ... and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord."

All these texts clearly confirm that there is a covenant transaction between God and believers, and that it is initiated from God's side by way of proffer and promise, and from the side of man by acceptance and surrender. The teaching and practice of the church, not only prior to the Antichrist but also immediately subsequent to the Reformation, has always been consistent with the manner in which this covenant transaction is presented to us in Holy Writ. The Reformers have presented and inculcated this doctrine verbally as well as in writing. It is presented in the forms for Holy Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and marriage. A number of ministers who served subsequent to the

writing of these forms have extensively and forcefully written on the subject. Therefore this is not a truth -- as some suggest it is -- which was defined clearly only a few years ago. Those individuals did this to be honored for it and were perhaps ignorant both of the matter itself and of former authors. The Parties in the Covenant of Grace: God and Man In order to gain a clearer understanding about the essence of the covenant, and to lose oneself in astonishment concerning this matter, it is needful to attentively consider the parties which come together and are joined in this covenant. Never have such opposite parties been appeased, and never have such unequal parties been united. The parties are God, the Creator of all things and a holy Lord, and an abominable sinner.

Let us now consider each of these parties in particular, in order that this doctrine may be acknowledged to be all the more glorious and be admired for its all-surpassing excellency, so that everyone may be allured to enter into this covenant. May it serve to excite those who have entered into it to the joy and glory of God. The one party and covenant initiator is the Lord God who in this covenant must be viewed as the all-sufficient One. God is all-sufficient in Himself, and does not need the worship of man's hands. Man's goodness does not extend to Him. He does not profit from the fact that someone enters into this covenant and lives righteously; such profit is limited to partakers of the covenant. As He is all-sufficient in Himself, He is also shaddai, that is, all-sufficient for each and every partaker of the covenant, to fill them to overflowing with so much light, love, peace, joy, and felicity, that they do not and cannot desire anything but God alone. Yes, they experience that they can only perceive a small drop of that allsufficiency. When a soul experiences but the least of all this, it will say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psalms 73:28); "But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:28); "In Thy presence is fullness of joy" (Psalms 16:11); "I shall be satisfied ... with Thy likeness" (Psalms 17:15); "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house" (Psalms 36:8). This all-sufficient God establishes a covenant with the man who lacks everything. Oh, how happy is he who may be in covenant with this God! Who would, and who can refuse to enter into a covenant with such an all-sufficient God? Who would not be motivated to do this at once? In addition to this, God is revealed to us as a good God. God is truly good. "The Lord is good" (Nahum 1:7); "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6); "Thou art good, and doest good;" (Psalms 119:68); "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever" (Psalms 136:1). This is the very nature of God, and from this goodness issues forth the good which He does, manifested particularly in this covenant of grace. "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us" (Luke 1:78); "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared ... He saved us" (Titus 3:4-5).

It cannot but grieve those who love God that there are many who always appear to entertain false notions concerning Him, considering this good God as being harsh, merciless, compassionless, unyielding, and as having no concern for the little and timid ones in grace. This view is rooted in their heart, and confirmed by their deeds. With such a heart they engage in prayer and have little or no hope of being heard. This is the condition of their heart for an entire day after they have sinned, as if grace were no longer available. Thus they dishonor God, and bring misery upon themselves. Let those who depart from God, who have no desire for Him nor seek Him, tremble before Him as an avenging God. You, however, whose heart goes out after Him and His grace,

view Him as a good God. For it is in this manner that He reveals Himself in nature, in Scripture, and to other believers -- and He has frequently manifested Himself in this manner also to you. "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lamentations 3:25). Therefore, whoever you are, come, fearing "... the Lord and His goodness" (Hosea 3:5). With such a good God man has dealings when entering into the covenant. Who then would not be desirous and have freedom to enter into a covenant with the Lord? In this covenant God is also revealed to us as an omnipotent God, who not only is desirous to communicate His all-sufficiency and goodness, but is also able to do so. When the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, He prefaced this by saying, "I am the Almighty God" (Genesis 17:1). Mary sang, "For He that is mighty hath done to me great things" (Luke 1:49). The Lord says, "I am ... the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). Whoever therefore is in covenant with such a God, how secure he is! How quietly he may rest in Him and with what assurance he may anticipate the fulfillment of His promises! In establishing this covenant God also reveals Himself as the faithful one, who will neither forsake those who are in covenant with Him, nor allow them to be wanting in anything. He is the faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19), "which keepeth truth for ever" (Psalms 146:6). "Great is Thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:23); "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul" (Psalms 121:3; Psalms 121:7). Behold, whatever this faithful God does is characterized by faithfulness. Indeed, when He afflicts, He does so in faithfulness (cf. Psalms 119:75). "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). I will not "suffer My faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips" (Psalms 89:33-34). Believe this and entertain no suspicion. Rest in this all you who have entered into this covenant, for your God is a faithful God. He will perfect all things concerning you.

God is also truthful and immutable. He is Jehovah, the I AM THAT I AM (Exodus 3:14). "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6). "... also the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent" (1 Samuel 15:29); "... the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). Therefore, a partaker of this covenant may expect these benefits as certainly as if he possessed them already, and without anxiety ought to rejoice in them as Abraham did. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20-21). In this covenant, God is also revealed as holy and righteous, for He "... will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:7). When Joshua caused the people to enter into a covenant with God, he said, "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for He is an holy God" (Joshua 24:19). Someone may think, "This discourages me, for who would dare to enter into covenant with such a holy and righteous God?" You should know, however, that this ought to attract you, since this righteousness has been satisfied by the Surety. God's righteousness now favors those who are in covenant with Him, and the covenant therefore remains unmovable. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Meditate to some length upon these aforementioned attributes of God, and consider God to be such until your soul is truly convinced that God in truth proves Himself as such in the establishment of this covenant. May you thus enter into this covenant with freedom, and having entered, rest with much assurance in this God. Thus this God is one of the parties in the covenant.

The other party is man, as miserable, sinful, condemnable, and impotent as we have previously depicted him to be. Compare, however, these two parties with each other. Is it possible to believe that between two parties who are so unequal there could ever be such a covenant, unless God Himself had revealed this to be so? Is the fact that such a covenant has come into existence between them not reason for astonishment and joy? Let angels, heaven, earth, and man be astonished that the majestic, holy, and glorious God enters into covenant with such abominable, evil, and unprofitable creatures, establishing such an intimate covenant of friendship with them, and leading them in this divine way to eternal felicity. The Conditions or Promises of the Covenant of Grace In order that we might attain to a clearer knowledge of this glorious covenant, it is needful that we examine the conditions or the promises of this covenant. [Note: For a proper understanding of à Brakel's terminology here, i.e., his repeated use of the phrase "conditions (requirements) of the covenant," it is most helpful to refer to Abraham Hellenbroek's booklet for catechetical instruction. In chapter six, Hellenbroek asks, "What does God require in this covenant?" He replies, "That which God requires in it, is also a promise of the covenant, namely, faith in Jesus Christ."] We shall first of all consider the benefits and promises which are offered and presented from God's side, and then which conditions are to be fulfilled from man's side. Whoever you may be, take careful note of the articles of this covenant, whether it might arouse in you desire, astonishment, and joy. Is not this covenant God's covenant? That alone is sufficient reason to study it. Furthermore, the promised benefits are so numerous and great, that they transcend all comprehension. There is infinite bliss in each benefit. We shall only briefly describe the main benefits, reducing them to fourteen articles. The first seven represent the miseries from which the Lord promises to deliver those who are in this covenant. The second group of seven deals with the benefits which God promises to bestow. May God grant us to consider these promised benefits of the covenant with a wise and believing heart, rather than hearing or reading about them in a mere casual manner. May we contemplate so long upon them until we can say "Amen" upon them and they would be most precious to us! Take heed therefore, as these are the conditions of this covenant. To all who desire to enter into this covenant with Him, God promises deliverance from the following seven evils: God first of all offers as a condition of the covenant deliverance from all sins. "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, saith the Lord ... and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:33-34). God promises to forgive sin in such a manner:

(1) He does not retain one single sin, but forgives them all; that is, the little, great, public, secret, and brazen sins, as well as those sins which are frequently repeated -- due either to weakness or enticement -- those which continually cleave to us, and also the sinfulness of our nature. He makes no exception. "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities" (Jeremiah 33:8).

(2) God promises that this forgiveness shall be of eternal duration, and that He will never recall these sins again. "I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34); "I ... will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25); "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins" (Isaiah 44:22).

(3) God promises to forgive sin in such a manner that He will no longer view the sinner as a sinner, but as if he had never transgressed against Him -- as if he had fully atoned for all his sins and fulfilled all righteousness. "Ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10); "... that we might be made

the righteousness of God ..." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

(4) God promises to forgive sin in such a manner that from henceforth He will behold their sins with pity -- as a father does when his weak child falls. Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven.

Secondly, God promises deliverance from His wrath. Due to sin every man is subject to wrath. "... and were by nature the children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). This wrath is unbearable, for "... who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?" (Psalms 76:7). From this wrath all partakers of the covenant are fully delivered. "... which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Thirdly, God promises deliverance from the curse which is upon every man. "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 27:26). God fully removes this curse. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13).

Fourthly, God promises deliverance from all corporal trials and from death; that is, to the extent that these would harm the partakers of the covenant and not be to their benefit. "I will redeem them from death" (Hosea 13:14).

Fifthly, God promises deliverance from the power of the devil. Every man by nature is a captive in the snare of the devil at his will (2 Timothy 2:26). God delivers His own out of this snare by virtue of this covenant. "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18).

Sixthly, God promises deliverance from the dominion of sin. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

Seventhly, God promises deliverance from eternal condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

What do you think of these conditions -- you who have ever felt what sin, wrath, curse, death, the power of the devil, the dominion of sin, and condemnation are? Are not these matters precious, and are not these conditions worthy of acceptance? Is it actually possible to reject them?

However, the Lord was not satisfied merely to deliver those who are in covenant with Him from all these evils. He proposes other conditions in which He promises all blessings which can be subservient to the felicity of the partakers of the covenant.

First, God offers Himself to be the God of a poor, contrite sinner. "I will establish My covenant ... to be a God unto thee" (Genesis 17:7); "But this shall be the covenant ... I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33). This is the sum and substance of all true felicity. No one knows what this is, however, except those who enjoy it. This felicity does not consist in receiving a benefit from God, but in having God Himself as one's portion. "The portion of Jacob is not like them: for He is the former of all things" (Jeremiah 10:16). This was the joy of the church. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him" (Lamentations 3:24). Herein Asaph found rest and encouraged himself in all tribulations. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalms 73:25-26). Who can give expression to the magnitude of this felicity? It consists in being overshadowed with God's gracious presence; to be surrounded

with His supporting and preserving omnipotence; to rest in His unfailing faithfulness; to rejoice in God's eternal fullness, majesty, and glory: to be enlightened by His light, goodness, and love; to be satisfied with His all-sufficiency; to lose oneself in His infinity and incomprehensibility; to bow before Him with delight and love; to be subject to Him; and to worship Him. This felicity consists in rendering Him honor and glory with heart, tongue, and deeds -- being conscious of His perfections and because He is so worthy of this. It consists in fearing Him, in serving Him, and a complete and full acquiescence in His will because He is God. This felicity is such that I can neither comprehend it, nor can you define it. Rather, we must lose ourselves in its infinity, exclaiming, "Hallelujah!", "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalms 33:12)! This is all-inclusive in and of itself. Nevertheless it has pleased the Lord to convey this and other special blessings as conditions and promises of the covenant. These conditions we will now consider in order that we may gain a better understanding and be more exercised concerning them.

Secondly, God promises to give His Spirit to those who are in covenant with Him. "I will pour My spirit upon thy seed" (Isaiah 44:3); "And I will put My Spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:27); "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28); "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts" (Galatians 4:6).

Thirdly, God offers His friendship, which is as intimate as between a father and his children. By virtue of this covenant Abraham was called "the friend of God" (James 2:23). Christ says of His disciples, "Ye are My friends" (John 15:14). "Behold, thou art fair, My love" [Note: The Statenvertaling reads, "Ziet, gij zijt schoon, mijne vriendin," that is, "Thou art fair my friend."] (Song of Solomon 4:1). The church in return calls Jesus Friend (Song of Solomon 5:16). Yes, God desires to be a Father to them, and they shall be His children. "And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters" (2 Corinthians 6:18). What a privilege, and how wondrous and sweet it is to be able to exclaim, "Abba, Father!"

Fourthly, God offers peace. "Great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13). This peace is with God, with angels, and with one's conscience. The person is in such a frame as if all of creation were at peace with him. The sweetness of this frame is such that it cannot be expressed, as it passes all understanding (Php 4:7). It is a foretaste of heaven, for the kingdom of heaven is peace (Romans 14:17).

Fifthly, God offers sanctification, including all its elements, such as:

- (1) illumination -- "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord" (Isaiah 54:13); "But this shall be the covenant ... they shall all know Me" (Jeremiah 31:33-34);
- (2) life -- "My covenant was with him of life" (Malachi 2:5);
- (3) truth -- "I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them" (Isaiah 61:8);
- (4) freedom -- "... where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17);
- (5) willingness -- "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness" (Psalms 110:3);

(6) joining everything together -- godliness, faith, hope, love, godly fear, obedience, humility, meekness, wisdom, etc. "But this shall be the covenant that I will make ... I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33); "A new heart also will I give you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). All that the godly so deeply long for -- and the absence of which they mourn so deeply -- is promised here.

Sixthly, God Himself guarantees that He shall preserve those who are in covenant with Him in the state of grace and friendship, so that neither they themselves nor any creature shall be able to rob them of it. The certainty of the state of partakers of the covenant is not dependent upon them, for they would fall from such certainty one hundred times a day. The Lord Himself promises that He will never forsake or reject them. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jeremiah 32:40). How sure and steadfast is the state of that person who may be in covenant with God! Such a person can confidently say, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 8:35).

Seventhly, as a condition of this covenant God offers eternal felicity. "And I appoint (by way of covenant or testament) unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me" (Luke 22:29); "And I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:28); "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

We have thus presented to you the articles of the covenant. Consider these fourteen articles together, and determine now whether there is one article which does not suit you, and which you would wish to be deleted. Consider whether there isn't something you would wish in addition to this. In doing so, you will discover that the perfection and glory of this covenant excels anything that all men together would have devised or dared to request. Is it not sufficient to be delivered from all the evil to which we are subject, and instead eternally to enjoy complete felicity? Does it not sufficiently motivate you to acquiesce fully in a resolution to enter into this covenant with God? What do you think -- is he not robbed of all his senses who refuses to enter into such a covenant, a covenant with God Himself, and upon such conditions? Otherwise God would require something from man which is unreasonable. The Unconditional Nature of the Covenant of Grace

Let us now consider which conditions God places upon man anew. I am not referring to conditions which man presents, for man is neither interested in a covenant nor inclined to enter into covenant with God. He therefore neither proposes such a covenant nor makes any request or promise for the purpose of moving God to enter into covenant with him. But God wondrously makes the initial proposal, and promises benefits in order to motivate and allure man to enter into covenant with Him. The question is: What are the conditions which God requires from man, and which He also promises to fulfil? I answer: God places no conditions upon man at all, nor does man promise anything as a condition upon which he would enter this covenant. Your heart needs to be instructed concerning this matter so that you might have more freedom to enter into this covenant, and with fewer doubts be more steadfast in this covenant. I therefore repeat that from man's side no conditions whatsoever are imposed upon him by God -- conditions which man promises to fulfil. This is first of all confirmed by several specific texts. "He that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1); "I will give unto

him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Revelation 21:6); "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). It cannot be stated any more clearly than this.

Secondly, what would a poor son of man be able to contribute or promise? He has nothing and can do nothing. Even if he promised something, it would prove to be a falsehood. Whatever he would promise, he would have to be able to deliver, for he cannot promise concerning that which belongs to another. Man, however, possesses nothing, and God cannot be satisfied with a deceitful promise. God knows man, and He knows well that he can do nothing and will do nothing by his own initiative. God desires truth within.

Thirdly, this covenant is entirely of grace, excluding the covenant of works in its entirety. Consequently, all conditions to be met from the side of man are absolutely excluded. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace" (Romans 11:6).

Fourthly, if any condition were imposed upon man, and were to be promised by him, the covenant of grace would be breakable and mutable; for whoever does not fulfil the condition breaks the covenant established on the basis of this condition. If man were to promise something, he would not keep his promise and would thus break this covenant and would never become a partaker of salvation by virtue of this covenant. Then the saints would be able to fall away, which is contrary to the Bible.

Fifthly, if man were able to do something and make promises accordingly, what would it be? Would it be conversion, love, holiness, obedience? Aside from the fact that man cannot do so, these matters are conditions which God promises to fulfil from His side. God offers to give these matters to the person who enters into covenant with Him, as has been demonstrated above. If these are conditions which God from His side promises to bestow upon man, they cannot be conditions which man from his side promises to fulfil.

Objection #1: One could be inclined to think that man neither needs to exercise his will, nor believe. All promises are contingent upon believing, and there are threatenings for those who do not believe. If these are conditions which God has promised to fulfil in man from His side, they cannot be conditions which man promises to fulfil from his side.

Answer: First of all, conditional promises and threatenings are motives by which God allures and draws man to enter into this covenant. Secondly, the conditional threatenings and promises have reference to the measure in which the benefits of the covenant are applied to those who are in covenant with God, and are means to stir them up. It cannot be concluded, however, that to will and to believe are conditions of the covenant of grace itself, which in its very essence contains no threatenings but only promises.

Thirdly, to will and to believe are acts which are prerequisite qualities in someone who enters into this covenant. Prerequisite qualities are not conditions, however, but only qualify a person to enter into a covenant. The desire of a young man and the granting of his request, as well as the giving of a daughter into the marriage covenant, are not conditions for the marriage, but constitute the marriage itself. Such is also the case here. At best, the act of willing and believing could be called *conditio, sine qua non*; that is, a condition apart from which nothing can occur, which however does not pertain to the essence of the matter itself.

Objection #2: One could furthermore be inclined to think, that since God requires nothing from man in the establishment of this covenant, and promises to do everything for him, only God is under obligation and not man, and he may therefore live as he pleases.

Answer: A poor daughter who promises herself to a rich young man, who in turn promises only those conditions which are for her good, is as obligated to this young man without promising any conditions as he is to her with his conditions. Likewise, a believer who enters the covenant binds himself to the Lord, confirming verbally and in writing, "I am the Lord's." To what does the believer obligate himself? He obligates himself to belong to the Lord, to be the object of all God's goodness, and to be led and governed in all his ways by the Holy Spirit. It was stated above that the fifth article of the blessings of the covenant pertains to sanctification in all its particulars. Shall a man enter into this covenant, there must be both a true delight in, and a true love for, this article. He who finds delight [Note: à Brakel frequently uses the word verliefd to describe the disposition of heart of the godly. Literally translated this word means to be in love, and thus à Brakel literally states that the godly are in love with sanctification.] in sanctification will be motivated to enter the covenant for the very purpose of attaining to holiness, wishing to live a godly rather than an ungodly life. In addition to many other obligations by which he feels bound to a sanctified life, it is love which obligates him to it. Such a commitment constitutes marriage; however, it is not a condition of the covenant. So much about conditions.

Since the majesty, holiness, righteousness, and truth of God do not permit Him to deal with the sinner as a sinner, it is necessary that a Surety and Mediator intercede, to remove every obstacle in the way. This Surety is Immanuel, Jesus Christ, who is very God and very man, thus representing both parties equally. In Him both natures are united in order to unite God with man. In God's presence He represents man, taking all the sins of the elect for His account as if He personally had committed them and guaranteeing the payment of their guilt. He also bore their sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). He engages Himself to obey the law on behalf of the elect, and has also rendered them righteous by His obedience (Romans 5:19). Before man, so to speak, He represents God, confirming that God will be true to the promises made in this covenant. In consequence of this He dies as testator, in whose death the testament is unbreakable. "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead" (Hebrews 9:16-17). Thus, He brings these two parties, God and man, together, bringing the sinner to God in the way of reconciliation and peace (1 Peter 3:18). How desirable and how firm is this covenant, in which all the weighty conditions are laid upon the Surety, and all blessings come upon those who are partakers of the covenant by the Mediator Jesus Christ, in whom all the promises are yea in Him (2 Corinthians 1:20). The Form and Essential Nature of the Covenant of Grace

We now must consider the form and essential nature of this covenant, which consists of mutual consent or acquiescence. Neither benefits, desirability, nor love constitute a marriage, but rather the mutual declaration of consent before each other. Everyone is familiar with the fact that when both parties acquiesce in the conditions, peace is established between those parties which previously were at war. Such is also the case here. To facilitate a clearer understanding of this, four things should be noted. 1) God's offer to the sinner to bring him into a covenant; 2) the allurements by way of offering numerous advantageous conditions; 3) the consent and acceptance of this offer; 4) the right -- granted to the partaker of the covenant by virtue of being in covenant

with God -- to request, in faith and through prayer, those benefits which God has promised and upon which he now has a claim. From God's side there is acquiescence, for He is the One who offers and invites. If a man, who now correctly understands the conditions, has a heartfelt desire for them, believes the truth of the offer, turns away from all other things to God alone, and quietly, truthfully, and joyfully declares his acquiescence in this covenant, surrendering himself thereby to God in Christ, then the covenant has thus been made and will eternally endure. Happy is he whose eyes have been opened by God, whose will has been inclined, and who has been brought to this earnest acquiescence! He may be assured of his present and future state of blessedness, even if he comes into much darkness, for his state is only secure in this covenant -- not in his feeling, faith, or holiness. Those who merely contemplate these matters, however, considering them to be desirable but nevertheless have not heartily and truthfully had any dealings with God in Christ -- never having become partakers of the fundamental fruit of this covenant, namely, renewal of heart -- should not imagine this to be their portion. But all those who make Jesus their choice, receive Him, look to Him, and yearn for Him, wait upon Him to receive the forgiveness of sin, peace, comfort, and strength for the way of sanctification -- all those are truly entering into this covenant. It may be that, due to lack of clear light and guidance, they do not perceive that in these things they have this covenant in view and are engaged in covenant transaction. The perception of this, however, should serve to the strengthening of the little ones in faith. The purpose of this covenant must also be carefully noted, for this will yield much liberty to a poor son or daughter of man. Since God alone promises the fulfillment of all conditions, requiring none of man in return, what is His purpose in entering into a covenant with man? This is not to His benefit, for it neither increases His felicity nor renders Him more perfect and glorious. Rather, the purpose as far as He is concerned is the revelation of His grace, goodness, wisdom, righteousness, and power; and concerning man, His purpose is to bring him, motivated by love, to felicity. This is confirmed in the following texts: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:5-6); "And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory" (Romans 9:23); "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:10-11).

If this is God's purpose in executing this great work of redemption by way of a covenant, who then would not wish to be the recipient of all this? Being unfit for everything, we are nevertheless suited for the manifestation of infinite grace, and divine, invincible goodness. If God wills to be the God of sinners and to lead them as His children to glory, does it not behoove us, and do we not have sufficient ground, to freely enter into this covenant and to turn repeatedly to it? Therefore if it is God's purpose to be gracious, let it be your purpose to focus also upon this grace. In love acquiesce in this covenant, to the glory of God's great and free grace, and be saved for that purpose. Entering the covenant with that perspective glorifies God and yields the soul humility, liberty, and sweet quietude. A clearer knowledge of the nature of this covenant and its desirability is also acquired by a consideration of its characteristics. These are both distinct and exceedingly desirable.

First, this covenant is primarily a one-sided covenant, for God conceived it, God alone promises the conditions, God provides the Surety, God makes the initial proposal, and God works knowledge as well as to will and to do. Therefore we generally read in Scripture, "I shall establish My covenant"; "I shall make a covenant"; "I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." However, since the establishment of a covenant requires the consent of both parties as a necessary prerequisite, there must therefore be the acquiescence of man from his side, and from that perspective it is a two-sided covenant.

Secondly, this covenant is exclusively a gracious covenant. Neither good works, good spiritual frames, good desires, desirability, nor misery which would invoke pity -- nothing whatsoever from the side of man moved God to conceive a way of redemption and a covenant. Nothing from man's side first moved God to help him. God desires to be gracious, and in this covenant man is willing to receive everything by grace alone. God comes to the foreground here as a gracious God (Exodus 34:6). Of His fullness man receives "grace for grace" (John 1:16).

Thirdly, it is a holy covenant. The Lord is holy, the Mediator is holy, the way in which partakers of the covenant receive the promises is holy, all the promises are holy, and also the partakers of the covenant are sanctified. Thus, this covenant is holy from every perspective: "... to remember His holy covenant" (Luke 1:72).

Fourthly, it is a glorious covenant. The Lord God possesses all glory, the Mediator is glorious and crowned with glory, and the benefits which are promised are lofty and glorious. It is especially glorious for man to be exalted in such a manner that he may enter into covenant with God; by way of this covenant he is brought unto glory (Hebrews 2:10). Thus, it behooves all who are in this covenant to exclaim, "For He that is mighty hath done to me great things" (Luke 1:49).

Fifthly, it is a well-ordered covenant. "Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things" (2 Samuel 23:5). Everything -- the beginning, middle, and end -- fits together. Its orderliness is so precise that from every perspective its manifold wisdom, the purity of its righteousness, its unspeakable goodness, and its irresistible power shine forth. In that covenant we behold that eternal purpose to be magnified by inexpressible grace, the beholding of which would yield the felicity and happiness of angels and men. In consequence of this, God created man perfectly holy, and permitted him, by the exercise of his own will, to break the covenant in the commission of sin, thus concluding them all in sin. Subsequent to this, God proposes another way unto salvation: the covenant of grace. The Lord promised the Surety, depicting Him by means of ceremonies; causing Him to be born at a specific moment and by way of suffering to atone for sin; and then exalting Him at His right hand, committing all things into His hands. The Lord causes the gospel to be proclaimed, and by it draws His elect into this covenant, leading them by many remarkable and wondrous ways to glory. This covenant is thus well-ordered in all things.

Sixthly, it is a covenant of peace and friendship. "... neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed" (Isaiah 54:10). From this proceeds the mutual use of the name friend. Yes, by way of comparison it is an offensive and defensive covenant. God says to Abraham, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Genesis 12:3), and the partaker of the covenant responds, "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts" (Psalms 119:63); "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? ... I hate them with

perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Psalms 139:21-22).

Seventhly, it is a marriage covenant. As husband and wife are united in love and are one, so intimate is the relationship and unity which comes into existence between God and Christ on the one hand and those who are in covenant with Them on the other hand. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee ... and thou becamest Mine" (Ezekiel 16:8); "And I will betroth thee unto Me" (Hosea 2:19); "For thy Maker is thine husband" (Isaiah 54:5). From this proceeds the use of the names Bridegroom and Bride, and the mutual use of the word my. "I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zechariah 13:9); "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16).

Eighthly, it is an everlasting covenant. It does not merely last for ten or twenty years, or for the duration of one's life, but is a covenant without end. It is therefore frequently called an eternal covenant (Jeremiah 31:33-34), and thus is steadfast, sure, and unbreakable. This is evident from -- (1) Isaiah 54:10, "Neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed;"

(2) its issuing forth from "the purpose of God according to election" which shall stand (Romans 9:11);

(3) its being founded upon the covenant of redemption and the Counsel of Peace, which is unbreakable: "My covenant will I not break" (Psalms 89:34);

(4) being confirmed by the death of the Testator. "For a testament is of force after men are dead" (Hebrews 9:17);

(5) being founded upon the truth and faithfulness of God, "which keepeth truth for ever" (Psalms 146:6);

(6) it being a covenant confirmed by God's oath, "wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath" (Hebrews 6:17). So much for the characteristics of this covenant.

Attentively consider the characteristics and the qualities of this covenant. From whatever perspective we view it, is it not a wondrous and desirable covenant? Who can refrain himself from entering into this covenant with his whole heart? Who being in covenant with God would not leap for joy in view of so great a salvation, and sweetly rest in God by way of this covenant? To this covenant also belong seals for the assurance of its steadfastness unto those who are in covenant with God. They do not seal this covenant, for they make no promise. Since only God promises, however, it is only He who seals this covenant. Under the Old Testament administration, circumcision and the passover were seals, as is true for holy baptism and the Lord's Supper under the New Testament administration. God first wishes to prepare man to become a partaker of eternal salvation out of free grace. He leads him, as He led Israel in the wilderness, in many mysterious ways which appear to lead away from heaven. Therefore the Lord gives him seals so he does not faint in the way. The Lord does so in order that 1) these promised benefits may repeatedly come to mind, he may receive a deep insight therein, and focus on nothing else but these benefits; 2) he may increasingly be strengthened in faith and be assured of the certainty of the promises made to him; 3) he may receive a foretaste of the heavenly benefits and experience

something of their efficacy; 4) he may repeatedly be stirred up to be courageous in forsaking the world, to strive against his lusts, take up his cross, and seek honor and glory in well-doing. In this manner one ought to use the sacraments, not resting in the use of the sacraments themselves. One must rather view them on the one hand as a symbol of the suffering and death of the Mediator Jesus Christ, and on the other side perceive in them the unbreakable nature of all the promises of this covenant.

Reasons why Many Do not Enter into this Covenant

We have presented to you the excellency of the covenant of grace. Who would not be desirous to be a partaker of this covenant? Who would not say "Amen" upon all this and exclaim, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalms 118:23)? Nevertheless, there are many who do not desire it. The Lord Jesus marvelled because of the unbelief of the Jews, and likewise all who know the glory of this covenant will marvel with me, while on the other hand perceive how many have no desire for it, and do not enter in. One would think, "How is this possible?" and we ask, "What are the reasons for this?"

First, there is ignorance, for one will not desire that of which he has no knowledge. Many do not perceive what the purpose of preaching is, nor what is being proclaimed. Although there may be a hearing ear to some degree, they do not meditate upon it, nor make any effort to thoroughly understand the matter, and therefore it remains concealed for them. Others contemplate it for mere intellectual reasons, in order to be able to discuss it, and to acquire esteem as being intelligent. Thus they consider the excellency of the covenant as something foreign to them -- as something of no value to them.

Secondly, there is unbelief. They take notice of the matters relating to this covenant and esteem them to be good and desirable, but do not know whether this is according to truth. Even though they dare not reject it as untruth, they do not believe that men can become partakers of these matters and enter into such a state. They thus leave these matters alone and turn away from them. The Word does not profit them, not being mixed with faith.

Thirdly, there is listless laziness. They perceive something of this matter and are desirous of being partakers thereof. This desire is, however, the desire of a sluggard who does not wish to make an effort. It is the meditation and contemplation of one who is half asleep, who falls asleep with this desire, and at the same time loses his desires and exercises concerning it. Therefore they do not become partakers of it. This will be found in no other way except in the way of seeking. "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:4-5). For such persons, however, all effort is too much. If this blessing were to come automatically upon them, they would allow themselves to be influenced by it. To be continually engaged, however, in searching, praying, wrestling for faith, and receiving it by faith, is too heavy a task for them, and is not worth the effort.

Fourthly, there are earthly concerns. Many are desirous for the covenant and are sometimes inclined to enter in, but tribulations and excessive business, the fear of future want, as well as troubling thoughts and considerations draw the heart away, and cause them to forsake their good intentions with a sigh. These are the thorns which choke the good seed, make the heart heavy, and cause man to remain in his state.

Fifthly, there are the lusts of the flesh. These individuals would be desirous for the benefits of the covenant as such. However, when they consider the particulars of having to part with, hate, and strive against all those sins which bring them honor, advantage, and entertainment, the benefits of the covenant are no longer appealing to them. That which they enjoy presently is too sweet, and that which is of the flesh too delightful. Therefore they readily choose sin and forget about that which is spiritual. If they cannot enter heaven in any other way, so be it, for it is certain that, regardless of what happens, they cannot and will not forsake sin.

Sixthly, there are erroneous views. Many are knowledgeable concerning the truth, view it as glorious and desirable, and esteem those to be very blessed who are partakers of the covenant. They go to church, are outwardly religious, and refrain themselves from being involved in the gross pollution of the world. Thus they consider themselves partakers of the covenant:

(1) even though they do not know the truth internally, do not perceive the spiritual dimension of these matters, and in their hearts neither esteem the Surety of this covenant as precious, nor have a desire for Him alone;

(2) even though they do not break their alliance and covenant with the world and their flesh, treating them at once as enemies, but inwardly, with their inclinations and love, remain united to them;

(3) even though there are no dealings between them and the Surety of this covenant and the God of this covenant that they might enter this covenant wholeheartedly, they only consider the promises to be desirable.

(4) They are very satisfied, even though they neither possess nor have a feeling for the benefits of this covenant. They consider themselves partakers of the covenant even though they are separated from God, live far from Him, are void of holiness, are of the earth, live for themselves, live in secret sin, and with heart, thoughts, inclinations, and objectives are not focused upon God, but upon that which pertains to the body and is seen before their eyes. Those very matters which are to be found in all true partakers of the covenant are absent in presumptuous and temporal believers, and therefore such individuals ought to be convinced that until this moment they have deceived themselves with erroneous views.

Exhortation to Enter into the Covenant of Grace

You who are convinced that as yet you have not entered into this covenant, hear me, and let me persuade you to become a true partaker of the covenant by entering into it.

First, outside of this covenant there is nothing but misery. God is a Judge whom you have provoked to wrath; you are not a partaker of the Surety and His fullness, and you have no part in any of the promises. Rather, all threatenings apply to you, and all judgments rest upon you. All that you enjoy in the world increases your sins and makes your judgment all the heavier, and eternal damnation shall be your portion. "Wherefore remember ... that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:11-12). Awaken, come to yourself, be terrified and tremble! Let the terror of the Lord move you to faith and flee the wrath to come by entering into this covenant of peace.

Secondly, in this covenant the fullness of salvation is to be found. Page back a bit and examine all the promises of this covenant stated previously and consider if there is anything which you would desire in addition to this. If not (for nothing is lacking), embrace this covenant and yield yourself unto the Lord. You will forsake nothing but filth, and you will lay down that which is but a heavy burden. It is a hard and cruel taskmaster whose service you will renounce. Contrary to this, it is God with whom you shall live in peace and friendship. This consists of nothing but light, love, joy, and pure holiness, which all partakers of the covenant will enjoy both now and forever. Why do you still hesitate? Come, make a resolution, and enter into this covenant.

Thirdly, it is God Himself who beseeches you. He comes to you and calls out, "Turn unto Me and be ye saved." He sent His only begotten Son, and through Him He speaks to you. Will you then not hear God? Will you turn from Him who is from heaven? The Lord sends His servants, and presently also me, unto you. How they labor, how they beseech you, and what use they make of heart-rending reasons, even of tears, to allure you to enter into this covenant! My dear friend, allow yourself to be persuaded. Be reconciled with God, be conquered by the urgency of love, as well as by all the prayers of ministers sent up to God on your behalf.

Fourthly, the Lord shall turn no one away who in truth comes unto Him through Christ -- even if for so many years you have been disobedient to this friendly offer; even if until now your entire life has been nothing but sin; and even if until now you have done abominable things, are a murderer, an adulterer and fornicator, a thief, a slanderer, and a liar. If only you would but acknowledge your sin, have true sorrow, and have a true desire to be a partaker of this covenant in all its ramifications, and of its Surety so that through Him alone you may become a partaker of all these benefits. Be not discouraged, for there is hope concerning this matter. Come, for the Lord will certainly not cast you out, but will receive you, as He has said. You may observe this in all the promises, such as in John 6:37, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

You who are truly partakers of this covenant (which you may know from that which we have said previously), first of all, rejoice and delight yourself in being a partaker of all these benefits and over the steadfastness of this covenant, even though you do not enjoy as much of this as you desire. One day you shall enjoy all this in full measure.

Secondly, reflect upon God as He presently is in this covenant, and transact with Him as a partaker of this covenant who has been graciously received by Him. With humble boldness come into His presence, pray in faith for the enjoyment of these benefits, expect them with patience, and rely in all things on Him, trusting that He will make all things well.

Thirdly, walk worthy of the gospel, as is fitting for one who is a partaker of this covenant. Do not be influenced by your former friends, the world and all that is to be found in it. Deny your fleshly lusts, be heavenly minded, let your conversation be in heaven, and let your light shine among men in order that they may perceive that a more excellent spirit is in you than in them. Strive for humility and meekness; strive to love your enemies; behave yourself wisely in the pathway of uprightness, and be holy as He is holy who has received you into His covenant.

Fourthly, walk in love and peace with other partakers of the covenant. Let the world observe that you are one in heart and soul, and may your example stir up all other partakers of the covenant, so that the mutual love of many may kindle a fire which may ignite those who are without.

Fifthly, magnify God concerning this great work. Be diligent not merely to enumerate the perfections of God unveiled in this covenant, but seek to plumb their depth, so that your soul may lose itself in amazement, and your tongue may be loosened to "shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). "Praise the Lord, call upon His Name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that His Name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for He hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee" (Isaiah 12:4-6).

Concerning this covenant two questions need to be answered. The Covenant of Grace Identical in both Old and New Testaments

Question #1: When was this covenant of grace initiated? Answer: Due to a misunderstanding concerning the nature of the covenant of grace, the Socinians and Arminians, who are in this respect like-minded, claim that it did not exist in the Old Testament. Although they admit that it was announced that a Savior would come at a given time, and that a covenant of grace would be established at a given time, they claim that there was no such covenant during the Old Testament dispensation. They claim that those living in that dispensation were not partakers of this covenant, did not receive any promises concerning eternal salvation, and did not receive eternal life by faith and hope in a future Savior. Instead, they received it by grace, that is, on the basis of their virtuousness. To this we respond that, although the administration of the covenant was very different in both testaments, this covenant, as far as essence is concerned, existed as well in the Old Testament -- being initiated with Adam -- as presently in the New Testament.

Proof #1: This is first of all confirmed by the fact that immediately after the fall this covenant was established in Paradise by way of the promise in Genesis 3:15, "It (the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head (the serpent)." This Seed of the woman is the Lord Jesus, who without the involvement of a man was born of the Virgin Mary. Such never has been nor ever shall be true for any man. Christ alone, and no one else, has bruised the head of the serpent, that is, the devil. "That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14); "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Christ, the Seed of the woman, who would bruise the head of the devil, is promised here, which can be deduced from the threat made to the serpent. This promise was not addressed to Adam and Eve, but only within their hearing. From this it follows that the covenant of grace was not established with Adam and Eve, and in them with all their descendants as was true for the covenant of works. Rather, Adam and Eve, hearing this promise, had to receive the promised Savior for themselves in order to be comforted, as every believer has done subsequent to the giving of this promise, which shall become evident in what follows.

Proof #2: The gospel, which is the offer of this covenant, is proclaimed in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:16). He said "in thee," that is, in thy Seed, which is Christ. "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). Abraham believed this good news, not for the heathen who still would come and believe, but for himself. It was to his personal benefit, it being unto justification, which is an acquittal from guilt and punishment, and a granting of the right unto eternal life. This is confirmed in Genesis 15:6, "And he

believed (note: not “the Lord,” but) in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness”; “And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God” (James 2:23). That the gospel was proclaimed to him was not an extraordinary privilege afforded to Abraham alone. The church of the Old Testament had the identical privilege, which is evident from Hebrews 4:2 a, “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them.” It is proclaimed to us in order that we would receive it to our benefit, and thus likewise also to their benefit. The reason why many did not profit from this was not to be attributed to the fact that it was not offered unto them, but due to their not receiving it by faith. “But the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Hebrews 4:2 b). Thus, in the Old Testament dispensation Christ was proclaimed and offered in the gospel, and everyone was obligated by means of this gospel to believe in Christ unto justification as Abraham did. The covenant of grace therefore existed in the Old Testament.

Observe this also in reference to Moses. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Hebrews 11:24; Hebrews 11:26). Moses knew Christ, believed in Christ, esteemed Christ as being precious, and had the promises in view through Christ. This chapter enumerates an entire register of Old Testament believers, and the benefits of which they became partakers by faith in Christ.

Proof #3: The Surety of the covenant was equally efficacious in the Old Testament as in the New, and thus this covenant existed then as well as now. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). “Today” refers to the present time, “for ever” refers to the future, and “yesterday” refers to the past. The apostle does not merely state that Christ was, is and shall be, but he says that Christ has always been the same; that is, unto reconciliation, comfort, and help. Therefore one ought not to faint under oppression. By “yesterday” we cannot understand the time immediately prior to Paul, that is, the period of Christ’s sojourn upon earth. It is very evident that the apostle exhorts the believers to be steadfast, since Christ at all times -- that is, as soon as the church came into existence and as long as the church shall exist -- is the same faithful Savior. “Yesterday” therefore refers to the time prior to Christ’s incarnation, which also is confirmed by the statement that Christ has been slain before the foundation of the world. “Whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). The words “from the foundation of the world” may not be made to relate to the words “whose names are not written in the book of life.” There is no need to go back to that earlier phrase, and Christ never is said to be slain without any modifying statement. Even if one were to interpret these words as such, namely, “whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb before the foundation of the world,” it remains an established fact that there was a book from before the foundation of the world in which the names of believers were written. This is the book of the Lamb, that is, of Christ, and thus Christ’s death is noted as being efficacious at that time, since no one can be written in that book except it be for the efficacy of His death by being slain. It is very simple and clear, however, that one should join the words as the apostle does: “the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world.”

Question: But in what manner has Christ been slain since that time? The apostle appears to contradict this in Hebrews 9:26, where we read, “For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world.”

Answer: The apostle shows that the death of Christ had to occur but once, and that this one sacrifice was efficacious from the foundation of the world. He thus forcefully confirms that this one death of Christ already was efficacious then, this being such as if He both at that time and since that time had actually suffered. He thus confirms that Christ is the same yesterday and today. Christ was not slain in actuality from the foundation of the world, but rather as far as the efficacy of His sacrifice was concerned. From that moment believers believed in Him through the sacrifices, wherein they beheld the death of the Savior to come, and received Him by faith unto justification. This was true of Abel and Enoch, for we read, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God" (Hebrews 11:4-5). Abel sacrificed in faith, Abel pleased God, and Abel was righteous. This expresses irrefutably that Abel saw Christ represented in his sacrifice.

Proof #4: Believers in the Old Testament had all the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace, and thus they, as is true for us in the New Testament, had the covenant itself.

(1) God was their God and their Father. "I am the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:2); "I am thy God" (Isaiah 41:10); "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father" (Isaiah 64:8); "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father?" (Jeremiah 3:4).

(2) They had the forgiveness of sins. "As for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away" (Psalms 65:3); "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (Psalms 32:5).

(3) They had the spirit of adoption unto children, "to whom pertaineth the adoption" (Romans 9:4); "We having the same Spirit of faith" (2 Corinthians 4:13); "Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalms 143:10).

(4) They had peace of conscience with God. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart" (Psalms 4:7); "Truly my soul waiteth upon God" (Psalms 62:1).

(5) They had childlike communion with God. "When I awake, I am still with Thee" (Psalms 139:18); "But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:28).

(6) They were partakers of sanctification. "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalms 119:97).

(7) After death they entered eternal bliss, for which they longed. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Hebrews 11:10; Hebrews 11:16). They were the recipients of this salvation. "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:11). The apostle neither refers here to the heathen, nor does he elevate the salvation of the heathen above the salvation of the Jews, but his reference was to the fathers who could not bear the yoke and nevertheless were saved by faith. From this he affirms that their expectation of salvation was also by faith and not by the works of the ceremonial law. From this he concludes that one must not impose the requirement of circumcision and the keeping of the ceremonial law upon the Gentiles. From all this it is evident that believers under the Old Testament enjoyed the benefits of the covenant of grace, had the covenant itself and were partakers of the same covenant with us, having all eaten the same spiritual meat and having drunk the same spiritual drink (1 Corinthians 10:3-4). Therefore

the apostle Peter called the Jewish nation, "The children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:25).

Objection #1: In the Old Testament believers did not receive the promises, "not having received the promises" (Hebrews 11:13).

Answer: The promises to which the apostle here refers have reference to the incarnation of Christ, which they saw from afar, believed, and embraced.

Objection #2: "For the law made nothing perfect" (Hebrews 7:19).

Answer: The ceremonial laws to which the apostle refers here lacked efficacy of satisfaction, but did point to Christ. They were a stimulus for a better hope. By faith in a Messiah to come they were perfect in Him (Colossians 2:13).

Objection #3: In Hebrews 9:8 we read "that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing."

Answer: Christ is the way (John 14:6). Christ consecrated the way to God and to glory through the veil, that is to say, His flesh (cf. Hebrews 10:19-20). The text states that as long as the ceremonies were still in effect, Christ had not yet actually paid the ransom, nor merited salvation for His own. When this occurred, however, these ceremonies no longer served a purpose. The apostle does not say that no one entered heaven during that time period, which is something most opposing parties would not dare to deny. Enoch, Elijah, Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would rebuke them. Neither does the apostle state that the way to heaven was not known as yet, for whoever possesses faith, hope, and love, also knows the way. He stated rather that Christ Himself -- who would accomplish that which the entire tabernacle service could not bring to pass, that is, the salvation of sinners -- had not yet come in the flesh.

Objection #4: The apostle stated that Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). Thus light and life were not present prior to Christ's incarnation.

Answer: The text indeed states that Christ is He who has brought life and immortality to light. It does not mention, however, that Christ did this only subsequent to His incarnation, and not prior to His coming. We have shown above that Christ, who is the same yesterday and today, was thus engaged in the Old Testament, the gospel having been proclaimed also during that time. This text, however, refers to the measure of revelation, and to the revelation of the gospel unto the Gentiles, which, prior to this, had only occurred in Israel. This is confirmed in verse 11, where we read, "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." The apostle states this expressly when he says, "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed ... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs. ... Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:5-6; Ephesians 3:8). In like manner Acts 16:25-26 is to be understood, where we read, "... according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the

obedience of faith.” From this it is evident that there is not a distinction between the Old and the New Testament as far as the way of salvation is concerned, but the distinction is between the Jewish nation, which at that time was the only recipient of revelations, and the Gentiles who now have the very same revelation.

Objection #5: Consider the following texts. “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39-40); “Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things” (1 Peter 1:12). It is evident from these texts that they who lived during the Old Testament period did not partake of these benefits.

Answer: These texts expressly refer to the incarnation of Christ, it being evident that these promises were not received while these saints lived. They proclaimed that Christ at one time would come, but that they did not expect Him during their time. In this respect they did not minister unto themselves but unto us who live subsequent to the coming of Christ, and may behold and enjoy the fulfillment of that promise. And thus we enjoy better things than they; that is, they are better since the fulfillment of the promise is better than the promise itself. It thus follows that these texts do not refer to the enjoyment of the benefits of the covenant, for they were partakers of this as much as we are (which has already been shown); the apostle pointed to this in the text itself when he stated, “that they without us should not be made perfect.” They thus were made perfect, not by the works of the law, but through Christ, whose coming they had in the promises of which we have the fulfillment. They were therefore not saved on any different basis than we, for we and they are saved by the very same Surety. The New Testament is superior to the Old Testament only as far as administration is concerned. The Existence of an Additional, External Covenant with Men Denied

Question #2: Did God, either in the Old or New Testament, establish a different, external covenant in addition to the covenant of grace?

Answer: Before we answer this question it is necessary to define what an external covenant is.

(1) An external covenant is a relationship between God and man; it is a friendly covenant, or association.

(2) The parties of this covenant are, on the one side, the holy God who is of purer eyes than to behold evil (Habakkuk 1:13), who has no pleasure in wickedness, with whom evil shall not dwell, in whose sight the foolish shall not stand, who hates the workers of iniquity, who shall destroy them that speak leasing, and who abhors the bloody and deceitful man (Psalms 5:5-6). The other party is the unregenerate, whose throat is an open sepulchre, whose tongue use deceit, who have the poison of asps under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, whose feet are swift to shed blood, whose ways are destruction and misery, who do not know the way of peace, and who do not have the fear of God before their eyes (Romans 3:13-18). As long as they remain in this condition, they are the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3), and vessels of wrath fitted to destruction (Romans 9:22). These would have to be the parties of this covenant.

(3) The promises of such a covenant merely relate to physical blessings, be it the land of Canaan, or in addition to that, food and clothing, money, delicacies, and the delights of this world.

(4) The condition is external obedience, merely consisting in external observance of the law of the ten commandments and the ceremonies, church attendance, making profession of faith, and using the sacraments, participation being external and without the heart.

(5) Such a covenant would be without a Mediator, being immediately established between God and man.

(6) In the Old Testament this would be the national covenant established only with the seed of Abraham. This covenant would have been an exemplary covenant to typify the spiritual service in the days of the New Testament. In the New Testament it would be a covenant to establish the external church. All of this would constitute an external covenant, it being essentially different in nature than the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

Upon closer examination of such an external covenant (even though proponents of such a covenant do not perhaps appreciate such a close examination), the question is whether there is such an external covenant? Some deny that such is the case in the New Testament, but claim it existed in the Old Testament. Others maintain that such a covenant also exists in the New Testament. We, however, make a distinction between external admission into the covenant of grace, and an external covenant. We maintain that there have always been those who externally have entered into the covenant of grace, and who, without faith and conversion but without giving offense, mingle among the true partakers of the covenant. Their external behavior, however, does not constitute an external covenant. God is not satisfied with such an external walk but will punish those in an extraordinary measure who flatter Him with their mouths and lie to Him with their tongue. Thus, there is an external entrance into the covenant of grace, but not an external covenant. This we shall now demonstrate.

First, the person who joins himself to the church or ever has joined the church never has had such a covenant in view by which he would merely obtain some physical benefits. He has salvation in view. Thus, such an external covenant would be without partakers. This is not to suggest that man does not desire physical benefits, but he does not seek to obtain them by way of such a covenant. Man is neither acquainted with nor believes in such a covenant. There is no such covenant proposed to man, nor is he wooed or enticed to enter it. There is not one text in the entire Word of God supporting such a covenant. Therefore, whatever is neither offered nor pursued does not exist.

Secondly, it is inconsistent with the holiness of God that God, as we have expressly described Him to you, could enter into a covenant of friendship with man, who is as we have just portrayed him. It is inconsistent with God's nature that He would find pleasure in external religion, without the involvement of the heart. God demands the heart, even when He promised Canaan and other external blessings. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land," etc. (Deuteronomy 6:5; Deuteronomy 6:10). God expresses a dreadful threat to those who serve Him without the heart. "Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from me ... therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:13-14). Thus, it can neither be consistent with God's nature that He be satisfied with external obedience, nor that He by virtue of a covenant of friendship would bestow external blessings upon external obedience.

Furthermore, how can it be consistent with the veracity of God to exercise external friendship and yet internally be filled with holy hatred, to bless externally by virtue of a covenant and yet inwardly be truly inclined to condemn the sinner, for the sinner to belong externally to God in a friendly relationship and yet internally be truly a child of His wrath? If men were to interact in this manner among themselves and establish covenants in this manner, would such a practice not be despised by the ungodly? "Far be it from the Almighty that He should commit iniquity" (Job 34:10). And even if it could be consistent with God's nature, which it cannot, it would be a covenant of works and thus be imperfect. Human activity would be the condition, and the promises would relate to the physical. However, God cannot establish a covenant of works with the impotent sinner, which we shall demonstrate at the appropriate time.

Evasive Argument: God bestows external blessings upon many because of correct, external behavior. This can be observed in Ahab, the ungodly king of Israel. "seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me? because he humbleth himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house" (1 Kings 21:29).

Answer: It is one thing to maintain that God, by His common grace and in certain situations, bestows external blessings upon the ungodly. This we readily admit, for, "The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psalms 145:9). However, it is another thing to maintain that God does this by virtue of an external covenant, and thus, due to a relationship with the unregenerate and the ungodly, bestows external blessings upon them on the basis of externally good behavior. This we deny vehemently. The example of Ahab is no proof whatsoever, for the blessing bestowed upon him in response to his external manifestation of humility did not proceed from an external covenant (this being the point of contention here which needs to be proven), but by virtue of God's common grace and longsuffering.

Thirdly, if God could establish a covenant of friendship with the unregenerate without a Mediator of reconciliation, as is claimed by some, this necessarily being the proposition, there would be no need for the Surety Jesus Christ and one would be able to be saved without satisfaction of the justice of God. If God is able to establish a covenant of friendship with a sinner for the purpose of bestowing external blessings upon external obedience, doing so apart from a Mediator of reconciliation, God would likewise be able to establish a covenant unto salvation without a Mediator of reconciliation, thus promising eternal life to all the godly by virtue of their sincerity. If that were possible, there would be no need for Christ, for all of this could then transpire without Him. This, however, is impossible, as will be shown in the next chapter, and therefore it is also impossible for such an external covenant to exist. From this it is at once evident that holding to an external covenant undermines Reformed truth and gives opportunity for dissension.

Fourthly, such a covenant either has sacraments or has none. If there are none, then it is not a covenant, for God has never established a covenant without seals. If there are sacraments, which are they? Circumcision and the Passover in the Old Testament and baptism and the Lord's Supper in the New Testament? This cannot be, for then the same sacraments would be of two essentially different covenants, which is an absurdity. Besides, the sacraments of the covenant of grace only have reference to Christ, and are signs and seals of the righteousness of faith (Romans 4:11). Since this covenant would neither have Christ as its Surety nor spiritual promises and the righteousness of faith, these seals cannot be sacraments of an external covenant. In addition to

this, no one has a right to partake of the seals of the covenant of grace unless he is a true believer, since they are seals of the righteousness of faith. This position, however, maintains that the unregenerate are true members of this external covenant, who nevertheless may not partake of the sacraments. Therefore, the sacraments cannot be seals of this external covenant, from which follows that there is no such covenant.

Fifthly, whatever one proposes concerning this external covenant (such as external obedience) is comprehended in the covenant of grace. This obedience, however, proceeds from and is in harmony with an internal, holy spiritual frame. The covenant of grace includes of necessity all the external as well as the spiritual promises requisite unto salvation. Both aspects are confirmed in the following passages. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20); "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1); "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:8); "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).

Since the covenant of grace also obligates us to external obedience, and also has external promises, there is no need for an external covenant, which would require and promise all matters and benefits already comprehended in the covenant of grace.

Evasive Argument: One may suggest that all these reasons are not compelling since this external covenant presupposes the covenant of grace and coalesces with it.

Answer: (1) This does not confirm the matter, since this covenant must be viewed as being of an entirely different nature. It must therefore be considered independently. Thus, all these reasons remain in full force.

(2) The unregenerate, even though they externally enter into the covenant of grace, are not essentially in the covenant. With an external covenant, however, they would be actual and true members (and thus would be true partakers) of it without any reference to the covenant of grace. Thus they, not being true members of the covenant of grace and therefore without Christ and the promise, would be considered as true members of this external covenant. The covenant of grace is therefore not the issue here at all. Hence, the suggestion that an external covenant, which presupposes the covenant of grace, is established with the unregenerate holds no water. Thus, this evasive argument is without substance and our proof remains in force.

Objection #1: In the Old Testament the entire nation, head for head, the godly and the ungodly, had to enter into the covenant. They were all required to partake of the sacraments, were all in this covenant and used the sacraments, and many broke the covenant. There was thus an external covenant which in its essential nature was entirely different from the covenant of grace. For this covenant has been established with believers only and thus cannot be broken.

Answer: (1) The covenant of grace is an incomprehensible manifestation of the grace and mercy of God. When God offers this covenant to someone, it is an act of utmost wickedness to despise it, and to refuse to enter into it. Therefore everyone to whom the gospel is proclaimed is obligated to accept this offer with great desire and with all his heart, and thus to enter into this covenant. This

fact is certain and irrefutable. Thus, the obligation to enter the covenant does not prove it to be an external covenant.

(2) The ungodly, being under obligation to enter into the covenant of grace, were not permitted to remain ungodly, for the promise of this covenant also pertains to sanctification. They were to be desirous for sanctification, and this desire was to motivate them to enter into the covenant. Therefore, if someone remained ungodly, it would prove that his dealings with God were not in truth -- as ought to have been the case. It would confirm that he had entered into the covenant in an external sense, as a show before men, and that he was not a true partaker of the covenant.

(3) They were required to use the sacraments in faith. If they did not use them in this way, they would provoke the Lord. Neither in the Old nor New Testament do the ungodly have a right to the use of the sacraments. Unto such God says, "What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth?" (Psalms 50:16).

(4) Just as the ungodly merely enter the covenant under pretext, so they likewise break it again and their faith suffers shipwreck. Thus they manifest by their deeds that they have neither part nor lot in the word of promise. Their breach of covenant was not relative to an external covenant but relative to the covenant of grace into which they entered externally. The manner whereby they entered into this covenant was thus consistent with the breach of this covenant. With all that was within them they destroyed the covenant of grace by changing it into a covenant of works.

(5) In a general sense God established this covenant with the entire nation, but not with every individual. Everyone was to truly enter into this covenant by faith.

Objection #2: In the New Testament the church consists of believers and the unregenerate, the latter being by far the majority. The unregenerate are not in the covenant of grace, and yet they are members of the covenant. Consequently, they are in an external covenant, in view of which there is also an external or visible church. Children of believers, who as they grow older manifest themselves as being ungodly, are thus called holy (1 Corinthians 7:14). This can only be the holiness of an external covenant. From this it follows that there is such an external covenant.

Answer: (1) The unregenerate are in, but not of the church. They are not true members constituting the church, but are merely parasites. All who are present in someone's home do not necessarily belong to this home and the family members. The unregenerate have externally gained entrance into the church, but the external entrance into the covenant of grace does not constitute an external covenant.

(2) There is only an external church as far as the external congregation in its totality is concerned, but not relative to individual members where the evil intermingle with the good.

(3) The children of believers are called "holy" not in reference to an external covenant, but in reference to the covenant of grace, into which the parents, be it externally or in truth, have entered, and to which they may also entrust their children, doing so by virtue of their baptism. They also have no other covenant in view than a covenant by which they and their children can be saved. Thus, we have presented the covenant of grace in all its ramifications to you, and it is our wish that everyone would be endeared to it and truly enter into it. Amen.

020. Chapter 17: The Necessity of Satisfaction by the Surety Jesus Christ

----- CHAPTER SEVENTEEN ----- The Necessity of Satisfaction by the Surety Jesus Christ In the previous chapter we have dealt with the covenant of grace in general. We will now proceed to examine particular aspects of this covenant: 1) the Surety of this covenant; 2) the partakers of this covenant, the church; and 3) the way whereby the Lord translates them into this covenant, directs them in this matter, and leads them to its culmination -- glory. We shall first discuss the Surety of this covenant. It is essential that we consider Him more comprehensively, so that in knowing Him we may believe in Him with an understanding heart. It is, however, in vain to consider the Surety and His accomplishment unless we are convinced of the necessity of satisfaction. We shall therefore first of all expound this to you as a matter of utmost importance. The Nature of Satisfaction Defined In order to understand the nature of satisfaction correctly, we need to consider the nature of sin, the Judge, and the work of redemption.

(1) Sin brings upon man guilt, wrath, and punishment. If the sinner is to be delivered, he must be acquitted and be delivered from guilt. God must be appeased and the punishment must be borne.

(2) God is the Judge who appears here not so much as a creditor, nor as Lord and offended party, but as Judge. A creditor may forgive a debt if he so desires, and a lord and offended party may relinquish his rights; such freedom of action has been afforded to man by the supreme Judge. A judge, however, may neither relinquish justice nor the punishments due upon crime. However, the manner, time, place, and nature of the punishment, God has left to the discretion of the judge. Since God is the supreme Judge, His justice demands the punishment of the criminal.

(3) The work of satisfaction is contingent upon the diversity of the debt in question. In retiring monetary debts the debtor is not taken into consideration, but only the debt to be paid, which is satisfied with an amount equivalent to the debt. It is immaterial to the creditor whether this debt is paid by the principal debtor or by another who functions as surety. He will be paid with the identical sum of money, which is not a concession at all. With criminal guilt, however, the situation is different. Then the debt cannot be retired by something equivalent in value, but punishment is required for the satisfaction of justice as administered by the judge. Not only the debt or guilt is considered, but also the person who has rendered himself guilty, the criminal. If this satisfaction were to be accomplished by a surety, then, in addition to the surety making satisfaction by bearing the punishment, there must also follow the forgiveness of the criminal. Thus justice would be satisfied; the judge, however, must be willing to admit and accept the surety as well as to punish the incurred guilt in him. Viewing his rights in the absolute sense of the word, the judge would not have to do so. He must thus not impute the punishment to the criminal, but release him from guilt, wrath, and judgment, since all these have been imputed to the surety. Thus mercy and justice, satisfaction and forgiveness meet each other in the atonement, all of which is true in Christ.

Secondly, the word “satisfaction” appears twice in Scripture (Numbers 35:31-32), whereas the word “atonement” occurs eighty-one times. [Note: The Dutch reads as follows: “Het woord voldoening staat wel met zoovele letteren in de Schrift niet, maar de zaak zelf wordt met vele andere woorden klaar in de Schrift uitgedrukt.” The Wolters Dutch-English dictionary gives the following translations for voldoening: satisfaction, reparation, atonement, settlement. The choice is clearly between the words satisfaction and atonement. Since both words do occur in the KJV, the sentence had to be reconstructed.] Scripture gives further expression to this matter by the use of many related words such as kipper, that is, to make atonement (Exodus 30:10). From this word are derived the words ransom, day of atonement, pada, that is, to redeem by way of restitution. In Exodus 13:13 we have lutron, that is, ransom; in Matthew 20:28, antilutron, that is, ransom; in 1 Timothy 2:6, apolutrosis, that is, redemption by payment of a ransom; in Ephesians 1:7, hilasmos, that is, redemption; and in Romans 3:25, hilasterion, that is, propitiation on the basis of satisfaction. All these words, when considered in the original texts, refer to an atonement and a redemption accomplished on the basis of payment and satisfaction. The Absolute Necessity of Satisfaction In considering the matter itself we shall show that satisfaction is absolutely necessary. Since man by sin not only became subject to guilt, wrath, and punishment, and by breaking and transgressing the law also lost the right to eternal life, he might by way of satisfaction, that is, only by the bearing of punishment, be delivered from the punishment. In this way he would not receive a right to eternal life, however, since this was promised only upon perfect obedience to the law. Therefore, in addition to bearing the punishment, also a perfect holiness and fulfilling of the law are necessary. The necessity of both we shall demonstrate by considering each aspect individually.

Question: In order to remove the guilt and punishment of the sinner, is the bearing of punishment due upon sin absolutely necessary for the satisfaction of divine justice?

Answer: The Socinians deny this. We, however, maintain that it is absolutely necessary for the satisfaction of divine justice that the punishment be borne. Without this satisfaction, no forgiveness of sin is to be expected. This is not only true in reference to the decree and truth of God, but also in reference to the essential nature of the justice of God whereby He cannot let sin go unpunished. This will become evident from the following arguments.

First, natural man knows innately that God exists, that He is Judge, that His avenging justice demands punishment (Romans 1:32), and that therefore He punishes sin. Pagan literature, which only recognizes that which naturally belongs to God's essence, bears abundant witness to this. Consider the following quotes: “God bears a garment of wrath.” “Rarely will the rascal escape his punishment.” “since God is Judge, no guilty person will be acquitted.” “Judgment upon the wicked puts me at ease, and excuses God.” The inhabitants of Melita said, “No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live” (Acts 28:4). Even though pagans are more in the dark concerning the fact that God cannot forgive sin without satisfaction, they nevertheless manifest such understanding in their deeds. They are always ready to do something to make satisfaction for their sins, be it by torturing themselves, or by sacrificing animals or other objects. Indeed, even people were sacrificed as their substitute; they said, “since they themselves were guilty, a sacrificed animal could not give satisfaction and the wrath of God can only be appeased by the blood of men.” All these statements, together with their deeds, indicate that pagans were cognizant of the avenging justice of God, of the necessity of satisfaction, and of God permitting the substitution of a Surety. This argument is very much reinforced when

viewing it in the light of Scripture.

Secondly, it is evident from the attributes of God:

(1) The justice of God. The entire Scriptures are permeated with expressions pertaining to God's justice. One should not merely understand God to be just, equitable, and proper in His nature and deeds, but also that He executes justice as a Judge. This is confirmed by the following texts: "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Genesis 18:25); "God judgeth the righteous" (Psalms 7:11); "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgments" (Psalms 119:137). It is common knowledge that the justice of a judge is an attribute consisting in giving everyone his just reward: treating each according to his desert whereby the guilty one is condemned and the innocent acquitted. It is an abomination before God if an earthly judge acts contrary to this (cf. Proverbs 17:15). However, God being Judge, who will judge all men, cannot but condemn or acquit. Both acts are attributed to God in Scripture. "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16); "It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33). The Hebrew word *hitsdik*, and the Greek *dikaiun* never convey the meaning of absolution or forgiveness, but always refer to acquittal by a judge. From this we may conclude with certainty that God cannot justify anyone unless they are righteous and free from guilt. Furthermore, since God justifies many, they are most certainly righteous. Now, in order for such persons to become righteous who in themselves most certainly are sinful and condemnable, their sin must first be punished and the law must first have been perfectly obeyed. Only in this manner will they be righteous and be able to stand before the righteous judgment of God. It is thus evident that God's justice cannot permit sin to go unpunished. If one admits God to be Judge, one must admit that God can only condemn the sinner, and must also admit of the absolute necessity of satisfaction for sin for those whom He justifies by bearing the punishment due upon sin.

Evasive Argument #1: God's justice is nothing more than His fairness, His righteousness; that is, the holiness of His nature and His deeds rather than an avenging justice.

Answer: This is a false statement. We have just shown the contrary to be true as far as the execution of His justice as Judge is concerned. If the justice of God consists, however, in His fairness and the righteousness of His nature and His deeds, then this also applies to His execution of judgment as Judge, which implies that He will justify no one but he who is righteous.

Evasive Argument #2: The justice of God is an act of His free will; God may or may not choose to exercise this, and thus may either punish or not punish.

Answer: If the proposition is true that the justice of God consists in fairness and righteousness as far as nature and deeds are concerned, then it would necessarily follow that God who does everything of His own volition could choose either to be or not to be just and fair, to deal or not to deal righteously. Such a proposition is blasphemous! If, however, He is of necessity just and fair in His nature and deeds, this also applies to Him as Judge in the execution of justice.

Evasive Argument #3: Avenging justice is inherent to God's nature rather than being an element of His free will. God, similar to fire which always burns, of necessity must always and at every moment punish.

Answer: God is not just by compulsion, but of His own volition. Here volition and necessity, that is, whatever is consistent with one's nature, are not contradictory. Volition is not a matter of course but it is a necessary consequence issuing forth from His perfect nature and activity. He who functions of necessity and according to his nature, doing so rationally, knows both the time and manner of his actions.

(2) Furthermore, the holiness of God confirms that in order for man to be redeemed, the satisfaction for sin by the bearing of punishment is an absolute necessity. God is holy; He is holy in His essential nature and is holiness itself. Since God is holy in the very essence of His being, He, by His very nature, hates sin. Since God is infinitely holy, He also has an infinite hatred for sin -- much more so than an angel and the godly, who have but a small droplet of holiness. Since God by His very nature hates sin with an infinite hatred, He cannot unite Himself to nor love a sinful thing or person. Thus, by His very nature, He can only cast away the sinner eternally. This eternal casting away of a sinner is an eternal judgment. "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Yes, God's essential, infinite holiness, and His hatred of the sinner proceeding from this, can have no other consequence but the utter damnation of the sinner.

Thus, sin and the sinner cannot remain unpunished but must be punished. This deduction that God hates sin by virtue of His essential holiness, is evident to every man who is able or willing to use reason. It is also confirmed very clearly by Scripture. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Habakkuk 1:13); "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness" (Psalms 45:7); "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins" (Joshua 24:19); "For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with Thee. The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (Psalms 5:4-6). Consider these texts attentively and you will observe that since God is holy He hates the sinner, and because God is holy and hates sin, He cannot allow sin to go unpunished. Therefore, in order for a sinner to be delivered, it is absolutely necessary that guilt, wrath, and punishment be removed by the bearing of the punishment of sin.

Evasive Argument: God chooses to hate sin merely because He desires to do so. Answer: Even though God manifests this hatred as an act of His free will -- God exists and does everything by an act of His free will -- His hatred is not an arbitrary act of volition, as if He were also capable of not hating, but even loving sin itself. Such a proposition is blasphemous! God's hatred issues forth from His holiness; holiness is a manifestation of His character. Thus, by virtue of His nature, He loves holiness. Since unholiness and sin are contrary to His character and His being, it is natural for Him to hate sin. Since God is righteous, holy, and sovereign, and the sinner is subject to Him, His holiness and hatred for sin cannot but result in the rejection and punishment of the sinner.

(3) The mercy of God also confirms that God cannot allow sin to go unpunished. It is an indisputable fact that God is infinitely merciful, this being consistent with His character. If it were possible that the justice of God could permit the sinner to remain unpunished, no sinner could or would be punished with temporal, much less, eternal punishment, for the eternal mercy and grace of God would not permit Him to execute His justice and power by way of punishment. It would even be considered cruel among men if someone who had the right and authority to make another

person miserable and who had the freedom to execute or not to execute that right, would use this right to gain no other advantage than the opportunity to demonstrate that he had both the right and the authority to subject another to utmost misery, poverty, pain, and terror; whereas by manifesting mercy he could receive more praise. If this is true among men, it is much more true of Him who is supreme goodness itself, and infinite in grace and mercy. Would He, as an exercise of pure sovereignty, be able to permit His creature, according to body and soul and without any relief, to suffer extreme pain and anxiety to all eternity, being able to do otherwise? Therefore, since God's punishment is both temporal and eternal, and since His punishments are not a manifestation of cruelty (He being goodness itself), it necessarily follows that divine punishment is not merely due to His right and power, but to His perfect justice -- which, when considered by itself, is as adorable as His goodness -- and therefore He cannot but punish sin. Consequently, there is an absolute necessity that sin be fully punished in order that man might be delivered.

(4) This is also confirmed by the truth of God, where it is expressly stated in Scripture, "... and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:7); "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies" (Nahum 1:2). In Genesis 2:17 we have the pronouncement upon Adam and all who are comprehended in him and have sinned in him: "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). The following passage does not only contain the pronouncement of a sentence upon the Jews, but upon all that have received the law, either by nature or by way of the Scriptures: "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them" (Deuteronomy 27:26). Consider all these and similar passages, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18); "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). It is certain that God can neither lie nor recant what He has said; thus there is no other way to be delivered than in a way of complete satisfaction by bearing the punishment due upon sin.

Evasive Argument: A natural man may readily think all threatenings and sentences are contingent upon sorrow, faith, and repentance.

Answer: This is not stated at all; they are absolutely unconditional. If one were to say that such threatenings do occur in Scripture, as for example in regard to Nineveh, I respond as follows: 1) By producing a single example, where the circumstances make it evident that a condition was comprehended in the threat, it does not follow that all threatenings and sentences are conditional. 2) If God, upon outward repentance, temporarily postpones temporal punishment, this neither constitutes the removal and forgiveness of sins, nor deliverance from eternal punishment. 3) By referring to the conditions of sorrow, faith, and repentance, one is certainly referring to true sorrow, faith, and repentance; that is, such faith and repentance which are pleasing to God, and not such as man would propose on the basis of his own opinion, contrary to the Word of God. In the exercise of true faith, however, satisfaction by a Surety is considered a certainty for He is received by faith. Furthermore, faith in Christ is an element of every true conversion, and this faith engenders an internal change from death to life and from the world and self to God, from which ensues a manifestation of that spiritual life in all [the believer's] activities. If God upon -- and thus not because of -- such faith and repentance removes sin, it occurs because His justice has been satisfied by the Surety Jesus Christ whose ransom is received by faith. Being a partaker of that ransom manifests itself in conversion. We therefore never read that God removes sin and

punishment because of worthiness, faith, or repentance, but always upon or by faith and repentance. Thus, none of the threatenings of curse, death, and condemnation are conditional, but are certain and unchangeably sure.

It is necessary that the punishment be borne, either personally or by the Surety. He who is not the recipient of the payment made by the Surety will eternally be required to bear the punishment himself. Such a person will experience that outward and natural sorrow, a historical and temporal faith, and an outward conversion will not acquit him from this punishment. If one responds to this by saying that if the Surety pays, the sinner does not make payment himself, and thus the threatening is not absolute, but rather conditional, I reply that the threatening remains absolute and unchangeable. The threatening was made relative to sin and thus sin is punished and the demands of the law are met, even if all this transpires through a Surety. Since the Surety has the same nature as he who has sinned, the sinner and the One making the payment are one and the same in that respect. Therefore the apostle testifies, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ" (Romans 3:21-22).

Thirdly, the need for satisfaction is evident from the Surety's execution of His work. This demonstrates that satisfaction of the justice of God is an absolute necessity.

(1) Scripture testifies that it pleased God to require the Surety to make payment in order to save sinners. "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10). If God were to forgive sin and save the sinner apart from the sufferings of the Surety, He would do something which would be unbecoming to Him. Far be it from us to attribute this to God. Satisfaction is thus a necessity.

(2) In sending forth the Surety there is a manifestation of most eminent and unfathomable love. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). It certainly would not be an act of love but rather the greatest act of cruelty, to let the holy Jesus suffer and die as He did if there were no need for this and if man could be saved without satisfaction. This love is so great and therefore satisfaction is an absolute necessity.

(3) Scripture states plainly that in the Surety Jesus Christ we have a declaration of the righteousness of God. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness" (Romans 3:25). This was neither a declaration of His authority nor of His justice which would grant him license to perform His task, but it was a declaration of His righteousness, which in this manner was satisfied.

(4) If, from Adam on, we also consider the entire focus of all the prophecies, ceremonies, promises, and desires and hopes, who would be able to think that all of this was merely pretext, was related to something for which there was no need? Does not all of this demonstrate the absolute necessity of satisfaction, and that without it there can neither be forgiveness of sin nor salvation?

Objection #1: Mercy and avenging justice are two opposite attributes, and therefore cannot coexist within one and the same God. Since mercy belongs to the very nature of God, avenging justice cannot be inherent in His nature.

Answer: (1) Earthly judges will answer this question for me. They can be eminently merciful, and yet this does not prevent them from being just in punishing evildoers.

(2) The simultaneous existence of mercy and wrath in God is taught throughout the entire Scriptures and is confirmed by daily experience in man's judgment by way of various ailments. The attributes of mercy and wrath, however, are as opposite as the attributes of mercy and avenging justice from which wrath issues forth.

(3) There is a difference as far as the objects are concerned, but not in the nature of God. This nature remains inherently merciful and just. This was also true prior to creation, when there were no objects for the manifestation of these attributes. However, since there are a variety of such objects after creation -- the one sinful and the other as viewed in the Surety -- the same divine nature manifests itself justly to the sinner, and in mercy to the partakers of the covenant. Nevertheless, this mercy is shown neither in consequence of the misery of man nor even as a result of the satisfaction of Christ. These are merely means and presupposed qualities whereby this mercy is bestowed upon partakers of the covenant. However, they are not the causes of divine mercy; mercy has no higher nor previously existing cause than God Himself. God, in His wisdom and without compulsion -- and thus not in an arbitrary or compulsory manner, but as a necessary consequence of His nature -- at a time, manner, and degree determined by Him, executes His avenging justice upon the ungodly according to the measure of their ungodliness, and manifests His mercy to His elect in Christ. "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Romans 9:18).

Objection #2: Cannot God relinquish His justice without satisfaction as men may and can do by forgiving those debts and crimes committed against them? If this is true, then God can also forgive sin without satisfaction.

Answer: (1) A law has been given to man by which he must govern his behavior. Therefore, one cannot make a determination of God's acts on the basis of man's obligation. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

(2) Also, judgment and justice are not one and the same matter. [Cf. 2 Samuel 8:15] Judgment relates to the exercise of authority, whereas justice is a virtue. Every individual may in many instances relinquish his right to be just, but never the virtue of justice. A government may never give its subjects license to sin.

(3) A judge may never relinquish justice -- or else he would be committing an injustice. In this situation God must not be viewed as an offended party, but as the highest Judge of heaven and earth. God and men are not on equal footing.

Objection #3: If, as Scripture states, sins are forgiven and remitted on the basis of grace, satisfaction is not necessary, for satisfaction and forgiveness are contrary to each other. Where the one occurs, the other is excluded.

Answer: It has already been shown how the satisfaction rendered by the Surety and the forgiveness of men harmonize. Relative to man there is nothing but grace and forgiveness. Man has not contributed anything himself, for he is miserable, hateful, and impotent. God, however, has chosen certain individuals according to His sovereign good pleasure; has thought out, ordained,

and sent the Surety; imputes the merits of the Surety to those who are His; and thus forgives and remits all their sins. It is in this manner that man receives forgiveness. As far as the Surety is concerned, however, there is complete satisfaction. Therefore, the apostle conjoins grace and satisfaction: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

Objection #4: Since God has granted Christ as a gracious gift, the elect already had been loved and accepted in grace prior to that. Satisfaction was therefore not needed.

Answer: God has elected them in Christ (Ephesians 1:4). God loved them with the love of benevolence, and therefore God ordained the Surety so that by His satisfaction He could remove sin which He hates. Sin would have prevented God from uniting Himself to the sinner with the love of His delight, as well as from blessing them. God thus sent the Surety for them because He loved them and because then they would eternally enjoy felicity with Him.

Perfect Holiness: Essential unto Salvation

Having perceived the necessity of satisfaction to the justice of God by the bearing of punishment, one ought also to know that a perfect holiness is required in order for man to be delivered and to be saved. This is first of all confirmed by the fact that salvation is promised upon no other condition than perfect holiness. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Romans 10:5). Transgression merits temporal and eternal death. Assuming that the punishment has been fully borne and death has been conquered, man has then not progressed beyond his original state as far as punishment is concerned. Punishment could not be imposed upon him, and he could not inherit salvation, since the condition of perfect obedience to the law -- that is, perfect inward and outward conformity to the law -- had not as yet been fulfilled. The law, of necessity, had to justify "from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39); "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh ... that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Romans 8:3-4). The law cannot justify, however, as long as man has not fulfilled it and does not actually possess righteousness. That is the prerogative of the law. Therefore, man must first be in possession of perfect holiness will he ever be saved.

Secondly, "the judgment of God is according to truth" (Romans 2:2). Justification does not merely consist of acquittal, but also in granting a right to eternal life. When man will be placed before the bar of divine justice, investigation will not merely be made as to whether he is worthy of punishment, whether the punishment has been borne; but also whether, in addition to this, he possesses holiness and has fulfilled the law. The salvation of man does not consist in an absence of punishment, but rather in perfect communion with God. In order for God to justify man and to grant him the right unto the enjoyment of eternal felicity, he must truly be righteous and holy, for God's judgment is according to truth and His sentence is righteous and just. Here nothing can be overlooked or remitted, for God is Judge, and the task of a judge is either to condemn or to acquit and to grant to a person his right and possessions. Therefore there must be perfect holiness in order for man to be justified and to obtain salvation.

Thirdly, this is also confirmed by the imputation of the perfect holiness of Christ to the elect, which we will consider at the appropriate time. At this time consider the following passages: "so by the

obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19); "... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21); "And ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). It is thus evident that sanctification is prerequisite unto the justification and salvation of a sinner.

Having therefore concluded that these two matters are absolutely required for the redemption of man -- the satisfaction of divine justice by the bearing of punishment, and perfect holiness -- it now must be considered who can and who does accomplish this. Does man himself or another who functions as a Surety accomplish this? If by another as surety, we must consider who can be and is qualified to be surety.

Man can accomplish neither one for himself. He can neither make satisfaction by bearing punishment, nor can he bear this punishment to its full end. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matthew 16:26); that is, he cannot contribute anything. Neither supplication for grace, the forsaking of evil, nor the performance of what man deems to be good are of any value here. Guilt already has been established and man cannot make any payment towards this debt. All his suffering in this world cannot atone for this. Punishment upon sin is eternal and thus without end. Man must bear this punishment eternally. Being a finite creature, man cannot transcend beyond that which is infinite. He also remains a sinner and continually increases his guilt so that also his punishment can never cease. He can neither convert himself, make himself perfect, nor fulfill the law in such a manner that he will not transgress a single commandment, which would render him guilty of violating all the commandments. "... there is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings 8:46); "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin" (Proverbs 20:9); "For in many things we offend all" (James 3:2); "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Thus, man must in himself completely despair of the idea that he can deliver himself. The Sinner's Absolute Need of a Surety to Make Satisfaction For a sinner to be saved this work must be accomplished by another person, who functions as a Surety. Question: Is it possible and just that a Surety makes satisfaction on behalf of the sinner? Answer: Socinians deny this, but we answer affirmatively. Such satisfaction is possible, just, and also necessary. This is first of all evident from the fact that among both the heathens and the godly it is customary, as recorded in Scripture, that a surety makes payment for someone else. It is just that he who has obligated himself to be surety also makes payment and that the government may also justly demand satisfaction from him. Heathens are known to have killed those who had obligated themselves for the debt of others when such a person either fled the scene or was not true to his word. They are also known to have killed animals and even persons in the place of others to make satisfaction for their sins before God. There was thus some degree of knowledge that someone else could bring about reconciliation with God on their behalf. In Scripture we have the example of Paul: "Put that on mine account ... I will repay it" (Php 4:18-19). Judah offered himself to be surety and was willing to be a slave the remainder of his life on behalf of his brother Benjamin: "For thy servant became surety for the lad. ... Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord" (Genesis 44:32-33).

Secondly, Scripture states expressly that the Lord Jesus is a Surety. "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" (Hebrews 7:22); "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18); "And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted" (Isaiah 53:6-7); "The Son of man came ... to give His life a

ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). We shall shortly deal more comprehensively with this matter.

Objection #1: Relative to monetary debt, one person may become surety for another simply because it is permissible to share one's resources with someone else. This, however, is not permissible relative to life itself; much less is it permissible that someone should become surety for another by bearing the punishment of eternal condemnation and by fulfilling the law, and thus merit a right to eternal life.

Answer: Relative to monetary debt, one is authorized to become a surety for someone else only because God has authorized man to do so. Man, however, may not become a surety in cases relative to human life on behalf of someone who is worthy of death. Under such circumstances governments are not permitted to accept a suretyship.

(1) This is expressly forbidden by God. "Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer" (Numbers 35:31).

(2) God has not authorized man to dispose of life at his own discretion. Man is not permitted to give his life as a ransom, and therefore it cannot be accepted as a ransom.

(3) In giving his life as a ransom, man would act beyond his ability. For he cannot make full payment while simultaneously preserving himself, but rather he remains indebted since he cannot quicken himself.

(4) If God had not forbidden this, and if man were capable of quickening himself and remaining alive, there would be no reason why one would not be able to deliver another person from death by dying on his behalf, as well as to deliver another person out of monetary straits.

God is the supreme and sovereign Lord who gives His laws to man. He Himself is above the law, however, and is not bound by the law He has given. God knows what is appropriate and what is able to satisfy His justice. He Himself has appointed a Surety and is satisfied with His Suretyship. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matthew 17:5). The Surety, Jesus Christ, due to His divinity, 1) is Lord over His own life, 2) has power to lay down His life and to take it again (John 10:18), thus enabling Him to resurrect Himself and transcend the payment itself, [Note: The Dutch reads as follows: "... en de betaling te boven komen."] 3) voluntarily became Surety (Hebrews 10:7), this being His will and His pleasure, and 4) is able, by virtue of His death, to grant eternal life to an exceptionally large multitude. God is thereby satisfied and the elect are reconciled with Him. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son ..." (Romans 5:10); "For it pleased the Father ... having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself ..." (Colossians 1:20).

Thus, we have clearly established that a Surety can make satisfaction for a sinner. How can anyone consider this to be cruel, as this all testifies of willingness and goodness? It would have been cruel if God were to have subjected a holy and innocent Jesus to so much dreadful pain, anxiety, and death if He had not appointed Him to be Surety to deliver others by virtue of His satisfaction but merely had made Him an example of meekness. Those who object thus grapple with and argue against the truth, and accuse God of cruelty.

Objection #2: In Deuteronomy 24:16 we read, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers," and in Ezekiel 18:4, "The soul

that sinneth, it shall die.”

Answer: (1) In these texts there is no reference to a surety or a dying on behalf of someone else in order to deliver this person (this being the issue at hand), but rather to dying due to the sins of someone else, thus relating their sins to this individual's punishment. These texts are therefore not applicable here.

(2) God forbids man to kill a person for the sake of someone else's sin. He, however, remains sovereign and thus punishes parents in their children, which results in much more grief than if one had to bear this punishment himself -- “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children” (Exodus 20:5).

(3) Children are as sinful as all other men, and therefore are worthy of temporal and eternal punishment. Thus, no injustice is done by God when He pours out His wrath upon them at the occasion of someone else's sin -- whether they be fathers, governments, or whoever else they may be related to. God does declare, however, that in specific cases and at certain occasions He will not do so, especially if the children do not follow in the footsteps of their fathers. When the godly are subject to general judgments upon a nation due to the sins of its inhabitants, such judgments are but fatherly chastisements upon them. The Necessary Qualifications of a Surety for Sinners

Having concluded that without doing injury to God's justice it is possible for a surety to make satisfaction for another, it must be asked, “Where may such a qualified surety be found?” It is not possible for everyone to become surety for another even as far as monetary debt is concerned, and those who are capable of being surety often are not willing.

If we turn to our fellow man, we must conclude that he is as miserable as everyone else. He cannot even make satisfaction for himself. He, being unable to exhaust eternal punishment, would eternally have to be subject to it. He would not be willing to be eternally damned on behalf of someone else. He neither can fulfil the law on his own behalf nor on behalf of someone else -- even if his holiness were to excel that of the other person. Yes, even if he were perfect by virtue of someone else's perfection, this would only be of benefit to himself. Such a surety would also not be acceptable to God. How miserable will be the outcome for those who look to man! In turning to angels we are confronted with an entirely different nature. The nature which has sinned is punishable and must itself bear the punishment. The human nature was subjected to the law, was threatened with punishment, and has transgressed, so that none other but He who has that same human nature can be surety. Angels are also finite, and therefore cannot overcome infinite punishment. Whatever they are, they are for themselves, and they can neither communicate unto others what belongs to their nature nor clothe others with perfection. There is then no expectation from these quarters. To be a surety, one must have the following four qualities: He must 1) be very man, having proceeded from man; 2) be a holy man; 3) be very God, and 4) be God and man united in one person.

First, the Surety must be very man.

(1) This is due to a) the law having been given to man, which primarily requires that man serve God with body and soul, and love God and his neighbor; b) man having been threatened with death upon disobedience and having been promised felicity upon perfect obedience; and c) man

having actually transgressed, thus being subject to death. In order for man to again obtain felicity, someone of necessity had to come forth from the human ranks who would fully bear the punishment due upon sin and perfectly fulfill the law placed upon him.

(2) Scripture states this very clearly. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). The incarnation and being under the law are joined together, confirming that no one can be under the law unless he is man. "... God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4).

These texts as well as the nature of the subject indicate that the Surety not only had to be man, but also man proceeding from man. The Surety Jesus Christ is called the seed of the woman, of Abraham, of David, of Mary and thus of "the fathers ... as concerning the flesh" (Romans 9:5). If another human nature had been created anew, either out of the earth or out of nothing, such a man, having merely a similar nature, could not be surety, not having the identical nature. Such a man would not have transgressed, and thus could also not bear the punishment. The surety had to come forth from the human nature which had sinned.

Secondly, the Surety must be a holy man; otherwise,

(1) this nature could not have been assumed in union with the Person of the Son of God, for God cannot unite Himself to something which is sinful;

(2) He would be obligated to suffer for Himself, and His suffering could not be of benefit to others;

(3) His sacrifice would be tainted, could neither be pleasing to God nor procure the removal of sin;

(4) He would not be able to clothe others with holiness, He Himself being without it;

(5) He would not be able to approach unto God to intercede for the elect, for God does not hear sinners;

(6) Indeed, all the reasons mentioned above, which give evidence that God's justice must be satisfied by both the bearing of punishment as well as perfect obedience, confirm that the Surety must be a holy man.

(7) Scripture states this very clearly. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners ... who needeth not daily ... to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's" (Hebrews 7:26-27).

Thirdly, the Surety must be very God: (1) Otherwise, His suffering would not have infinite efficacy and value. If eternal punishment had to be suffered in its duration, His suffering could neither be concluded nor be exhaustive, and therefore satisfaction had to be made by such suffering which in efficacy and value was equivalent to eternal duration. This could only be accomplished by one who is infinite Himself. It is true that the divine nature neither did nor could suffer; however, the Person who suffered in His human nature was God and therefore the efficacy and value of His suffering was consistent with His personhood. This is not a partial acceptance, that is, to accept a part as representing the whole, for that would not be true satisfaction but would amount to remittance without payment. This efficacy and value are also not the result of having respect for His Person,

so that His suffering as such could be accepted as being sufficient. Rather, it was truly such a Person, such an efficacy, and such a value. It was an infinite Person who suffered according to His human nature, and thus His suffering was of infinite efficacy and value, "... having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12).

(2) In order to bear the magnitude of God's wrath, His human nature needed more fortitude than a common man possesses; therefore His divine nature had to support and fortify His human nature so that He would not succumb under this burden. (God's ability to support a creature in such a fashion exceeds our comprehension.) For this reason we read, "... Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14).

(3) The Surety, by way of perfect obedience to the law to which man is obligated, was not only required to clothe one, but rather all of the elect with His holiness. A finite man, even if he were holy and was himself not subject to the law (which cannot be), could not accomplish this, for at best he could hypothetically fulfil the law for only one person. Since, however, the Surety had to fulfil the law on behalf of all the elect, He of necessity had to be very God. It is true that a human person is himself subject to the law. This is, however, not true for a divine Person who assumed, not a human person, but a human nature. As a divine Person He Himself is not under the law, but as Surety He places Himself under the law. Since He is infinite in His personhood, His fulfillment of the law renders a sufficient and complete satisfaction for all the elect. *Actus sunt sappositorium*, that is, deeds are the persons who perform them. If an infinite Person places himself under the law, and an infinite Person fulfills the law as Surety, the fulfillment of that law is perfect and sufficient. For this reason the Surety had to be very God.

(4) The Surety had to actually deliver His own from the power of the devil, to set them free and make them children of God. He had to regenerate them, bring them to God, keep them, and give them eternal life -- all of this being required unto salvation. No one can accomplish this but He who is very God. The fourth quality of the Surety is that He had to be God and man united in one Person. The reason for this is obvious from the foregoing. God Himself can neither be subject to the law, nor suffer and die. Man in subjecting himself to suffering and dying, could not suffer exhaustively nor resurrect himself. Besides that, his suffering would only benefit one person. In order, therefore, for His suffering and obedience to be of eternal efficacy, and in order that He, by His suffering and death, would conquer without the assistance of anyone else (the suretyship having to be executed as such), the Surety of necessity had to be God and man in one Person, descending from "... the fathers ... of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5).

Jesus Christ: the Divinely Appointed Surety

It now remains to show who this Surety is. It is Jesus Christ. In view of His office, the Surety has various names. He is called:

(1) Surety, since He gives Himself as substitute for the sinner, removing his guilt and taking it upon Himself as if He Himself had incurred it. He bears the punishment due upon sin, and fulfills the law. We read of this in Hebrews 7:22 and in Jeremiah 30:21, "For who is this that engaged his heart [Note: The Statenvertaling reads as follows, "Wie is hij, die met zijn hart borg worde?"; that is, "Who is He, who has engaged his heart to become Surety?"] to approach unto me? saith the

Lord”;

(2) Mediator, because He brings together, unites, and satisfies both God and man. He removes from both sides whatever would prevent rapprochement by satisfying God's justice and by changing man from unwilling to willing, making him desirous and prayerful and causing him to come. “For there is ... one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5); “Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant” (Hebrews 12:24);

(3) Deliverer, because He delivers from whatever makes man miserable. “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer” (Romans 11:26);

(4) Savior, because He actually imparts to man all that can eternally and perfectly make him happy (cf. Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:11);

(5) Prophet, Priest, King, Goel, Bridegroom, and Immanuel. Each name has its own specific purpose. It is not necessary to prove to Christians that the Lord Jesus is Christ, the promised Messiah, being both Surety and Savior. He was born in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary. He preached throughout the entire Jewish nation, performed innumerable miracles, was crucified by Pontius Pilate on the hill Golgotha near Jerusalem, arose on the third day, and ascended into heaven after forty days. Every Christian acknowledges this. It is beneficial, however, and it also quickens and strengthens faith to observe how precisely all prophecies and types have been fulfilled in Christ. For this reason we will briefly focus upon some of these.

First, let us consider the time frame in which the Messiah had to be born.

(1) It would be when the tribe of Judah would still be fully intact according to its genealogy. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come” (Genesis 49:10). The word shebet means “trunk,” “stick,” or “staff.” Since kings had a staff -- one being more ornate than the other -- it thus means (albeit not frequently) “scepter.” Its most common meaning is “genealogy,” by which one is able to prove his ancestry, and from which noble family (such as Judah, Reuben, or Levi) he has descended. I am of the opinion that the word schebeth here means “genealogy” and in this text it therefore means that Judah will continue to have a well-defined genealogy and his tribe will not be mixed with other tribes or nations. His genealogy will be completely maintained until Shiloh, the Messiah, comes. This was needful in order that one would know that the Messiah, who had to come out of Judah, did indeed come out of Judah. If one maintains that other tribes were also still fully preserved, I reply that the ten tribes, to a large extent, had intermingled internally, so that only a few here and there knew to which tribe they belonged. Anna was from the tribe of Aser, and Paul was out of the tribe of Benjamin. However, it does not carry any weight -- even if all the tribes at the time of Christ's birth had still been fully preserved. Judah had to be preserved in its entirety and was preserved in its entirety until the coming of Christ. “For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah” (Hebrews 7:14).

If one wishes to interpret the word “scepter” as a reference to the royal government of the Messiah, I have difficulty in reconciling this with the text. First of all, such royal government was not associated with the tribe of Judah until the time of David, prior to which Benjamin reigned in the person of Saul. Here we read that the schebeth shall not depart from Judah, indicating that the Messiah was already present in Judah as the trunk and in his children who already were as branches in him. However, royal government was not as yet associated with Judah. Whatever

does not exist cannot depart.

Secondly, the scepter had departed from Judah long before the coming of the Messiah. At that time they were subject to a foreign sovereign, the emperor. In addition to this, Israel had to be severed from Judah before the Messiah would come. "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown ... I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him" (Ezekiel 21:26-27). This being the case, how can one maintain that the royal government would not depart from Judah until Shiloh, the Messiah, would come? If one understands the word "scepter" to refer to genealogy, however, the matter is cleared up at once. This genealogy was still intact at the time of the birth of Christ. This is confirmed by the genealogies of Joseph and Mary in Matthew 1:1-25 and Luke 3:1-38. This genealogy departed from Judah shortly afterwards, a fact which is still true until this day.

(2) The Messiah had to come when the second temple was still standing. "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory" (Haggai 2:6-7); "And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in" (Malachi 3:1). It cannot be denied that this house, this temple, must be understood to refer to the second rather than the first temple, for both prophets prophesied after the Babylonian captivity, during and after the building of the second temple. The second temple as such was much inferior to the first temple. The old people who had seen the first temple wept when they viewed the foundation of the second, it being so inferior to the first temple (Ezra 3:12). They missed several things in the second temple which made the first so glorious. Nevertheless, this second temple would be filled with glory, and this glory would consist in the fact that the Messiah, as the fulfillment of all the types, would come to this temple. The Lord Jesus, the desire of all nations, came to this temple, as confirmed by all the gospel writers. This second temple was destroyed forty years after His suffering and death. The Lord Jesus is thus the Messiah.

(3) The Messiah had to come after seventy weeks (one week representing seven years), thus four-hundred-ninety years, after the revelation to Daniel. "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression ... from the going forth of the commandment [that is, the command of Cyrus in Ezra 1:1-2] to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times" (Daniel 9:24-25). Precisely at that time the Lord Jesus was born.

Secondly, the location where the Messiah had to be born was Bethlehem. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2). This has been fulfilled at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:4; Luke 2:6-7).

Thirdly, the family from which the Messiah had to be born was Judah. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, ... until Shiloh come" (Genesis 49:10). He also had to come forth out of the house of David. "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His kingdom" (2 Samuel 7:12). For this reason the Messiah is frequently called "David" (cf. Hosea 3:5). This has

been fulfilled in Christ. "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah" (Hebrews 7:14); "... and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). The fact that Mary was a cousin of Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias the priest, does not negate the fact that Mary was from the tribe of Judah. [Note: In Dutch this phrase follows, "want zusters kinderen zijn ook nichten." à Brakel adds this statement since the Dutch word "nicht" has a dual meaning in English. "Nicht" can be translated as "cousin" or "niece." Since the clarification intended by this phrase is not necessary in English, the phrase has been omitted in the translation.] Levites, having no inheritance, were permitted to take wives from all the tribes; yes, all daughters without an inheritance were permitted to marry into other tribes, so that it is very well possible that Elizabeth hailed from Judah. The law forbidding marriage into other tribes pertained only to those daughters in whose families there was no male seed. Since the inheritance was theirs, they could not marry into another tribe, lest the possessions of the tribes be intermingled.

Fourthly, the Messiah had to be born out of a virgin. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son" (Isaiah 7:14). He could not be of the seed of a man -- in order that He could be born without original sin -- but He had to be of the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). Our Lord Jesus was the fruit of Mary's womb (cf. Luke 1:42; Matthew 1:18).

Fifthly, the Messiah had to be God. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: ... therefore God, thy God, hath anointed Thee" (Psalms 45:6-7); "... and this is His Name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6). Our Lord Jesus is very God (1 John 5:20).

Sixthly, the Messiah must be prophet, priest, and king. He must be a prophet. "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee" (Deuteronomy 18:15). This is the Lord Jesus, a fact deduced from all the sermons He preached, as well as from statements made by the gospel writers. "... Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word" (Luke 24:19). He must be a Priest. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalms 110:4). This refers to Christ who is "a merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:17). He must be king. "Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion" (Psalms 2:6). This also refers to Christ, for He is the "KING OF KINGS" (Revelation 19:16).

Seventhly, the Messiah would perform many miracles, as is recorded throughout Isaiah 35:1-10. The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in all the gospel writers.

Eighthly, the Messiah would fulfill all types, suffer and die as is recorded in the entire fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded by all the gospel writers. We also read in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

Ninthly, the Gentiles would believe in the Messiah. "And unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49:10); "... the desire of all nations" (Haggai 2:7). The Gentiles never believed or followed anyone of the Jewish nation; however, they do believe in the Lord Jesus, the Son of Judah and David. Since His ascension this has occurred with such powerful efficacy that the name of Jesus is glorious and precious throughout the entire world.

Tenthly, the Messiah would cause all ceremonial worship to cease. The temple had to be broken down, Jerusalem had to be destroyed, the Jewish nation had to be dispersed and would roam about among the Gentiles in dishonor for a long period of time. "And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and ... He (that is, the Messiah) shall cause

the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (Daniel 9:26-27); "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim" (Hosea 3:4). All of this was fulfilled shortly after the days of Christ, and it continues to be fulfilled until this very day. Our hearts are hereby fully established and assured that "... Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20:31). Nevertheless, the Jews do not perceive this as yet, and will continue to harden their hearts until the Redeemer will come out of Zion to turn away the ungodliness from Jacob.

Exhortation to Focus upon the Sinner's Need for Satisfaction

We have thus held before you the marrow of the gospel, that is, the necessity of satisfaction by the Surety Jesus Christ. Whoever errs here will err unto his eternal condemnation. Therefore, take it to heart. You know that you are sinful and commit sin. However, are you truly conscious of this? Do you have a deep impression that every sin is deserving of death, and if this begins to trouble you somewhat, what emotion does this generate?

(1) Perhaps you are avoiding this conviction, diverting yourself with other thoughts and activities, since such a conviction robs you of your rest. Be aware, however, that you are time and again resisting the Holy Ghost who works such convictions in you, and thus you repeatedly shun heaven itself. It is as if you say, "I do not wish to be saved; the way to heaven is not to my liking, and is of little value to me. If I cannot be saved in any other way, well, so be it." Poor man; how else will you be saved? How dreadful it will be for you to contemplate this in hell! Then you will say, "How obstinate and evil I was to turn a deaf ear to all the knocks upon my heart, even resisting them. Who did I ensnare but myself? Then I could have been saved, but I would not; now it is eternally too late, and I am eternally damned! Woe, woe is unto me!" Therefore take notice: If ever you are convicted within, if your heart smites you because of your sin, if you are terrified by the wrath of God and the prospect of eternal damnation, consider it to be an inexpressible blessing. Open your heart and exclaim, "speak, Lord, for I hear! Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Neither cease to deal with me nor allow this conviction to pass by. Let it progress within me until I may find grace in Thy eyes and be converted."

(2) Perhaps you go in the wrong direction when you are convinced of sin and judgment. Perhaps you are ignorant of the righteousness of God and of knowing that it is impossible to be saved without perfect satisfaction by the bearing of punishment, and without perfect holiness. Therefore you seek to be saved by the fact that you grieve over your sins and your condition, and think by yourself: "I shall pray to God for mercy; I shall repent and do my utmost to cease from sin; I shall attend church more frequently; I shall go to the Lord's Supper; I shall read God's Word; I shall give alms; I shall do well to my neighbor; I shall live a decent life; I shall no longer get drunk, dance, or gamble; I shall be righteous in my dealings and walk; and then I hope that because of all this God will be gracious to me. More than this I cannot do." Poor man, this is the net in which the devil catches men by the thousands and drags them to hell. This is the way in which a multitude of people deceive themselves so miserably and hasten towards eternal destruction -- something which they will not be aware of until it is too late. Here the proverb of Solomon applies: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). In God's stead I declare to you that God will not forgive a single sin without punishing it both

temporally and eternally, something which we have proved above to be undeniably true. Consider this matter attentively until you perceive and feel it to be the truth. If you then proceed to pray to God, let this truth first of all confront you. Be conscious that God is a consuming fire for the sinner: He closes His ear against you and casts you away. Thus you sink away in despair and think thus, "My sins are a reality, and God neither hears the sinner, nor can the righteous Judge be satisfied with anything else but temporal and eternal punishment upon sin. What must I do? There is absolutely no hope for me. I cannot make satisfaction but will be eternally subject to punishment, for my present suffering will not render satisfaction." Remain in such a state of perplexity until you look outside of yourself and become conscious of a way in the Surety Jesus Christ -- until that way becomes precious to you, you flee to that way, and seek salvation in that way. In so doing you will find. As impossible as it is for you to bear the punishment and to satisfy for your guilt, so impossible is it for you to convert yourself. Man imagines in his heart that he is able to do something himself, and for that reason he is not very concerned about his state. He vainly imagines that the matter is in his hand, and he will one day betake himself to convert himself. In this way he is encouraged and the gnawing of conscience subsides somewhat upon making the resolution that he will convert himself, for now it will take place. This is the reason that he becomes upset with himself when he does not act according to his resolution, thinking there is still so much good to be found in himself which would enable him to be steadfast and to exercise his will in a right manner to convert himself. Even if he cannot make perfect satisfaction, God will be satisfied with it; and even if he cannot earn heaven with it, God will be moved by his efforts and grant him heaven anyway. With these notions such a person, not being upon the right way, travels on to his eternal destruction.

We have already demonstrated above that man is entirely incapable of converting himself. Allow me to make you acquainted with yourself, your inability, as well as that your refraining from evil and doing good is of no value before God. Allow me briefly to convey to you what true conversion is.

Some imagine that conversion consists in refraining from the commission of gross sins and in the performance of some good deeds. Conversion, however, is a complete change of man as far as his spiritual frame, intellect, will, thoughts, words, and deeds are concerned. This change can be compared with a person born blind receiving his sight, a deaf person being enabled to hear, a dumb person being enabled to speak, or a totally paralyzed person being enabled to move about. The Holy Spirit is given to the person who is to be converted, who, having made His residence in the soul, reveals to the soul how polluted it is from every perspective, causing the soul to detest and abhor itself, to be filled with shame, to be humbled, and to be perplexed concerning its condition. In addition to this the Holy Spirit reveals God to the soul as being holy, majestic, just, good, and a God of truth. He reveals to the soul the necessity and the fullness of the Mediator and grants him some understanding as to how he can be reconciled and united to God. He works love and fear for, and obedience towards, God. How precious this becomes to the soul, causing him to betake himself to the Mediator Jesus, to receive these matters out of His fullness! This produces grief and sorrow over the fact that the soul cleaves to all that is before the eyes and cleaves to sin -- both the great as well as the small sins, both external and internal sins. Now he perceives and is conscious of all these sins of which previously he took no notice. Such a soul now seeks to exercise communion with God and desires to be near Him. The soul is either joyful or sorrowful in

relation to whether he is far from God or close to Him. His disposition is one in which his back is turned the world and sin, even though he is frequently ensnared by them. He lives focused upon God, and even though all is darkness, he looks to Him for light, life, spirituality, comfort, strength to do battle against sin, as well as for holiness. Such a soul is not satisfied with mere performance. He knows that he must perform good works, but wishes to do so by faith, in union with Christ, and through Him unto God, doing so in the presence of the Lord out of love to God, in the fear of God, in obedience to God, and with denial of self. He has much grief over ulterior motives he perceives within himself. He abhors not only sinful company, but also all that pertains merely to civil and natural life. His desires on the contrary are towards godliness and he would rather be despised and oppressed with the godly than to obtain riches and glory with others. This is just a brief statement about conversion, which will be considered much more comprehensively in chapter 31. What do you think? Are you able to bring this about? Try it once! Examine your conduct of one day by what has just been stated. Do your utmost, and then observe whether you are able to conduct yourself in such a manner. You will most certainly experience that you cannot take even one step in that direction and that it is impossible for you to bring about the very beginning of spiritual life. You will perceive that your conduct is wanting. Focus for some time upon this truth until you lose courage within yourself and feel yourself to be destitute, impotent, and without hope. Furthermore, should you have made some progress, realize that the spirituality you need will still be lacking, so that your conduct cannot be acceptable to God nor move God to look down upon you to save you -- all of which has been shown. Such is the misery and hopelessness of your condition. You cannot satisfy the justice of God by your bearing of punishment. Such holiness is not obtainable.

Oh, that you were truly destitute and perplexed! Then there would be hope for your salvation, not because of your perplexity, but because there is a Surety for such perplexed ones -- Jesus Christ, whose voice sounds forth, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). To you who are perplexed, without hope, destitute, and troubled, I proclaim that there is one Savior -- a Savior unknown to the heathen. Although they know that there is a God, they do not know that there is a Savior and Surety who is proclaimed among us. This Surety calls you, invites you, and promises to save you if you come to Him. Therefore rejoice in such a blessed reality. Look outside of yourself, go to Him, receive Him by faith, and be saved.

021. Chapter 18: The Divinity, Incarnation, and Union of Two Natures in the Person of Our Lor...

----- CHAPTER EIGHTEEN ----- The Divinity, Incarnation, and Union of Two Natures in the Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ In the previous chapter we have shown that the Mediator had to fulfil four conditions. He must be 1) very God, 2) very man out of Man 1:3) a holy man, and 4) God and man in one Person. We also have shown the Lord Jesus Christ to be this Surety and Mediator. It is therefore also essential that these four conditions are fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

We first of all wish to affirm that there is only one God, and not two or three gods. There is neither an inferior nor a superior God. God is superior to all creatures, but this is not true in reference to another god, for there is no other god. "For though there be that are called gods ... to us there is but one God" (1 Corinthians 8:5-6).

Secondly, we affirm that this one divine Being subsists in three independent Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost" (1 John 5:7).

Thirdly, we affirm that these three Persons are neither separate from the divine Being, nor from each other. There is but one God. "... and these three are one" (1 John 5:7).

Fourthly, we affirm that these three persons are distinct, so that one Person is not identical with another Person. Each Person is a different Person, and yet not a different God. "Another Comforter (John 14:16) ... whom I will send unto you from the Father" (John 15:26).

Fifthly, we affirm that each Person is the one and only true God. The Lord Jesus Christ is Very God

It is first of all necessary to show that the Lord Jesus is very God. The Socinians and Anabaptists deny this. We, however, uphold this as a major tenet of the Christian religion. This is evident from all those proof texts by which we are convinced that Jehovah is God. We shall prove that Jehovah is God from the fact that,

(1) He is called God everywhere in Scripture. It is without question that whenever Jehovah is called God the reference is not to angels or authorities, but to the eternal God;

(2) He is eternal, infinite, omniscient, and omnipotent; (3) He has created heaven and earth and still upholds and governs the same; (4) He must be honored, worshipped, believed, feared, and served. There is no one who would dare to cast doubt upon these proofs. These proofs being an absolute certainty, the Lord Jesus is therefore very God, for there is abundant testimony in Scripture that these four matters are stated in reference to Him. It is therefore blasphemous if one would dare to deny that the Lord Jesus is very God, and to suggest that He is merely called God because of His miraculous conception, His mission in this world, God's love towards Him, His miracles, His ministry, His resurrection from the dead, and His glorification. None of these things

render one divine. They are the proofs of, rather than the basis for, His divinity. That Christ is the true, eternal God is therefore evident from the four aforementioned proofs. First, He is referred to as God throughout Scripture, and the context of these references is such that all evasive arguments are silenced.

(1) Only consider these texts: "Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Psalms 45:7). [Note: The Statenvertaling reads as follows: "Daarom heeft U O God! uw God gezalfd," that is, "Therefore Thou, Oh God! hast been anointed by Thy God."] That this initial reference to God relates to the Lord Jesus is evident when we read, "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: ... therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee" (Hebrews 1:8-9).

Without a doubt thy God refers to the true, eternal God. How can this be confirmed? The answer is that He is expressly called God here. Likewise the Lord Jesus, is also here called God as well as is the Father: therefore He is the eternal, true God.

(2) Add to these the texts in which He is called Jehovah. In the entire Scriptures this name is neither attributed nor can be attributed to anyone else but the eternal, true God -- a truth which we already have confirmed in chapter three. The fact that the Lord Jesus is called Jehovah is confirmed for instance in Jeremiah 23:5-6, where we read, "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch ... and this is His Name whereby He shall be called, THE Lord (that is, Jehovah) OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." That the Lord Jesus is here called Jehovah is confirmed by the fact that He is the Branch, the King of Zion, who is here called by this name. Thus, the Lord Jesus is the true and eternal God.

(3) Add to these from the New Testament, Romans 9:5, where we read, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." In the preceding context no mention is made of God the Father, but only of the Lord Jesus, and He is said to have come from the fathers as concerning the flesh. It is beyond all controversy that the reference here is to the Lord Jesus and His human nature. Of the very same Person it is said immediately (as in one breath) that He is God who is to be blessed for ever. I repeat, as in one breath, for nothing separates these two clauses, neither a period, nor a colon, but only a comma, upon which follow the words **οὗτος** (who is), which always refer to the antecedent and relate to whomever had just been mentioned. The Lord Jesus is therefore the God who is blessed forever, this expression being a description of the eternal God. "To whom be glory for ever." (Romans 11:36); "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory," etc. (Revelation 4:11); "God is ... to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him" (Psalms 89:7); "For the Lord is a great God ... above all gods" (Psalms 95:3); "The Lord ... is high above all the people" (Psalms 99:2).

(4) This is also confirmed in 1 John 5:20, where we read, "This is the true God." It is not written here that He is God, nor merely that He is truly God, but rather that He is the true God, and thus the only God. He is also said to be **μορφή** (in forma) **θεοῦ**, that is, in the form of God (Php 2:6), **χαρακτὴρ τῆς ποσθεως**, (the express image of His Father's Person) (Hebrews 1:3), and that the Name Jehovah, that is, the essence of Jehovah, is in Him (Exodus 23:20).

Evasive Argument: The use of this name cannot be the basis for concluding the eternal Godhead of Christ, for governors are also referred to as gods.

Answer: When they are called “gods,” the context is such that one is able to observe at once that the name is contrasted with actual existence (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:5-6). In such descriptions one can perceive at a glance that the reference is to creatures to whom special gifts from God are ascribed, as is true in Psalms 82:6. In verse 2 of this psalm the reference is to ungodly judges who are threatened with death in verse 7. When the Lord Jesus is called “God,” however, He is called Jehovah, God to be praised for ever, the true God, the form of God, and the express image of His Father’s Person. Neither angels nor authorities are referred to as God in the singular. The second proof for the Godhead of the Lord Jesus can be deduced from the divine attributes which are ascribed to Him. He who is eternal, omniscient, and omnipotent, is the true God. This is undeniably true. Since all this applies to the Lord Jesus, He is thus very God.

(1) Christ’s eternity is confirmed in the following text: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah ... out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). Matthew 2:6 and John 7:42 confirm that this refers to the Lord Jesus, who, according to the flesh, would come forth out of Bethlehem. This very Person was from eternity. He is consequently also called the “everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6), the One who existed “before Abraham was” (John 8:58), and the “... Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending ... which is, and which was, and which is to come” (Revelation 1:8). This is an express description of eternity, which can only be properly ascribed to the true God. “And Abraham ... called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God” (Genesis 21:33). Thus, Christ is the true God.

(2) Christ’s omniscience is confirmed by the following texts: “... I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts” (Revelation 2:23); “And needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man” (John 2:25). This is a divine attribute: “For Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men” (1 Kings 8:39). Thus, Christ is the true God.

(3) Christ’s omnipotence is confirmed by the following texts: “... the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8); “... according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Php 3:21). However, only God is omnipotent: “... the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Revelation 19:6). Thus, Christ is the true God. The third proof for the Godhead of the Lord Jesus we deduce from divine works. He who has created heaven and earth, upholds and governs everything, of Himself performed miracles, regenerates man, and resurrects the dead -- He is the true God. No one denies this (cf. Jeremiah 10:11-13; Isaiah 44:25-28). Since this all applies to Christ, however, He is therefore the true God.

(1) John 1:3 confirms that Christ created the world, for we read, “All things were made by Him (the Word); and without Him was not any thing made that was made.” Christ is the Word (vs. 1). Creation here does not refer to regeneration, but to the generation of everything out of nothing. “All things” -- therefore nothing is excluded. This is also found in Colossians 1:16-17, where it is written, “For by Him (the image of the invisible God) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth ... all things were created by Him, and for Him.” Through Him, that is, not as a means or instrument (for even then He would have existed prior to creation), but rather through Him as the energizing cause, since the preposition “through” refers to the initial energizing cause. “Through Him ... are all things” (Romans 11:36); “... by Jesus Christ, and God the Father ...” (Galatians 1:1). All things are also unto Him, which can be ascribed only to the initial energizing cause and not to the instrument. “... to Him, are all things” (Romans 11:36).

(2) That Christ upholds and governs all things is also evident. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work ... for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:17;John 5:19). When it is stated that He cannot do anything of Himself unless He sees the Father do them, this refers to the manner of subsistence and operation of the three Persons in the divine Essence, as well as to His mediatorial office. Consider also the following texts: "By Him all things consist (Colossians 1:17) ... upholding all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3).

(3) That Christ performs miracles by His own power is evident "... there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all" (Luke 6:19); "... I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me" (Luke 8:46). When the apostles performed miracles, they did not do so by their own power, but by the power of Christ. "Why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? And His Name through faith in His Name hath made this man strong" (Acts 3:12;Acts 3:16); "... even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole" (Acts 4:10).

(4) That Christ resurrects the dead is evident, "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:21;John 5:28-29). All of this is the work of God alone, and thus Christ is the true God. The fourth proof we deduce from His divine honor. He who must be honored in like fashion as the Father -- in whose Name one must be baptized, whom one must worship, in whose name one must believe and in whom one must trust -- is the true God (cf. Isaiah 42:8; Matthew 4:10; Jeremiah 11:5;Jeremiah 11:7). All of this applies to the Lord Jesus, and thus He is the true God. This is true:

(1) in reference to honor: "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23);

(2) in reference to baptism: "... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19);

(3) in reference to worship: "And let all the angels of God worship Him" (Hebrews 1:6); "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:13);

(4) in reference to faith: "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1). When we read that Israel believed Moses (Exodus 14:31), this refers to the doctrine of Moses, and that they believed Moses to have been sent from God. When we read that Israel was baptized unto Moses (Exodus 14:22; 1 Corinthians 10:2), this means that it was performed by the hand of Moses and by His service;

(5) in reference to trust: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Psalms 2:12). Each of these proofs is sufficiently forceful to believe in the Godhead of the Lord Jesus. When considering all these proofs together, we can only lift up our hearts to the Lord Jesus and exclaim, "The Lord Jesus is God."

Objection: The thought could occur that some may not be able to harmonize various expressions in the Word of God with the aforesaid. How ought we to understand that Christ is said to 1) be less than His Father? "For My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28); 2) not be able to do anything of

Himself (John 5:19); 3) receive everything from the Father (2 Peter 1:17; Matthew 28:18); 4) be God's servant (Isaiah 42:1); 5) be sent of the Father (John 10:36); 6) pray to the Father (Hebrews 5:7); 7) be distinguished from the Father (John 17:3); 8) be the firstborn of all creatures (Colossians 1:15); 9) and the beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14)?

Answer: These difficulties will at once be resolved when one considers:

(1) Christ has two natures, and that some things about His Person are said about His natures.

(2) To consider Christ in His divine nature is an entirely different matter than viewing Him in His mediatorial office and administration. Respecting the latter He is said to be less, to be a servant, to pray, to receive, and to have been sent.

(3) He is distinct from the Father, but not severed from Him as a Person, and thus coessential with the Father. John 17:3 neither denies the Godhead of Christ nor states that the Father alone is God in distinction from Christ, but rather that the Father is the only God in distinction from idols. Likewise the Son and the Holy Spirit are the only God. In this text Christ is distinguished from His Father in reference to His mediatorial office, a distinction that must be understood in order to obtain eternal life.

(4) Although He is called the firstborn of all creatures, He is never called the first-created. He is the firstborn of the Father by eternal generation; in reference to the creature He is the heir of all things, and as Mediator He has the Old Testament right of the firstborn.

(5) When He is called the beginning of creation, this must not be understood in a passive sense, as if He were first created, but in an active sense, having created all things, and all things having their origin in Him. All things must thus end in Him, He being their origin. The Lord Jesus, being true and eternal God, has assumed the human nature. Neither the divine Essence, nor the Father, nor the Holy Ghost became man, but only the second Person, the Son. According to His Godhead, Christ is the eternal Son of the eternal Father by an eternal and incomprehensible generation, and thus He is called the Son par excellence (Hebrews 1:5). "... His own Son" (Romans 8:32); "... the only begotten Son" (John 1:18); "... the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15); "... the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3). This Son causes all believers to be sons and daughters of God by their betrothal to Him as bride to her Bridegroom, but also by faith as members of Him their Head. The Lord Jesus Christ is Very Man The Lord Jesus is not only true and eternal God, but He is also very man -- a man out of man. I repeat, He is very man. This is not merely so in appearance, but in very truth, having that very nature.

First, He is frequently referred to as a man. "... which is by one man, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:15); "... the last Adam ..." (1 Corinthians 15:45); "... the man Christ Jesus ..." (1 Timothy 2:5).

Secondly, He had:

(1) a true human body; "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2:14); "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have" (Luke 24:39);

(2) a true human soul; His Godhead was not a substitute to Him for a soul. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28); "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38).

Thirdly, He was subject to various human afflictions and emotions, however, without sin. He was an hungered (Matthew 4:2), thirsted (John 19:28), was sorrowful (Matthew 26:38), wept (John 11:35), was glad (John 11:15), and was wearied (John 4:6). Thus, Christ was very man.

He did not bring this human nature with Him from heaven; it was not created out of nothing, nor from some matter as some Anabaptists insist. He is man out of man, in order that He would have the identical nature (not merely a similar nature) which He would redeem. This is confirmed in the Old Testament by way of prophecy, and in the New Testament by way of fulfillment. In the Old Testament He is called the Seed of the woman. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head" (Genesis 3:15). "Thee" refers to the serpent, the devil, who beguiled Eve (2 Corinthians 11:3). The seed of the serpent refers to the ungodly, the children of the devil (1 John 3:10). The woman refers to the woman who had sinned, who had been beguiled by the devil and who would have sorrow in carrying and bearing children. This woman was Eve, the wife of Adam, the mother of all living. The Seed of the woman does not refer to all mankind descended from her, but to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is confirmed not only by the mere fact that the word seed is used in reference to Christ in Galatians 3:16, nor that He is called the fruit of Mary's womb (Luke 1:42), and was made of a woman (Galatians 4:4), but particularly because whatever is written concerning this seed can only be applicable to Christ -- that He would bruise the head of the serpent; that is, that He would conquer the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

Furthermore, consider those texts in which Christ is called the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 22:18; Genesis 26:4; Genesis 28:14). This seed should not be understood to refer to Isaac and Jacob, since the very same promise was made to them. Abraham and his godly descendants did not receive the promise (cf. Hebrews 11:39). He had, however, already received Isaac. Yet, neither in Isaac nor in Jacob were all nations of the earth blessed, but only in Christ; He is the seed of Abraham. "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). The reference is not to a spiritual seed, for Christ was not the spiritual seed of Abraham. Such are the believers who walk in Abraham's steps and do Abraham's works. Christ is called the seed of Abraham because He came forth from His descendants according to the flesh as can be observed in the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1:1-25 and Luke 3:1-38. This is also evident in 2 Samuel 7:12, where we read, "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels," etc. It cannot be denied that this text refers to Christ, for in Acts 2:30 we read, "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his (David's) loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" (Acts 2:30). Consider also the following text, "Of this man's seed (David's) hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (Acts 13:23). Even though some of these things can be applied to Solomon, they primarily refer to Christ. The following phrases, however, in no wise refer to Solomon but to Christ only:

(1) "I will set up thy seed after thee"; Solomon was already born and sat upon the throne while David was still alive;

(2) "I will stablish the throne of His kingdom forever" (2 Samuel 7:13). Solomon died and his descendants ceased to be kings. Concerning Christ, however, the angel said, "And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever" (Luke 1:33). Since this text speaks of Christ, it is clearly confirmed that He was of David's seed, and came forth out of his bowels as far as His flesh was concerned. The same is also evident in the New Testament, so that there is no need to quote any texts. Nevertheless, consider those texts in which:

(1) Mary is called the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in which Christ is called the Son of man. Both nature and Scripture teach and confirm that no one can be a mother unless she has brought forth a man, and no one can be a son of man unless his existence originates in man.

(2) Add to this, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke 1:42). Whatever fruit trees and animals bring forth, has proceeded from their substance. The children of humanity are the fruits of its womb, and thus proceed from its substance. Christ thus proceeded from the substance of Mary. This is also confirmed by those texts which make mention of Mary's impregnation, as in Luke 1:36. This is also stated concerning other women, such as in Luke 1:36.

(3) Add to this the following texts: "Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3); "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" (Romans 9:5); "... made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4); "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11). Add to this the genealogies of Matthew 1:1-25 and Luke 3:1-38. These texts ought to fully convince everyone in his own mind that Christ is very man out of man.

Objection #1: "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:20).

Answer: Since God is a Spirit, this does not refer to the origin of substance but to the original cause of this conception. Mary did not become pregnant spontaneously and as a consequence of her womanhood, but by the creative power of the Holy Spirit. He is nevertheless not a son of the Holy Spirit. Fatherhood and sonship are the result of generation, by which a person comes into existence from the substance of another, and after its own kind. In referring to the Holy Spirit, we cannot speak here of generation, but rather of a creative act in regard to the seed of Mary. For this reason He is said to be without a father as far as His human nature is concerned (Hebrews 7:3).

Objection #2: In Romans 8:3 we read, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and in Php 2:8, "And being found in fashion as a man."

Answer: (1) The words "likeness" and "in fashion as" do not refer to external appearance, but to an internal reality, such as man being truly human. "And Adam ... begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Genesis 5:3). "In the likeness of sinful flesh" refers to the human nature of which all sinful men are partakers. Christ, however, possesses this without sin.

(2) If one wishes to consider "likeness" and "in fashion as" to be references to that which is human-like rather than that which is truly human, then this must refer to man in his sinfulness. Christ had neither the form nor the sinful nature of sinful men. Natural men, perceiving all men to

be sinful, considered Him as such, as they did not truly know Him. He, being truly human and being known as such, was without sin, however; and by virtue of a wrong conclusion that all men are sinful merely appeared to be sinful to other natural men (Isaiah 53:4).

Objection #3: He is said to be “from heaven” (cf. John 6:33; Ephesians 4:9; 1 Corinthians 15:47).

Answer: Christ has two natures. “To be from heaven” properly refers to His personhood, His divinity, as it likewise properly belongs to His human nature to be “from man.”

Objection #4: If Christ is very man of man, should He not of necessity have original sin?

Answer: (1) Those who deny original sin obviously cannot raise this objection.

(2) Original sin is passed on to descendants by way of generation which involves both the man and the woman.

This, however, does not apply to Christ, who was neither conceived by the involvement of a man nor by the exercise of a human will, but rather by the creative power of the Holy Spirit, having been formed from the blood and seed of Mary which in itself is not sinful.

Christ, being man out of man, was born out of the Virgin Mary. She was a virgin when the Lord Jesus was formed within her and remained a virgin throughout her entire pregnancy, during which time Christ's body developed in a normal human manner. She was a virgin when, after the normal period of time, she gave birth to Christ in a normal manner, and it is credible that she remained a virgin until the day of her death. The prophecy was as follows, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son” (Isaiah 7:14), which was fulfilled in Matthew 1:1-25, and in Luke 1:1-80; Luke 2:1-52. The Lord has concealed from us the month, day, and hour of the birth of Jesus Christ, in order that there be no occasion for superstition. The approximate time of His birth, however, is given us as being:

(1) during the reign of Caesar Augustus, at his first taxation, which occurred when Cyrenius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:1-2).

(2) when Herod was king at Jerusalem (Matthew 2:1).

(3) during the fifteenth year of the emperor Tiberius. When Pilate was governor of Judea and Herod was the tetrarch of Galilee, Jesus Christ was baptized, being about thirty years old (Luke 3:1-23). This having been researched in Roman historical documents, His birth appears to have occurred approximately 1700 years ago.

We have thus observed that the Lord Jesus is very God, the Son of God, and that He is very man out of man. It need not be proven that He was a holy man and thus without sin, since He is known as such to all. The angel called Him “that holy thing” (Luke 1:35); Peter and John, that “holy child Jesus” (Acts 4:30); Paul, “holy, harmless, undefiled” (Hebrews 7:26); and Peter, “a Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). The Lord Jesus Christ: Very God and Very Man in One Person--the Hypostatic Union

It now remains for us to show against Socinians and Anabaptists that He is very God and very man in one Person. This is first of all confirmed by many texts which speak of the two natures together, making mention of them in reference to the same Person. “Concerning His Son Jesus

Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power" (Romans 1:3-4); "... of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 9:5); "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16).

Secondly, in the aforementioned, both divine and human characteristics and activities are attributed to the same Christ. Christ is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient; He created the world, and upholds and governs all things. Christ also had a body and a soul, was born in time, suffered, and died. Jesus Christ is thus God and man in one Person. The human nature of Christ, consisting in the union of body and soul, did not exist independently, was not for some time on its own, but from its very first moment existed by virtue of the personhood of the Son of God. Thus, the human nature, not being an independent person, from the very beginning has existed by means of and within the divine Person of Christ. It is and remains personally united to His divine nature. This union was established by way of assumption. The divine nature, being a Person, has assumed the human nature (having no independent existence) within the singularity of its personhood. This is according to Scripture: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant" (Php 2:6-7). This is also confirmed by Hebrews 2:16, "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but he took on Him the seed of Abraham." "The seed of Abraham" does not refer here to the natural descendants of Abraham, but seed is mentioned here in the singular, as in Galatians 3:16. "Took" is in the present tense, [Note: The Statenvertaling uses the present tense and reads as follows, "Waarlijk Hij neemt de engelen niet aan, maar Hij neemt het zaad Abrahams aan."] because "the taking upon him the seed of Abraham," that is, the human nature proceeding from Abraham, is a continuous action resulting in an endless union to all eternity. The verb "to take" does not mean "to deliver," for then the meaning would be as follows, "For verily He did not deliver the angels, but he delivered the seed of Abraham."

(1) Nowhere in Scripture does this verb have that meaning, but it always means "to take," "to accept," or "to take hold of." Even though deliverance could be the result of "to take hold of," such is not the meaning conveyed by this word. Rather, its meaning is made known from the other words appended to it.

(2) In this text it cannot be understood as such, for Christ does not only deliver the seed of Abraham, but also all believers who lived prior to Abraham, as well as all believing Gentiles. All of these would then have to be contrasted with the angels rather than with the seed of Abraham only. This not being the case, however, it is evident that "to take" does not mean "to deliver" in this text.

(3) In this entire epistle devils are never referred to as angels, and it is nowhere suggested that the devils can also be delivered. Above, mention is made of good angels, however, who are neither delivered by Christ, nor have need of Him as such. Thus, the act of "taking" cannot refer to the deliverance of angels.

(4) The context reveals that the taking upon Him of Abraham's seed is to have the human nature proceeding from Abraham's seed, this being according to the promises, for in verse nine the apostle declares that Christ has been made a little lower than the good angels in view of Him suffering death for the deliverance of man. Verse eleven demonstrates that for this purpose He had to be one with them -- man out of man -- and as the children, has partaken of flesh and blood

(vs. 14). He continues His argument in verse sixteen by showing that He did not take upon Him the nature of angels, but according to prophecy, assumed the human nature out of the seed of Abraham. The human nature having no independent existence and from its initial moment having existed by virtue of the existence of the Son of God, (to which it is and remains indivisibly and inseparably united), it is evident that there are two natures in Christ, but not two persons, that is, not a divine and a human person. There is but one divine Person. Therefore Mary did not bring forth a mere nature nor a human person, but rather a human nature existing by virtue of the personhood of the Son of God. She thus brought forth a divine Person into the world. This is not to say that the Godhead was born of her, but rather the divine Person according to His humanity. The Hypostatic Union: Without Change and Without Mixture This union, having been established by way of assumption, did not occur by the Godhead changing into man, for God is and remains immutable, invisible, and immortal (cf. Psalms 90:1; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 1:12). When John states, "And the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14), he gives expression to the union of these two natures in one Person, but by no means suggests that the Godhead has changed into man. "To be made" does not always suggest a change, which is confirmed in Galatians 3:13, where we read, "... being made a curse," which cannot mean that He was changed into a curse. In Genesis 1:3 we read, "... and there was light." This did not occur by something changing into something else, but it came into existence by way of creation. In Genesis 2:7 we read, "... and man became a living soul," which neither implies that the body changed into a soul, nor that the soul changed into a body, but rather that a union was established between these two parts. Such examples can be found in many other texts. Thus, to be made flesh is not to be understood as changing into flesh, but it rather refers to the assumption of the flesh, that is, of the human nature, and its personal union with it. As the divine nature does not change into the human nature, likewise the human nature does not change into the divine nature, for whatever is finite cannot become infinite and eternal. Furthermore, the divine nature cannot be communicated to the creature. This union also was not established by mixing these two natures, with a third type of person coming forth. Rather, this union was established without change and without mixture, each nature retaining its own attributes; each nature contributes its attributes to the Person. Thus, the same Christ has divine as well as human attributes by virtue of the union of these two natures in Him. However, the one nature does not have the attributes of the other nature. The union of these two natures in one Person has three consequences -- communication of: 1) gifts and honor, 2) attributes, and 3) activity and office.

First of all there is a communication of gifts and honor. By virtue of this union the human nature of Christ has acquired a value exceeding that of all creatures, including that of the holy angels, for it is the soul and body of the Son of God. This is true for His human nature only. By virtue of this union, this human nature is also the recipient of an extraordinary measure of the Spirit, wisdom, holiness, and other gifts. We read, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2); "Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Psalms 45:7); "... full of grace and truth" (John 1:14); "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John 3:34). All these gifts are not infinite, however, for that which is finite cannot comprehend infinity. Rather, the measure of these gifts far exceeds that afforded to all creatures; that is, Adam, the glorified saints in heaven, and all the angels. This does not mean that Christ according to His human nature had these gifts in that measure from His first beginning and

prior to His birth, or immediately at His birth. Nor does it mean that He neither could nor did increase in the same, for “Jesus increased in wisdom” (Luke 2:52), and “Yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8).

Albeit that Christ in His human nature has received such excellent gifts in which He exceeds all creatures, He must not therefore be worshipped as man or as Mediator. It is true that Christ the Mediator, that is, Christ as God and man, must be worshipped, and is the object of worship. The basis for this worship, however, lies neither in His mediatorial office, His human nature, nor in the excellency of His gifts, but solely in His divine nature. His mediatorial office is indeed the motive whereby we are stirred up to worship the Mediator. However, this worship neither terminates in nor is directed toward His mediatorial office or His gifted human nature, for:

(1) We may only worship God (Matthew 4:10). As gifted and glorious as the human nature of Christ is, it is not God, and thus ought not be worshipped.

(2) It is an act of idolatry to worship that which by nature is not God (Galatians 4:8). Christ's human nature is by nature not God, and thus it would be idolatrous to worship it.

(3) All the gifts of His human nature and its glory have been bestowed and are a gift, as can be observed in the aforementioned texts and which also is self-evident. Gifts cannot be the basis for worship.

(4) Even His divine works such as creation, upholding, and government are no basis for worship, but are merely motives for it, since they are not God Himself. Thus, both His mediatorial office and His gifted human nature are not the basis for worship.

Secondly, there is communication of attributes. The union of the two natures in Christ occurred without there being change and mixture, so that each nature retained its own attributes. Each nature communicates these unique attributes to the Person, so that the Person, being God, is eternal, infinite, omniscient, and omnipotent. At the same time, however, the Person of Christ, due to His humanity, was born in the fullness of time, can only be at one location at one time, does not know all things, had human but sinless emotions, hungered, thirsted, suffered, and died. These various qualities are attributed to Him in Scripture in a threefold manner, which we will identify in a moment. As the human nature did not communicate its attributes to the divine nature, likewise the divine nature did not communicate any or any part of its attributes to the human nature. This we prove against the Lutherans by the following:

We first of all prove this from the word “attribute” itself, for whatever is imparted to someone is no longer unique but common. If it were true that the divine attributes have been imparted to the human nature, then they are no longer unique to the divine nature, which is as much as to say that God is no longer God.

Secondly, since all the attributes of God are the divine essence itself (which can only be understood by us puny human beings by way of attributes), then all these attributes of necessity would have to be imparted if one or some were to be imparted. Then the human nature would be God; the human nature would be eternal and would thus have existed before Christ was born of Mary, eternity being one of the attributes of God. Then Christ could not have been born as far as the flesh is concerned, since He already existed. He could not have been buried, for He would

have been in the grave prior to this. He could not have arisen and exited the grave, for He would have done so prior to this, or He would have to remain in His grave after His resurrection, and whatever other absurdities could be suggested.

Thirdly, not only does Scripture state this nowhere, but it contradicts this expressly, for we read that Christ was not omnipresent according to His human nature:

(1) This is true in the state of His humiliation when He is said to leave one place and to go to another, or to be present in one place and not in the other. "And I am glad ... that I was not there ..." (John 11:15).

(2) He is also not omnipresent in His exaltation. "He is not here: for He is risen" (Matthew 28:6); "I leave the world" (John 16:28); "For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest" (Hebrews 8:4). To the suggestion that His visible presence is being referred to here, I respond that this is not stated, but it must be understood in its absolute sense. It cannot be understood as such, for it is an inseparable attribute of the human body to be visible. One would then be able to reason likewise in reference to the absurdities which we will be considering further.

Objection #1: Since the human nature has been united to the divine nature, it also has divine attributes.

Answer: (1) Our body is also united to our soul. It then ought to have the attributes of the soul.

(2) By the same argument the divine nature would also have the attributes of the human nature.

(3) On this basis all attributes would have to be imparted, eternity inclusive.

(4) This union necessarily implies that the Person possesses the attributes of both natures, but one nature does not have the attributes of the other nature.

Objection #2: The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily (Colossians 2:9), and therefore also the divine attributes.

Answer: (1) This argument must then hold true for all the attributes, eternity inclusive.

(2) This text refers to Christ's personhood and not to His human nature. You cannot logically proceed from His Person to His nature.

(3) "Bodily" means to say: evidently, truly, not by way of comparison, and not by way of examples and ceremonies -- Christ being the body or substance of these shadows (vs. 17).

Objection #3: If the attributes are not mutually imparted, then the natures must be separate from each other.

Answer: (1) By this argument all human attributes would have to be imparted to the divine nature.

(2) The opposite is true for the union of body and soul.

(3) This union is not local but personal in nature.

Objection #4: It is written: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things" (Ephesians 4:10).

Answer: No mention is made here of all places being filled with His body, but rather of His church and all her true members being filled with His Spirit and His operations.

Objection #5: It is not by measure (John 3:34).

Answer: The reference here is not to infinity, but that it far excels that of others.

Objection #6: There is written, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18).

Answer: The reference here is not to His human nature, but to His Person. Also, it does not say dunamis, that is, power, but exousia, that is, authority, power, domain.

Objection #7: God's Word states: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

Answer: (1) The reference is to His Person and not to the human nature.

(2) Christ can be viewed here as the object of faith, and thus believers may obtain all wisdom and knowledge looking upon Jesus, in whom all the mysteries of the gospel are revealed. It thus remains certain that the human nature did not receive the attributes of the divine nature.

Thirdly, there is communication of works and official administration. Both natures having been united in one Person -- they do not function independently -- all activity is of the Person. Since Christ is but one Person, there is but one principle which is operative. Since there are two natures within this one Person, which in reference to His personhood are indivisible and inseparable and in reference to each other are united without change and without mixture, the Person of Christ works by means of these two natures. Since each nature functions according to its own properties, there is a twofold operation. As God, the Person of Christ functions according to His divine nature, and as man, according to His human nature. Thus, each nature contributes to the execution of the one work of redemption in all its parts.

Christ is therefore Mediator according to both natures; that is, not only according to His human nature but also according to His divine nature. This is first of all evident from the fact that the divine nature constitutes the personhood of Christ, from which therefore the work of redemption originates. This work of redemption was not accomplished by His incarnation only, nor should it be viewed only in reference to His mediatorial office, placing Himself on the same level as His church, but it should also be considered how He, in His incarnation, made Himself of no reputation by concealing His Godhead, taking upon Him the form of a servant, and becoming obedient to His Father, even unto death (Php 2:7-8). This is a work of His Mediatorial office, and actus sunt suppositorum; these deeds are attributed to the Person. Christ is thus Mediator also according to His divine nature.

Secondly, as we have shown, the two natures and their particular workings are prerequisite for the office of Mediator. The divine nature had to support the human nature and resurrect it from the dead, render both His suffering and His fulfillment of the law valid and efficacious, and actually apply everything, delivering His own from the greatest evil and making them partakers of the highest good.

Thirdly, Scripture expressly relates the mediatorial office to the divine nature. "... to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28); "... they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8); "... Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14).

Due to the union of the two natures in one Person, there are various expressions which relate to the same Christ. First of all, this occurs when, in mentioning the Person, that which properly belongs to one of the two natures is attributed to Him. Such is true when it is said that Christ is from eternity, and yet came in the fullness of time out of a woman; Christ is omniscient, and not omniscient; Christ is omnipresent and not omnipresent; and Christ had glory with His Father before the world began, and yet has died. Secondly, this occurs when reference is made to the Person as far as one nature is concerned, while attributing to Him that which properly belongs to the other nature. God has purchased His Church with His blood and the Lord of glory has been crucified. Thirdly, one nature will be mentioned, while attributing to Him that which belongs to His Person and properly to both natures. "For there is ... one Mediator ... the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Exhortation to Meditate upon the Preciousness of the All-Sufficient Mediator Jesus Christ

Thus we have shown that the Lord Jesus is very God, very man, a holy man, and God and man in one Person. It is necessary to pause for a moment to consider this Mediator whose Name is Wonderful from every perspective, in order that we might properly be motivated to godliness.

First, this wondrous work shall neither be comprehended nor fathomed by angels or men to all eternity, but will always remain an unfathomable source of adoration. Nevertheless, being yet upon earth, we can and must attempt to gain insight into this work of redemption.

(1) No one could be Surety and bring man to God but He who was God and man in one Person. The Son of God first had to be personally united to the human nature before sinful man could be restored into friendship and union with God. Behold, how great a work it is to save a sinner! What manifold wisdom was required to conceive such a remedy! All the holy angels together could not have conceived such a remedy as God has conceived and revealed. They are desirous to look into this, but they shall never be able to comprehend it. What a blessing it is that none but He was able to do this, that He has sent His own Son for this purpose and caused Him to unite personally with the human nature! What omnipotence is required to execute such a design!

(2) How intimately the elect are united to God, when even their nature has been assumed within the Person of the Son of God! In this they are even exalted above the angels of God, whose nature is not personally united to God. Is it a small matter to be so near to God? If only we would attempt to reflect more upon this wonder of wonders! The angels are desirous to look into this. It is an activity with which they continually occupy themselves since they are not able to satisfy their desire. If we were to be continually exercised with this, we would lose ourselves in holy adoration, joyously approve of this, and before realizing it we would find ourselves wonderfully near to God, being united in communion with Him. We would understand what it means when the Lord Jesus says, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (John 17:21). This exceeds all comprehension and adoration. This is not only true regarding the matter itself but also relative to the rapturous frame of heart of all those who may

occupy themselves in reflecting upon this. This will fill our mouths with praise, and time and again will cause us to conclude with the psalmist, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him" (Psalms 8:4); "... that Thou shouldest magnify him? and that Thou shouldest set Thine heart upon him" (Job 7:17)

Secondly, let your consideration not be merely of a general nature, but proceed to meditate both upon His Godhead and His humanity. Let us consider His Godhead. If our Lord Jesus is God, and if according to His Godhead He is also our Mediator, then

(1) we observe that His ransom has eternal and infinite value and efficacy. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14). All the sins of all believers, however great and many they may be, without the least exception, are fully remitted and not the least measure of debt or punishment remains. Yes, this satisfaction is so perfect that it is as if they had no sin but had kept the law perfectly, for He who has made satisfaction is the true and eternal God.

(2) If the Lord Jesus is God, meditation upon Him as such will generate great reverence in our hearts, and cause us to exalt Him far above everything. It will cause us to bow before Him, to worship Him with the angels, to honor Him as the Father, He being one with Him; and we will join all creatures in heaven and upon earth by exclaiming, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:13).

(3) Meditation upon His Godhead will cause us to trust in Him according to His own command, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1). Oh, how confident a person may be who has received Him by faith, and when his entire case and all his circumstances have been given over into His hand! How safely is the soul preserved who has surrendered to Him. Such a soul may put all fear and concern aside and say with an assured and steadfast heart, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalms 73:24). He is God and therefore supreme goodness Himself. He is omniscient and thus knows the frame, desires, sincerity, and anxieties of the soul. He is almighty to deliver, keep, and comfort the soul, as well as usher him into eternal felicity. How blessed is such a soul which may have the Lord Jesus as his Savior! Let such a soul rejoice in His Name.

Thirdly, let the incarnation of the Lord Jesus also be the frequent subject of your meditation, for the manifestation of God in the flesh is a "mystery of godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16). All true godliness proceeds from the knowledge of, and a believing union with, the Lord Jesus. This generates love and all that proceeds from love. Whatever does not proceed from this source cannot be called godliness. Even though nature may give us an impression of God and religion, it does not reveal this mystery. He who has only been illuminated outwardly is also ignorant of the frame of heart which proceeds from knowing Jesus (that is, as both God and man) and being in a believing union with Him. This frame consists in having peace in and with God, resting in Him without fear, loving Him, and being desirous in all things to live in a manner pleasing to the Lord -- thus to be lifted up in magnifying God in response to the manifestation of His perfections in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus.

(1) This will confront us with the dreadfulness of sin on the one hand, and the pristine righteousness of God on the other hand. The one could not be taken away and the other could not be satisfied unless the Son of God would become man, conceal His glory behind the veil of His human nature, and permit Himself to suffer all shame and suffering according to His human nature. Yes, the Lord of glory had to be crucified.

(2) Herein we may observe God's unfathomable love for humanity. The elect, rather than being desirable, were hateful in themselves. God, however, loves them for reasons within Himself, purely because He wills to love them. This love moved the Father to send forth His Son in the flesh, concerning which the Lord Jesus exclaims, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Motivated by this love the Son went forth, assumed the human nature, and endured all manner of suffering and death. "... as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). If there is anything that stirs up love, then this love of God and of Christ ought to quicken our love and cause it to burn within us.

(3) The incarnation manifests the infallible veracity of God. His performance is in agreement with His Word, for here we observe the fulfillment of the promise made in Paradise, "It (the Seed of the woman) shall bruise thy (the serpent's) head" (Genesis 3:15). Here all the promises made to the fathers are fulfilled -- something which they so eagerly anticipated. Here we have the fulfillment of all the shadows and sacrifices which functioned as prophecies and descriptions of the Messiah. God thus reveals that He is true and will not allow one promise to go unfulfilled. Mary acknowledged this when she said, "As He spake to our fathers" (Luke 1:70). This was likewise true for Zacharias when he said, "As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began" (Luke 1:70).

(4) The incarnation is that great work of God in which the wisdom, goodness, power, mercy, and glory of God shine forth in a most excellent manner. What wisdom, goodness, and power is manifested in bringing a sinner back to a holy God by way of the most sublime manifestation of His justice; by a Person who is both God and man; through such a way of suffering; and by leading the sinner to such a felicity in ways which pass all understanding! All this the holy angels observe, and it is an element of their felicity to perceive the perfections of God in the work of redemption revealed by the incarnation. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10). Mary perceived all this and said, "For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His Name; and His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with His arm" (Luke 1:49-51).

One ought thus to meditate upon the incarnation, in order to discern clearly these and other attributes of God, approving of them with holy adoration and joyously magnifying God with the holy angels, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

Fourthly, the description of the incarnation of Christ also ought to arouse in us a joyous gratitude towards God, and we ought to welcome the fact that the Lord Jesus has assumed our nature. This the angel conveyed in his message to the shepherds when he said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10). If our soul should rejoice in anything, it ought to rejoice in this great and wondrous work of God. To this end consider the following:

(1) It was prophesied that men would rejoice upon the Savior's advent into the world. "They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given" (Isaiah 9:3; Isaiah 9:6); "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9); "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation" (Zechariah 9:9). Since it has been prophesied as such, and since we are living in the fulfillment of all this, we ought to lift up our souls with joy and thanksgiving.

(2) Consider the longing of the saints for the coming of Christ in the flesh. After Eve had given birth to her first son, it appears that she was of the opinion that the promise had been immediately fulfilled, for she said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord" (Genesis 4:1). The Lord Jesus said concerning Abraham, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day" (John 8:56). David gave expression to his desire when he said, "For this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow" (2 Samuel 23:5). This desire was also present in the God-fearing kings and prophets. "For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see" (Luke 10:24). Yes, all the saints of the Old Testament longed for this. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them" (Hebrews 11:13). What joy they would have manifested if they had seen the Lord Jesus in the flesh! We may experience the fulfillment of this. Therefore it behooves us to rejoice and to thank the Lord for this most precious gift, for such a dear and precious Savior.

(3) When Christ came into the world, heaven and earth were filled with joy. John the Baptist leaped for joy in his mother's womb (Luke 1:44). Mary sang a doxology, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:46-47). The tongue of a dumb Zacharias broke loose, exclaiming, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David" (Luke 1:68-69). Old Simeon took the child in his arms, praised God, and exclaimed, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Luke 2:29-30). Come, join and rejoice with them. Will your heart always be heavy-laden? Would you not rejoice for once? And if your heart would rejoice, what could be more motivating than the incarnation of Christ? Therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Php 4:4).

However, someone may possibly say, "My heart remains in bondage; I cannot rejoice in this, for I fear that He was not born for me anyway, and that I am not a partaker of all this." I respond to this by saying that:

(1) This is merely a fear, for you are also not assured that the contrary is true;

(2) This is not the only problem. The reason one does not rejoice in the incarnation is for lack of holy meditation upon the subject, its miraculous nature, the promises, the Person, the fruits, and this great salvation brought about by His suffering and death. What reason for rejoicing would he who does not attentively reflect upon this have?

(3) Since there is such a Savior, however, can it be a matter of indifference to you whether or not there is such a Savior? If you are not indifferent to this, why do you not rejoice over His coming

into the world, even if you still are no partaker of Him?

(4) You who yearn for Jesus, however, in order to be justified and sanctified by Him, even if it is accompanied by much darkness, fear, anxiety, and concern (John 6:40); you, in whose heart Jesus dwells by faith, so that your desires are repeatedly drawn towards Him (Ephesians 3:17); you, in whom Jesus has been formed (Galatians 4:19) and in whom Jesus lives (Galatians 2:20), so that He is all your joy and desire, generating within you a hatred towards sin, a desire to walk as He walked, and perceiving within you a battle between spirit and flesh; you, who love Jesus (1 John 4:19) -- you have reason to be assured that He has been born for you. Therefore you have double reason to rejoice with delightful and unspeakable joy, and to jubilate concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus in the flesh.

Fifthly, come therefore, and acknowledge Him as your Lord. "Kiss the Son" (Psalms 2:12), "For He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him" (Psalms 45:11). Surrender yourself to Him, seek to please Him, fear Him, serve Him, and hold Him before you as your only and perfect example, and thus follow in His footsteps (1 Peter 2:21). As one must consider the Lord Jesus as being very God -- and thus interact with Him with awe, reverence, fear, confidence, and in a worshipful frame -- one may and must likewise have fellowship with Him as man, as being our brother, "for ... He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:17). Such fellowship with Him the bride desired. "O that Thou wert as my brother!" (Song of Solomon 8:1). Since He has become our brother, we may and must have fellowship with Him as such, always viewing Him as being in such a relationship to us, "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" (Hebrews 2:17). He is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bones. This yields boldness and familiarity to bring all our needs before Him who, being man Himself, understands man's frame of mind when he suffers pain and is troubled in both soul and body. He can and does have compassion with them (Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 4:15). This familiarity makes the heart tender. It gives boldness to approach unto Him and commune with Him in human fashion as speaking to a man, commending our cause to Him, and on the basis of His Godhead entrusting it to Him. This in turn will stir up the heart in sweet love towards Him.

022. Chapter 19: Concerning the Three Offices of Christ, and Particularly His Prophetic Office

----- CHAPTER NINETEEN ----- Concerning the Three Offices of Christ, and Particularly His Prophetic Office

Having discussed the Person of the Mediator, it now follows that our discussion focuses on His offices. The Savior Jesus generally is also called Christ. The Savior had been promised in the Old Testament under the name Meschiach, "unto the Messiah the Prince" (Daniel 9:25). The Greek have translated this as Christos. "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John 1:41). The meaning in our language is "Anointed One," which is derived from the Old Testament practice of anointing. In those times and places, rather than using a fragrant powder for one's hair as we do, they used fragrant oils which, by way of the apothecary's art, were created as a very choice mixture whereby all its fragrance was derived from mixing a small quantity of ingredients together, creating a quintam essentium. This oil would be sprinkled in the hair in small quantities in order to make one's appearance presentable, and by the loveliness of the fragrance to make oneself desirable in the presence of others. The Lord had commanded to make a special oil from various fragrant spices according to the art of the apothecary (Exodus 30:32). No one was permitted either to imitate this or to sprinkle with this ointment, the violation of this injunction resulting in being cut off from his people (Exodus 30:32-33). With this oil Aaron and his sons were anointed to minister in the priest's office (vs. 30). Prophets, as well as kings (1 Samuel 10:1; 1 Samuel 16:13), were anointed with this oil (1 Kings 19:16). The Anointed One: Foreordained and Qualified This anointment was expressive of two matters. It first of all conveyed that such persons were foreordained and called to this office by God, for one would smell the fragrance of the Lord upon this person. Secondly, it conveyed that the Lord would qualify such persons for that office. Thereby they would be desirable to the people, as the fragrance of this oil was most desirable and the anointed one would exude a pleasant scent due to the fragrance of this oil. Therefore they were called the anointed ones, and the anointed of the Lord. Christ is thus called the Anointed One, being expressive of those two matters: foreordination and qualification.

We shall first of all consider foreordination. Christ did not take the office of Mediator upon Himself by His own initiative. "so also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest" (Hebrews 5:5).

(1) He was ordained to this office by His Father. "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20); "I was set up from everlasting" (Proverbs 8:23).

(2) The Father sent Him into the world for that purpose. "... Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world ..." (John 10:36). He also called Him. "I the Lord have called Thee in righteousness" (Isaiah 42:6). He was inaugurated into this office at His baptism. "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). He was thus made "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

Secondly, His qualification consists in: (1) the union of the two natures in one Person, without which He could not have been Mediator. God by Himself or man by himself would not have been qualified, but God had to be manifested in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16);

(2) an extraordinary anointing of the Holy Spirit. "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John 3:34). Just as three categories of individuals were anointed as types of Christ -- prophets, priests, and kings -- it was thus necessary that Christ would also have these three offices and minister in them, so that He would be able to remove the threefold misery of man. He removes blindness by His prophetic office, enmity with God by His priestly office, and inability by His kingly office. That Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King, ministering in these three offices on behalf of His elect, is evident throughout the Holy Scriptures. We will consider each office in particular. The Prophetical Office of Christ The prophetical office of Christ is confirmed by both prophecy and fulfillment.

(1) He was promised as a prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken." Acts 3:22 confirms that this reference is to Christ; these very words are quoted as relating to Christ. Consider also the following text: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek." etc. (Isaiah 61:1-2). Having read these words, the Lord Jesus applied them to Himself, saying, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21), and in verse 24 He refers to Himself as a Prophet.

(2) In His sojourn upon earth the Lord presented Himself as a Prophet. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matthew 17:5). Everywhere the Lord Jesus conducted Himself as a prophet. "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 9:35). He was recognized as such by the people. "A great prophet is risen up among us" (Luke 7:16); "... which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19). The ministry of the prophets consisted in 1) reception of immediate revelation from God concerning divine mysteries which occurred among prophets with an extraordinary calling; 2) the proclamation and exposition of the Word of God; 3) the foretelling of future events; 4) confirmation of revelation by means of miracles.

First, the prophets received divine mysteries by immediate revelation. "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream" (Numbers 12:6); "... holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). The Lord Jesus received all things from the Father in this fashion. "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth" (John 5:20); "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Revelation 1:1). This does not mean that Christ was taken up into heaven after His baptism to receive these mysteries. This is a fabrication of the Socinians for the purpose of denying the Godhead of Christ all the more effectively, for:

(1) Holy Writ does not mention a word concerning this; when mention is made of Christ's descent, the reference is to the assumption by the divine nature of the human nature, and His descent is mentioned prior to His ascension, which is contrary to their view; they place His ascension before His descent.

(2) It was not necessary for Him to be taken into heaven in order to receive divine revelations, for as God He was omniscient, and all things had their origin in Him. "I speak that which I have seen with My Father" (John 8:38). According to His human nature He had received the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2).

Secondly, the ministry of the prophets consisted in exposition and proclamation of the Word of God, which is to be observed in their prophecies. Thus, also the Lord Jesus, as God, as the sole Lawgiver and as the King of His people, gave them the law to be a rule of life for His people, declared this law to them, and purified it of erroneous exposition and distortion (Matthew 5:1-48). He rebuked the transgressors (Matthew 23:1-39) while exhorting and stirring up everyone to obedience by saying, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

However, Christ did not preach a new doctrine, did not issue forth a new law, and did not reveal a new way to heaven -- a way which would not have been declared in the Old Testament, and which to the godly would neither have known nor walked in. He merely fulfilled and confirmed that which prior to His coming had been written concerning Him and the way of salvation. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17).

Just as Christ conducted Himself in respect to the law, so likewise He proclaimed the gospel as a prophet. Christ is the author of the gospel, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Christ is also the messenger of the gospel. "And came and preached peace to you" (Ephesians 2:17). Furthermore, Christ is the object of the gospel. "But we preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23). For this reason the gospel is called the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16).

Thirdly, the ministry of the prophetic office also consists in foretelling future events; the Greek word "prophet" is derived from this fact. Christ did not merely foretell what He Himself would have to encounter in order to merit salvation for His elect, but also what would transpire in the world, the church, and upon the Day of Judgment. This is confirmed by the entire revelation of divine truth, the gospels included.

Fourthly, just as the prophets confirmed their doctrine by means of miracles -- as we observe in Elijah and Elisha -- the Lord Jesus confirmed His doctrine by miracles. The gospels abundantly bear witness to this, so that the multitude exclaimed, "When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done" (John 7:31). Peter stated, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22). The other prophets performed miracles by the power of Christ, to which Peter alluded when he said, "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? And His Name through faith in His Name hath made this man strong" (Acts 3:12; Acts 3:16). Christ, however, did miracles by His own power. "And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him ..." (Mark 5:30); "For there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all" (Luke 6:19).

Christ's Administration of His Prophetic Office Christ administered His prophetic office:

(1) by means of His prophets in the Old Testament. “searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:11); “By which also He (Christ) went and preached unto the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:19);

(2) during His sojourn upon earth. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2);

(3) after His ascension. He still administers His prophetic office by means of His apostles, pastors, and teachers. “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12). Since they are His messengers and preach in His Name, the Lord Jesus thus requires that we hear them as if we heard Him. “He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me” (Luke 10:16).

There is a twofold administration of this prophetic office: an external and an internal one. They are conjoined in Isaiah 59:21 : “My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth.”

Christ administers His prophetic office externally by the written and printed Word, and by the Word preached by His servants. This is no longer limited to the Jewish nation, as was true prior to the coming of Christ (Psalms 147:19-20), but the gospel is now proclaimed to the Gentiles and all who hear the voice of Christ, for His “sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Romans 10:18). Many nations, however, are and remain deprived of the means of salvation unto the present time. For even though all are not saved who hear the words of Christ, as “the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Hebrews 4:2), no one can be saved unless he hears the external preaching of Christ. “How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:14-17).

Christ administers His prophetic office internally when by His Spirit He illuminates souls by His “marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). He illuminates the heart “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6), enabling them to understand the truth in its very essence, “as the truth is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21), and to have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). He causes their hearts to burn within them (Luke 24:32), regenerates them (James 1:18), grants them faith (Ephesians 5:8), sets them free by the truth (John 8:32), and they walk in the truth (3 John 1:4). When the Lord Jesus teaches sinners internally, He does not address Himself differently to them than He does to others. The same Word, the same sermons heard simultaneously by many, some only hear with the ear and understand the truth in a natural sense without their hearts being renewed by it. That same Word affects others internally, enlightening and renewing the heart. Thus, this difference is not to be attributed to the Word or person who hears it. It is the applying power of Christ that makes the difference, affecting the one and not the other. In this we perceive the great distinction between all other prophets and this great Prophet of prophets. They were only ordinary, and above all, sinful men. They did not give authority to the Word, nor did they bring it forth of themselves. They were only able to preach the Word to the external ear. But “who teacheth like Him” (Job 36:22).

(1) He preached with divine authority, "For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29).

(2) He preached with a holy and penetrating zeal, so that the zeal of the Lord's house ate Him up (John 2:17).

(3) His preaching was accompanied by divine power, so that even His enemies said, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46).

(4) He preached with a wondrous wisdom, so that no one could resist Him, for "He had put the Sadducees to silence" (Matthew 22:34). He Himself says, "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isaiah 50:4).

(5) He preached with delightful eloquence, for "... all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22).

(6) He preached internally to the heart -- illuminating, warming, converting and sanctifying it. He baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Matthew 3:11). Oh, how blessed is he who may have such a Teacher!

Two matters must be considered more particularly regarding the prophetic office of Jesus Christ. First of all, one must seek to derive personal benefit from this office. Secondly, one must seek to follow His example for the benefit of others, that we also might be prophets, since as Christians we are named after Christ and are thus partakers of His anointing.

Exhortation to Seek Personal Benefit from Christ's Prophetical Office

First, we must make use of this office to our own benefit. If Christ is a Prophet -- yes, such a prophet as we have shown Him to be -- then come to Him, you who are born blind, ignorant, and strangers of the life of God due to this ignorance within you. You also ought to come, who may perceive some light but are as the man born blind, seeing but a glimmer, who, when he began to see, saw "men as trees, walking" (Mark 8:24). You ought to come who have received more light, which in turn makes you more desirous for additional light. You also ought to come -- you who have come into a condition of spiritual stupor and darkness, rendering your knowledge ineffectual and not bringing forth inner warmth, comfort, joy, and godliness. Therefore, all who are desirous for the knowledge of God, come, so that you may grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Come to this Prophet and beseech Him to instruct you, and attentively heed His instructions.

First of all, you need to do so, considering your ignorance. Solomon says concerning you, "Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good" (Proverbs 19:2). You are not suited for godliness or for salvation.

(1) You know that no one can be saved without faith. "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). But he who has no knowledge of the divine mystery cannot believe. "By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many" (Isaiah 53:11); "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard" (Romans 10:14). Bind this upon your heart, you who boast of having faith, and nevertheless are without knowledge!

(2) You know that without conversion no one shall enter heaven (John 3:5). Without knowledge, however, there can be no conversion. The very first thing that manifests itself in regeneration is knowledge. The Lord first opened Lydia's heart (Acts 16:14). Therefore conversion is referred to as an act of illumination. "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light" (Acts 26:18); "Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). It is a sure sign that one is unconverted if he has no knowledge of divine mysteries, even if he lives blamelessly according to the law and excels in good works. His ignorance conveys that his works are not of the same nature as true good works. Take this to heart, you who are of the opinion that the knowledge of the truth is of little value, but that our actions are of primary importance. The absence of light and virtue renders our deeds null and void.

(3) You know that he who does not love God and Christ is accursed. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" (1 Corinthians 16:22). But without knowledge no one can love God and Christ, for no one has any interest or desire for the unknown. Ignorance begets lack of desire. Even if you call God "dear Lord," or if you say "I love God," you nevertheless are not truthful if you do not know Him in Christ.

(4) You know that he who does not serve God cannot be saved. "Where I am, there shall also My servant be" (John 12:26). But without knowledge no one is able to serve, honor, fear, and obey God, for true religion is a reasonable service (Romans 12:1). Religion without knowledge is a "sacrifice of fools" (Ecclesiastes 5:1), and idolatry (Acts 17:16; Acts 17:23).

(5) Ignorance is the cause of all sin. Paul persecuted the church of God and, due to ignorance, even compelled its members to blaspheme Christ (1 Timothy 1:13). Through ignorance the Jews crucified Christ (Acts 3:17). The apostle therefore establishes ignorance as the chief of all sins. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3). Therefore do not pacify yourself by asserting that you have done this or that out of ignorance, for you ought to have known it.

(6) In a word, ignorance deprives man of all grace and leads him to eternal damnation. "It is a people of no understanding; therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will shew them no favour" (Isaiah 27:11); "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God ..." (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Therefore do not soothe your conscience by reasoning that you have done some good, and have not publicly been ungodly, for ignorance alone is a cause for condemnation.

(7) You who have received some light, is it not your experience that your unbelief, your failure to fear, love, and obey God; your fearfulness, anxiety, and sorrow are all caused by ignorance? Consider all this together and you ought to be frightened by what you perceive about yourself. Let this motivate you to go to this Prophet in order that He may teach you and that, being illuminated, you may walk in the light.

Secondly, if you may perceive the essential nature of this light and of saving knowledge, you will be motivated to be taught by this Prophet, for:

(1) It is an experience of extraordinary joy. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Proverbs 3:17); "My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb,

which is sweet to thy taste. So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul" (Proverbs 24:13-14); "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalms 97:11); "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance; in Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day" (Psalms 89:15-16).

(2) Sound knowledge sanctifies powerfully. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32); "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

(3) Such knowledge yields steadfastness in faith and stability for our entire pathway of life. "And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation" (Isaiah 33:6); "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God ... that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:13-14).

(4) This knowledge is the way unto salvation and pertains to the special felicity that shall be enjoyed in heaven. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy" (Psalms 16:11); "I will behold Thy face in righteousness" (Psalms 17:15); "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). These matters being so desirable, they ought to strongly motivate us to go to this Prophet in order that He might instruct us.

Thirdly, who shall instruct you? You cannot teach yourself, for were you through some effort to increase in a natural knowledge of God, such knowledge would merely be as moonlight and will not save you. Even if by study you were to increase your natural knowledge of the truth to some degree, your knowledge will nevertheless remain natural and shrouded in darkness. Even if you were to understand the entire Bible as to the meaning of the words and their respective context, you would not understand the matter expressed by these words. Even if you imagine to know God, that Christ is the Savior, and that those who believe in Him shall have everlasting life -- then what do you know more than the devils? Exert as much effort as you wish, and seek the assistance of wise teachers; together you will not be able to illuminate yourself spiritually. Although you have the notion that you do see, you are nevertheless blind. In order to be delivered from your darkness and to be illuminated with spiritual light, the Lord Jesus, this great Prophet, must take the task in hand to instruct you. He can, will, and does so to all who come to Him for such instruction.

(1) This Prophet is able to teach, for He Himself is the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2) He is "as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth" (2 Samuel 23:4). He is "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32).

(2) It is His desire to instruct, for He invites everyone, saying, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come" (Proverbs 9:4-5). He says, "I counsel thee to buy of Me ... and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation 3:18).

(3) He does this very thing, not only by giving His Word to this or that nation, by sending them His servants with this commission, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19), but also, by His Spirit, illuminating His own. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your

understanding being enlightened" (Ephesians 1:17-18). He is the One who fills the soul with "the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Colossians 1:9); He shines "in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

You who are unconverted, reflect upon your case for a moment. How long has this Prophet already been engaged in instructing you? How many teachers did He already send to you? How many agitations of conscience have you felt? How often has He convinced you of sin, your unconverted state, and eternal condemnation? How frequently has He stirred you up to become a Christian, to repent and enter into covenant with Him? You have not been inclined to do so, however, nor have you had desire for a knowledge of the truth; but you have ignored it as if it were something strange when He held before you the excellency of the gospel. You have permitted all convictions to disappear and have stifled them by turning to other matters. Perhaps you have hardened yourself against His rebukes and thus have made your bands even stronger (Isaiah 28:22). Tell me, would it not be just for this Prophet to turn away from you and allow you to go your own way, since you do not desire to hear Him anyway? Has He not stretched out His hands long enough to you? If He were to cease doing so at this moment, would your condemnation not be just? Yes, would your judgment and condemnation not be more severe and intolerable than others to whom God never caused His gospel to be proclaimed? Consider attentively this one text which I wish would be bound upon your heart: "see that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25). And you, children of God, consider that prior to your conversion you behaved yourself in like manner towards this Prophet. Consider what a great mercy it is that the Lord nevertheless persisted and by His almighty power opened your heart so that you gave heed to His voice, He shining in your heart to give the light of knowledge. It is only for this reason that you now properly perceive the truth -- that it is so desirable to you, quickens your heart, causes you to rejoice, and changes you. Acknowledge this. Perceive it as a wonder and blessing for you. Rejoice over this and give thanks to the Lord whose work alone this is. But consider at the same time how disobediently you still behave with regard to this Prophet. You have but a glimmer of light. Should you be satisfied with that? And even if this lack of light does not grieve you -- although it ought to -- you should have such esteem for this Prophet that you would not so frequently allow Him to speak in vain. A Diligent Exhortation to Converted and Unconverted Alike to Give Heed to the Words of this Prophet Therefore, both converted and unconverted, hear this Prophet with more reverence, attention, and desire.

(1) You must consider that this Person is God Himself. Should God speak and we not give heed? In what a powerful manner Isaiah began his prophecy! Oh, that it would move us! "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken" (Isaiah 1:2). Consider that the Father has sent Him to you, and that He exhorts you from heaven. Hear ye Him! (Matthew 17:5).

(2) Consider the matters themselves for they are the mysteries of salvation. They pertain to God, Christ, peace, joy, and the way in which a soul finds satisfaction in God. They do not merely point you the way to heaven, but seek to cause you to rejoice in this light already here.

(3) Consider the manner of His instruction. He does so in such a kindhearted, friendly, and quiet way; it is so wise and suitable to your circumstances -- counseling you precisely at the right

moment, warning you, stirring you up, continually saying, "This is the way."

(4) You who are unconverted, if you do not give heed, know that He will not always speak to you. He will remove either His Word, His Spirit, or you, and then it will be too late. "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart" (Psalms 95:7-8). You who are converted, know also that if you are not diligent in listening to Him, in continually beseeching Him, in expecting His answer, nor in following His counsel, He will remain silent, hide Himself more and more, and leave you in darkness. The more attentively and persistently you hear His instruction, however, the more He will reveal His secrets to you, and grant deeper insight into that which you may know already. His voice of instruction will be more enduring and efficacious within you. Therefore, "Hear attentively the noise of His voice, and the sound that goeth out of His mouth" (Job 37:2). The Lord Jesus says, "Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isaiah 55:2); "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors. For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord" (Proverbs 8:34-35).

All of you who are conscious of your blindness and are desirous for spiritual light, come to this Prophet who can and will instruct you, in order that by His instruction you may make progress.

(1) Renounce therefore your own intellectual ingenuity and shrewdness and cast yourself at His feet as one who is ignorant and even unfit to be instructed. Follow the advice of Paul, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Corinthians 3:18-19); "And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:2).

(2) Come with an obedient heart, being not only desirous to know, but also to do the will of God, saying with Samuel, "speak; for Thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:10) and with Paul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do" (Acts 9:6).

(3) Come and hear with an attentive heart, taking note not only of the meaning of the Word, but also of every illumination and motion of the Holy Spirit by and according to the Word. Lydia attended to the words spoken by Paul (Acts 16:14). Habakkuk stood upon his watch to see what God would say unto him (Habakkuk 2:1). The church confesses, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (Psalms 85:8). Cornelius said, "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33).

(4) Come to this Prophet, humbly beseeching Him that He will teach and guide you. "shew me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths; Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me" (Psalms 25:4-5); "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psalms 119:18). Then believe that He shall hear you and grant you wisdom. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:5-6), that is, doubting neither the power and the willingness of the Lord nor the fact that He will grant any matter at His time, in His manner, and in a measure determined by Him.

(5) In addition to this, be occupied in reading the Word, which is the voice of this Prophet, as well as in hearing sermons and catechism instruction. Meditate upon what you have read and heard. "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39); "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16);

“In His law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalms 1:2). Do not imagine that you will either acquire or increase in knowledge if your mind is not set on this, if you are not willing to make an effort, and if the ordained means are not used in earnest. “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:3-5).

(6) Be especially careful and diligent to apply at once what you have learned, for you will only understand each truth if you practice it. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God” (John 7:17); “If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth” (John 8:31-32). Give careful consideration to all these matters, and order your conversation accordingly. In so doing you shall be taught of the Lord (Isaiah 54:13) and “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). It is thus that we are to make use of Christ in His prophetic office to our own benefit. The Christian’s Sacred Duty to Be a Prophet

Secondly, if someone has thus been taught by the Lord Jesus as Prophet, it behooves him, in some measure and in a manner worthy of Him, to be conformed to Him in His prophetic office, since believers are named Christians after Christ, being partakers of His anointing. They were first called by this name in Antioch (Acts 11:26), although it is not known whether believers called themselves by this name or whether those from without called them such. The use of this name became common. King Agrippa also called them by this name when he stated, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). The use of this name was authorized by the Holy Spirit when Peter wrote, “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:16). This name, as despised as it is by Jews and Turks, is so precious for Christians, for this name is expressive of their union with Christ and the fellowship with His anointing. This anointing comprises their ordination and qualification for the discharge (in a manner applicable to them) of the three offices: prophet, priest, and king. “But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him” (1 John 2:27). They are therefore called prophets according to the promise found in Joel 2:28. “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17). They are also called kings and priests (Revelation 5:10), and a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). That which Moses once desired, “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets” (Numbers 11:29), has come true in a special manner in the New Testament, it being superior to the Old Testament dispensation. For believers are prophets, albeit not to foretell future events. We do believe, however, that the Spirit of prophecy concerning future events has not fully ceased in the church. We believe that the Lord will still reveal to this or that one of His faithful servants such things which relate either to themselves, His judgment upon the enemies of the church, redemption, or the oppression of the church. This agrees with what Christ said, “And He will shew you things to come” (John 16:13).

Nevertheless, such revelations are not regulative for others, either in doctrine or in life; neither ought we to expect these things from others. Man is naturally inclined towards foretelling future events. The devil can transform himself into an angel of light. Since the outcome of events is at times consistent with his predictions, this draws man away from God and inclines him towards

superstitious predictions by way of dreams and other incidents, all which may easily lead a person to be ensnared. A Christian should therefore take care and refrain himself from desiring to know future events outside of the context of the Bible. Furthermore, he should refrain from yielding to a desire for revelations and from giving heed to dreams, interpretations, and incidents, as if they had some significance for the future. A Christian, however, resting in God's providence, must be governed in faith and practice by the law and testimony. If he walks according to this rule, he will walk safely and have peace. He will cleanse his way if he takes heed thereto according to God's Word. Then he will not be "soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word" (2 Thessalonians 2:2). The difference between revelation and imagination I will not discuss here. It is a wise proverb which says that bina, that is, wisdom or prudence is better than nabi, which means a prophet who foretells future events. The Prophetical Obligations of the Christian

Believers, however, are prophets, and must strive to function more and more as such. They must do so in a twofold manner: to know the mysteries of the gospel, and to make them known to others.

First of all, believers are prophets for the purpose of acquiring a clearer knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel. Their knowledge is so limited, and they have but glanced at the matters with which they are acquainted. They therefore stand in need of an increasing knowledge, both by a continual searching of God's Word and by the immediate instruction of God's Spirit who discovers to the soul the essential spiritual nature of that which is written. Oh, that they would thus turn unto the Lord, open their hearts for the influence of the Spirit, and give the Holy Spirit opportunity to work! Thus they would keep watch at the door of supreme Wisdom until they are brought into the inner chambers to be taught there of God; there the Lord Jesus would reveal Himself to them according to His promise (John 14:21). The Lord has also made known in His Word what the church of the New Testament will encounter until the end of the world. This they must search out. They should especially read the Revelation of John frequently, that they may be enabled to strengthen both themselves and others against tribulations which shall come, and to comfort themselves and others with the blessed outcome which has been prophesied. The second prophetical task of believers is to make known to others the mysteries revealed in God's Word and which would have been sealed to their own soul. They are called to instruct, warn, exhort, and comfort others. Everyone must do so, however, in the position which God has assigned to him. A minister must do so differently from a church member. The latter must give heed that he neither assumes nor imitates the role of a sent servant of God, in order that the mission of the servants of God and the necessity thereof be not overshadowed, as this would be very detrimental to a congregation. The above is not merely the task of ministers, but each individual member ought to be convinced that this duty has been imposed upon him by God. Attentively consider the following texts, and bind them as a command of God upon your heart, especially since this duty is so greatly neglected. "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). This is intended for you, fathers and mothers. Are you thus engaged? In the future, will you not earnestly engage in this task as a task commanded by God? "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths" (Isaiah 2:3). In the

prophecy of Zechariah we read, "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also" (Zechariah 8:21). Notice that mention is made here of individuals, not of ministers. Observe how these prophecies relate to the days of the New Testament. Therefore consider the obligation to which the Lord binds you.

Attentively consider also these texts in the New Testament. "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church" (1 Corinthians 14:39); "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:39). The apostle is not writing to ministers, but to the congregation and to saints who are called (1 Corinthians 1:2). This exhortation therefore applies to each individual member, and thus also to you, whoever you may be. "Teaching and admonishing one another" (Colossians 3:16); "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day" (Hebrews 3:13); "And let us consider one another" (Hebrews 10:24). If God's command has any effect upon you at all, observe this duty to which the name of Christian obligates you. In order to stir you up even more, consider the following: First, the light, grace, and ability you may possess, you have received for that express purpose and are to give an account of both its receipt and use. "And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. ... Then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading" (Luke 19:13; Luke 19:15). Do you observe how that you have received gifts and graces to make gain and that you shall have to give an account of what you have gained with them? If a group of beggars were to stand before your door and you were to give a piece of money to one of them, commanding him to share this with the others, would he not be unfaithful if he were to keep it for himself? How did the unfaithful servant in Matthew 25:30 fare?

Secondly, love for the honor of Christ ought to compel you to do so. If you love Christ, you will be desirous to speak of Him, and you will be desirous that He be known, praised, and glorified by everyone. That desire will motivate you to display His beauty and to declare His perfections, saying, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend" (Song of Solomon 5:16); "For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids" (Zechariah 9:17).

Thirdly, love for noble and precious souls ought to compel you to engage in this task. In observing that your children, servants, close friends, neighbors, and acquaintances are ignorant, live in sin, and are travelling to hell, how can you quietly observe this and see them go lost? If a child has fallen into the water and is in danger of drowning, will you not do your best to save it? And if you cannot do so yourself, will you not cry and gather everyone together to help you? Will you be silent when you observe that such and such individuals are going lost? Will you have no compassion for these poor souls, forbearing to warn, exhort, and instruct them? Yes, will you not be held accountable for the damnation of souls which you could have helped as much as is in you?

Fourthly, to be instrumental in the conversion of souls is a very sweet and delightful task. Someone who plants a tree or orchard finds sweet delight in perceiving that the tree begins to show forth new branches, grows, blossoms, and bears fruit. He says to himself, "I have planted this tree with my own hands." However, to be instrumental in the conversion of souls is infinitely more delightful. Yes, this is not only delightful for the person himself, but it brings joy to the angels

in heaven and to believers upon earth, for “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10).

Fifthly, to be engaged as a prophet greatly promotes the upbuilding and growth of the church. If everyone would make this to be his duty, what a blessing would rest upon the church! Knowledge would increase, multitudes would be converted, and everyone would be “sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof everyone bear twins, and none is barren among them” (Song of Solomon 4:2). When the congregation of Jerusalem was scattered, “they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the Word” (Acts 8:4). This was the means for a wondrous expansion and increase of the congregation. It is remarkable that everyone who helped build the walls of Jerusalem is mentioned individually. Among them also the daughters of Shallum are recorded for an everlasting remembrance (Nehemiah 3:12). From experience I may know what blessing the Lord imparted by means of six or eight daughters of the congregation of Harlingen (then my congregation), each as prophetess giving herself to the service of the Lord, and wherever finding entrance, exhorted everyone to seek after knowledge and repentance. What a blessing the Lord bestowed through them! If you may be instrumental in the conversion of one soul, consider that this is not merely beneficial for this one soul, but such a soul may be the means whereby others may be converted, and this seed shall remain from generation to generation.

Oh, how sweet and delightful it shall be to be able to say on the last day, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Hebrews 2:13)! The Lord shall multiply His blessing upon such laborers. If someone is unfaithful, lazy, void of desire, and neglectful of the work of a prophet, such a person will generally walk in darkness and be lacking spirituality; his light will become dimmer and dimmer and he will become less and less capable of performing this task. He will complain frequently about this frame, but he knows that his neglect in this duty is the cause of it. If you engage yourself on behalf of others, the promise shall be fulfilled, “Unto every one which hath shall be given” (Luke 19:26). You shall experience that in teaching others you shall receive more light in these matters, and that while rebuking others, the rebuke will bear down upon you. While exhorting others, you yourself will be stirred up; and while comforting, you yourself will receive more faith and comfort and will go on your way rejoicing. All this considered together will undoubtedly touch and move you to be engaged as a prophet. Our nature, however, will not readily submit to this; it would rather receive than give. For this reason one will think of many excuses and pretend to be confronted with great difficulties, in order, if it were possible, to discontinue this task and yet have a quiet conscience.

Exhortation and Guidelines for Personal Evangelism

One will argue:

(1) “I have no qualifications for it, and if I wish to begin with this task, the words freeze upon my tongue and I do not know what to say; if I say something, it has no effect.” To this I respond, “You learn by doing.” If you are not capable of speaking to certain individuals, and about such matters, speak to others. Begin with beggars and children, by whom you are not intimidated, and discuss general and rudimentary principles. You will subsequently acquire more skill.

(2) You may say, “I do not know much myself, and I am in need of being instructed myself.” To this I respond that if you are a Christian, you will have some knowledge. If you know three words, then

teach others two, even if you were only to say, "We are going to die, which will be followed by eternity." This could be a means to someone's conversion.

(3) "My words have no effect. They neither have authority nor power. None wish to listen to me. They even laugh at it." To this I respond that fruit upon your words does not come forth from you. You will not be held accountable for fruitlessness, but for faithfulness. If any do not wish to hear you, you will be able to find another who will readily hear you. If anyone laughs, another will weep.

(4) "I am sinful and people see my faults; thus I am incapable of edifying even to some degree. Yes, it will be an offense and one shall say, "At that time he acted and spoke in such a fashion and now acts as a pious one. It is nothing but hypocrisy, which is true for all who are like him. "Yes, I am in such a sinful condition that my lusts have the upper hand, and thus I cannot speak." My response is that if someone were to wait with prophesying until he would be without sin or without obvious errors, there would be silence over the whole world and one would not hear Christ proclaimed. All His messengers are men of like passions as others. Let it be evident that you are conscious of your failures, that you grieve over them, and do battle against them while seeking to improve in these areas. Own your insignificance more frequently. When you address others, include yourself; do not say you, but we. In doing so you will perceive that while using your talent, you will become more careful and be more watchful against your own sins.

(5) If you are truthful, you will say, "I am ashamed to speak of spiritual matters, even to my children, and to those who are placed under me -- yes, even to the poor to whom I wish to give temporal support." How dreadful this is! Ought you to be ashamed of Christ and His words? Ought the Lord Jesus detect shame of Him in you? Where is your love? This is being irresponsible. If you are overcome by a feeling of shame, press on that much more forcefully, and do not yield to such feelings -- feelings which Christ will detect. As you engage in your task, you shall overcome this sense of shame.

(6) Laziness is another obstacle. If one examines the inner recesses of the heart, one will say, "This task is too heavy for me; I look up against it. It is as if I become ill when I decide to proceed with that objective in mind. I postpone it from one time to another, and thus nothing comes of it." Be ashamed, you who are lazy in reference to this great, glorious, and beneficial task. Consider what befell the lazy servant. Therefore be diligent and fervent in spirit.

(7) "I perceive that I seek myself in this work; that I am motivated by my own honor, and a desire to be praised by those who hear me. The fear of not doing well makes me fearful to begin. Therefore I think it best to refrain from saying anything." I respond that it is first of all a desirable fruit to have self-knowledge which gives you much strife and causes you to pray and to struggle while proceeding in this work as well as can be expected. In so doing the purity of your motivation will increase. To refrain from engaging yourself in this task for this reason, however, is but to continue in your impure pursuit of seeking yourself.

Having overcome all obstacles, and having been inclined and made willing to begin this work of evangelism upon due consideration of its obligation, glory, sweetness, and advantage, it is necessary to engage in this task properly. For this purpose one ought to read much in the gospels with the objective of making Christ your example, observing in what manner the Lord Jesus engaged in this task.

(1) It is essential to begin with those individuals by whom you are not intimidated, who are under your command (such as children and servants), or those who depend on your financial support. Such persons will have a hearing ear, or they will at least pretend to be desirous and attentive.

(2) One must conduct himself according to the circumstances. Sometimes it will be wise to speak of civil matters. Thereby we will manifest ourselves as being discreet, and it will prevent antipathy for us or prejudice against us from arising. Upon having inclined their hearts somewhat towards us, however, one should not cease at this point. At that moment or at a future occasion, create an opportunity with your words, be they few or many, and impress upon them the necessity of repentance and faith in Christ. Sometimes you will have set some time aside to speak with this one or that one about nothing else but spiritual matters. This could be when catechizing by way of questions and answers those who are subject to us, or when one seeks to engage in spiritual conversation. If our heart is but determined to be thus engaged, numerous opportunities will present themselves, and subject matter for discussion will be at hand.

(3) Above all, one ought to be watchful against pride and an air of superiority; otherwise there will be no edification. It must all be done in an amiable, loving and humble manner. Our conduct must be such, however, that we are serious about our intentions, have great reverence for God, and greatly esteem spiritual truths. It will soon be noticed whether we merely speak of spiritual matters, and thus it will have no effect.

(4) One must therefore often be engaged in private prayer; there must be prayer before one begins and while one is engaged. There must be prayer for enabling grace, as well as for fruits in others. Having performed the task with humbleness concerning the shortcoming in our own performance, we ought to again lift up our hearts to God with thanksgiving for having received proper motivation and for the fact that we were able to say something. Oh, that the Lord would touch, move, and qualify many to do the work of a prophet! Indeed, the congregation would be blessed and many souls would be converted.

023. Chapter 20: The High-Priestly Office of Christ

----- CHAPTER TWENTY ----- The High-Priestly Office of Christ

Having discussed the prophetic office of Christ, it now follows that we discuss His second office, namely that of High Priest. The Priestly Office Defined

First, we must attentively consider the high-priestly office in order that we may know the perfect way in which man is reconciled with God. Sometimes the title "priest" is used for persons who are held in high esteem, such as princes, rulers, and officers. "He leadeth away spoiled" (Job 12:19); "... David's sons were chief rulers" (2 Samuel 8:18); "And Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David" (2 Samuel 20:26). They bore the name *cohen* (coheen), that is, priest, because

(1) of the excellent glory manifested by the high priest -- for this reason the prophet calls the most excellent ornament a priestly ornament (Isaiah 61:10);

(2) prior to the tribe of Levi being set apart unto the priestly office, fathers, after them the firstborn, and thereafter the chief and most excellent members of the family ministered in the priest's office.

Secondly, a priest, when considering the essential meaning of the word, is one who "... taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Hebrews 5:1). The priestly office consists of two particulars: sacrifice and prayer, the pronouncement of a blessing being included in the latter. The duty to sacrifice is described in Leviticus 4:1-35. Of the duty of intercession we read, "speak unto Aaron and his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel," etc. (Numbers 6:23-26); "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord" (Joel 2:17). Once a year the high priest had to sacrifice a bullock and a goat, enter into the Holy of Holies, sprinkle the blood upon the mercy seat, and burn the incense (Leviticus 16:1-34), the latter symbolizing intercession. This can be deduced from Psalms 141:2, where we read, "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense"; "And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Revelation 8:4). Christ's high-priestly office likewise consists of sacrifice and prayer. We will first discuss His high-priestly office in general, and afterwards speak in particular of these two parts. A General Overview of the Priestly Office as Being Distinct from the Kingly Office of Christ

Let us view this office from a general perspective. The Lord Jesus is High Priest not only in name, but in very deed; that is, neither figuratively, metaphorically, nor comparatively, but in truth and very essence. He was not a priest in a prestigious sense, so that it would have reference to His kingly office; rather, His being Priest is such that His priestly office is entirely distinct from His kingly office. His being a priest relates simultaneously to the offering of an atoning sacrifice and intercession. He did not first become priest after His ascension, solely because of His intercession, but He already was Priest when He was upon earth. There, by His suffering and death, He offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice unto God, and by virtue of His sacrifice has entered heaven, this

being the Holy of Holies. There He administers the second part of His priestly office, namely, intercession, executing this on the basis of His sacrifice made upon earth. All such concepts are objected to by the Socinians in order to undermine the satisfaction of Christ. We must therefore give extra attention to this.

First of all, we maintain that the high-priestly office and the kingly office of Christ are not one and the same, nor does the difference consist only in the fact that in His high-priestly office He would merely be desirous and inclined to assist man, and that His kingly office consists in the execution of this inclination, for:

(1) Scripture teaches this nowhere, but declares that the high-priestly office consists in sacrifice and prayer, which we have shown. The kingly office consists in government and protection, and thus these offices are entirely distinct.

(2) Add to this that the office of High Priest is executed in the presence of God on behalf of man (Hebrews 5:1), and the kingly office is executed in the midst of and towards men.

(3) Just as the various ministries were distinguished in the Old Testament, there was likewise a distinction among persons under the Levitical ministry. Whoever was king was not permitted to sacrifice, which was the reason why Saul was punished (1 Samuel 13:13). Whoever hailed from the tribe of Judah, such as the king, was not permitted to be a priest (Hebrews 7:14). Since these ministries were typologically distinct, the same is true for the antitype.

Secondly, we maintain that Christ is not merely a High Priest in name, but also in very deed; that is, neither figuratively, nor abstractly, nor metaphorically, but in truth and very essence. This is evident:

(1) By expressly being called such, along with specific circumstances which clearly demonstrate that Christ is Priest in the true and essential sense of the word. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalms 110:4). Hebrews 5:5-6 makes it clear that the reference here is to Christ, for in this text the very same words, taken as a prophecy concerning Him, are applied to Christ. Here He is expressly called a Priest, being designated as such by God and ordained in this office by the swearing of an oath. All this confirms that Christ is a Priest in the true and literal sense of the word. This is also evident from Hebrews 2:17, "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." A matter can hardly be expressed any more precisely. Add to this Hebrews 4:14-15.

(2) All the activities of a true priest are attributed to Him, such as sacrifice and prayer (cf. Hebrews 7:26-27; Hebrews 9:25-26). "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ... For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14). This is also true for prayer (cf. Hebrews 7:24-25). "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

(3) Since Christ is the antitype of the priests of the Old Testament, and since these types were priests in the true sense of the word, this is much more true of Christ the antitype, who is the embodiment of the priesthood.

Thirdly, we maintain that Christ is not merely a Priest in heaven subsequent to His ascension, but He was a Priest and administered His priestly office prior to His ascension while yet upon earth.

(1) This is evident in Hebrews 7:26-27, "For such an High Priest became us ... this He did once, when He offered up Himself." This text does not refer to what He did in heaven, but to what He has done while upon earth. He is said to be a High Priest, and to have offered Himself once, which irrefutably refers to His suffering and death. He performed this sacrifice as High Priest, His sacrifice by comparison being the antitype of the sacrifices which the priests offered as types. They sacrificed upon earth outside of the Holy of Holies, first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people, after which they would enter the Holy of Holies with the blood of that sacrifice. Likewise Christ, while upon earth, as a High Priest sacrificed Himself, and this sacrifice is said to have been offered up once. This had already been accomplished and was history, whereas His intercession still occurs and continues.

(2) It is also confirmed by such texts in which it is expressly stated that this sacrifice of Christ was performed prior to both His ascension and His sitting at the right hand of the Father. Yes, He has entered heaven by and with His blood sacrificed upon earth. He entered heaven in the same fashion as the high priest entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of animals. "... when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). The word "when" implies that this purging occurred first. "But Christ being come an High Priest ... neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:11-12). First He sacrificed Himself as High Priest; first He brought about eternal redemption, and after this He entered the sanctuary by His own blood. The same is to be observed in Hebrews 10:12, "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." First, He performed the sacrifice and afterward ascended into heaven.

(3) Christ also performed the second element of His high-priestly office while upon earth: intercession. This is to be observed in the high-priestly prayer and in Hebrews 5:7, where it is written, "Who in the days of his flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that he feared."

Objection #1: His suffering and death were merely a preparation, but not the sacrifice itself.

Answer: This is not only unscriptural, but expressly contradicts Scripture which clearly calls it a sacrifice and refers to it as the high-priestly sacrifice of Christ. "For this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:27); "... the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. By one offering ..." (Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14).

Objection #2: "For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest" (Hebrews 8:4). Does this not suggest that Christ was not a priest upon earth?

Answer: This is not true in the least, but rather confirms it, for he states that in performing the high-priestly office it was not sufficient to sacrifice only, but with that blood He had to enter into the Holy of Holies. If He had remained upon earth, He could not have fully performed His priestly office and thus would not have been a priest. The High Priest in the Old Testament likewise would not have fully performed his office if he had merely sacrificed and remained outside the sanctuary.

Such would have been true if Christ were presently upon earth after He had offered Himself, for then He would not have entered the sanctuary. He would thus not have been a priest, not having fully accomplished His task.

Christ, a Priest After the Order of Melchizedek

Thus we have shown that Christ's high-priestly office is distinct from His kingly office, that He is a High Priest in the true sense of the word, and that He is not merely a High Priest in heaven by virtue of intercession, but was also a High Priest upon earth by virtue of sacrifice and prayer. Even though all this pertains to Christ, He greatly exceeds the Aaronic priests in excellence in numerous aspects, as the body exceeds its shadow.

(1) The Levitical priests hailed from the tribe of Levi, and it is evident that Christ came forth out of the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14).

(2) They were merely men, but Christ is also God, "who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5).

(3) They were merely priests, but Christ is also King (Zechariah 9:9).

(4) They were sinners having need to offer sacrifices for their own sins; Christ, however, was holy, innocent, undefiled, and sacrificed Himself only for the sins of His elect (Hebrews 7:26-27).

(5) They were but shadows and types, but Christ was the embodiment, the antitype (Hebrews 8:5).

(6) They were priests by succession and in the place of their deceased fathers. Christ, however, "because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood" (Hebrews 7:23-24).

(7) They were ordained without the swearing of an oath; Christ, by the swearing of a divine oath (Hebrews 7:20-21).

(8) They were inaugurated by being anointed with natural oil; Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:38).

(9) They were appointed to minister in the old covenant; Christ is the Mediator of the new (Hebrews 9:15) and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6).

(10) They sacrificed animals, but Christ offered Himself (Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:26).

(11) Their sacrifices could not remove sin and purge the conscience (Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:14).

(12) Their sacrifices had to be repeated until the time of reformation, but the one sacrifice of Christ has eternal atoning efficacy (Hebrews 9:10; Hebrews 10:1; Hebrews 10:14).

(13) They offered upon the altar in the temple, which was sanctified in order that the sacrifices might be sanctified (Matthew 23:19). Christ, however, "... through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). Thus He was simultaneously the Priest, the altar, and the sacrifice (Hebrews 13:10).

(14) They were priests after the order of Aaron, but Christ after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 6:20). This does not suggest that the Aaronic priests and their sacrifices were not types of Christ,

for this we have proven above. A matter can be viewed from different perspectives, one thing harmonizing with one perspective, another thing with another perspective. This priestly order, however, is indicative of Christ's superiority.

Little is recorded for us about Melchizedek in the Old Testament. The history is recorded in Genesis 14:1-24. In Psalms 110:1-7 he is declared to be a type of Christ. Paul, however, deals much more extensively with him in Hebrews 7:1-28. In these matters we must not seek to be wiser than what has been recorded. It should suffice us to know in what manner he is a type of the Lord Jesus, and how type and antitype agree with each other.

It can be said of him that he was not the Son of God Himself who in foreshadowing His incarnation was to have appeared to Abraham.

(1) For Moses describes him as a man in the true sense of the word, having the proper name of Melchizedek, whose residence and domain was a well-known city in Canaan, named Salem. This city was later comprehended in Jerusalem, together with the mountain in its vicinity, where Abraham intending to sacrifice his son, said, Jehovahjireh, that is, the Lord will provide. For this reason these two words -- the word uttered by Abraham, Jireh, and the name of this city Salem -- are brought together and coalesce in the name of the city of Jerusalem. That which first was called Salem later was called Jerusalem (Joshua 10:1). Moses describes him as being king of Salem, and a priest of the most high God, who gave bread and wine to Abraham and his people for refreshment when he returned from his glorious victory. He blessed Abraham, and Abraham acknowledged him as priest, giving him the tenth of the spoils. All of this is recounted as true historical fact so that not the least appearance is created that this must be understood in a figurative sense. Rather, it is clearly indicated that this history must be understood as a literal event -- as is true for other histories.

(2) It could not have been said of Melchizedek that he was like unto the Son of God if he had been the Son of God himself. Christ's description as a priest after the order of Melchizedek would not have been so extensive if He Himself had been Melchizedek. To be like someone is not the same as being that person, and He who is according to another's order is someone else.

(3) The offering up of animals and the possession of an earthly territory, all of which was true for Melchizedek, cannot be applicable to the Son of God.

Objection #1: Melchizedek is said to be without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. This can be said of the Son of God only.

Answer: This ought not to be understood in the absolute sense of the word, but only with reference to human knowledge; or else one may possibly not have known his genealogy. At least we do not know this, as it has not been made known in Scripture who his father and mother were, when he was born, and when he died. This is also applicable to his priestly office. The Aaronic priests were priests by succession; that is, the son would take the place of the father, and was required to give evidence of his genealogy. Melchizedek, however, was a priest without succession. Prior to him there was no one in his order whose place he had taken, nor was there anyone who succeeded him in this order. Not only is the suggestion that He would have been created in an extraordinary manner and as Enoch taken into heaven without seeing death not recorded in Scripture, but it is also contrary to it (Acts 17:26). Even then he would also have had a beginning of days.

Objection #2: He is said to be a priest for ever.

Answer: "For ever" often means "always," "as long as possible," whether "to the end of the world" or for "the duration of one's life" (Deuteronomy 15:17), or till the moment when the antitype comes. "For ever" here means that he -- without anyone succeeding him and thus coming between him and the antitype -- remained priest of his order until the antitype came. It also means that in his order he, in Christ, for ever remains the antitype.

Objection #3: It is said of Melchizedek that "he liveth" (Hebrews 7:8). This cannot be applicable to a man.

Answer: If he were still alive long after the antitype came, he could not be a type, for a type ceases to exist upon the arrival of the antitype. His being alive is therefore no different from what is said to be the case with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matthew 22:32). He is said to live, however, since no mention is made of his death. He also continues to live in respect to his order -- in his antitype Christ. Melchizedek is thus not the Son of God Himself.

Melchizedek was therefore truly a man. Who he was, however, is unknown. It could not have been Shem, for 1) Scripture records the birth, age, and death of Shem; 2) no reasons can be advanced that Moses would have changed his known name; and 3) it is also not credible that Shem lived in Canaan, since Abraham sojourned there. It would then not have been the land in which he was a stranger, since it would have belonged to his ancestors. From the foregoing and from Hebrews 7:1-28 it is evident that Melchizedek was a man of whom we do not know who he was, but that God had called and honored him in an extraordinary manner to be king and priest of Salem. He was most excellent in glory, greatly revered and esteemed, and thus typified in a most excellent manner the eternal duration of the kingly and priestly office of Christ, united in one person. In Hebrews 7:1-28 Paul establishes the resemblance between the two:

(1) They resemble each other in name, for Melchizedek means "king of righteousness," and Christ is likewise "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6). "The sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness" (Psalms 45:6-7).

(2) His kingdom was Salem, which in our language means "peace." Christ is likewise "the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:5), and "our peace" (Ephesians 2:14).

(3) Melchizedek is said to be "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (Hebrews 7:3). Christ likewise was without father according to His human nature, without mother according to His divine nature, without descent, and without beginning or end.

(4) Melchizedek was a priest for ever. Likewise Christ "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood" (Hebrews 7:24).

(5) Melchizedek was both king and priest, which is also true for Christ (Psalms 110:2; Psalms 110:4).

(6) Melchizedek was more excellent than Abraham, Aaron, and all successive priests, for they gave tithes to Melchizedek. Likewise Christ is more excellent than all, being above His fellows (Psalms 45:7). Although one or another of these matters may be applicable to others, there is no

one to whom all of these things are simultaneously applicable. None of them belonged to such an extraordinary priestly order, and none were types of Christ in that sense. The resemblance did not consist in the giving of bread and wine, as if he had performed a sacrifice, for he did not sacrifice bread and wine to God, but gave these to Abraham and his people for refreshment. Also in this respect he does not resemble Christ, for Christ did not offer bread and wine but His own body. In using bread and wine at the institution of the Lord's Supper with His disciples, Christ did not offer a bloodless sacrifice, but instituted it as a symbol of His suffering and death, and as seals of the forgiveness of sins on the basis of His death.

Neither before nor after Christ has there been anyone who was a priest after the order of Melchizedek. This is true for Christ alone, who has no successor in His priestly office since He continues eternally. Thus there are no longer any priests upon earth, neither after the order of Melchizedek nor after the order of Aaron (who had to be out of the tribe of Levi which ceased to function in Christ). If anyone were to be a priest today, he would have to be a priest of Baal, as each idolatrous nation still has its Baal priest. All of this has been stated concerning the office of Priest in general. The office of High Priest considered in particular, consists of two elements: sacrifice and prayer. Concerning sacrificing we read, "Christ ... hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2), "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26), "... through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14). The nature of this sacrifice, the genuineness of its satisfaction, its perfection, and its limitation to the elect only, will be discussed more comprehensively in chapter 22, which deals with the humiliation of Christ. We will therefore pass this by at present. The Intercessory Ministry of Christ's Priestly Office

Intercessory prayer is the second element of His priestly office, of which we read: "... who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34); "... He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25); "... to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24); "... we have an advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1). Concerning His intercession we must consider its necessity, nature, and efficacy.

We will first of all consider its necessity. Intercession is a task which belongs to Christ's high-priestly office: "We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1). As High Priest He is in heaven, as High Priest He sits at the right hand of God. The task in which He engages Himself as High Priest is to appear before His Father on behalf of His elect, interceding for them. It is thus a task of Christ's highpriestly office to intercede. The matters for which He interceded there are:

(1) All that which His elect are in need of in this life in order to enable them to walk in the way to heaven, namely, the Holy Spirit who illumines, comforts, and sanctifies them. This we observe in John 14:16-17 "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth."

(2) He intercedes for them so that they may perfectly possess salvation after this life. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John 17:24). This is also confirmed in Hebrews 7:25 : "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." For men to be saved, it

was not sufficient that by His suffering, death, and holiness He merited salvation, but it is also necessary that by means of His intercession He would apply salvation and make them actual partakers of it. This was typified in the Old Testament by the high priest, who was not finished after offering the sacrifice, but had to enter the Holy of Holies with blood in order to sprinkle it upon the mercy seat and burn incense. The Lord Jesus, being the antitype, likewise had to enter in with His own blood (Leviticus 16:1-34; Hebrews 9:12). This prerequisite was of such necessity that without it He could not be a High Priest. "For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest" (Hebrews 8:4). Had He not been a priest, there would be no salvation for the elect, for they must come to God and be saved by way of a priest. For this reason sacrifice and prayer are joined together. "It is Christ that died ... who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34); "... we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2). This necessity is also evident for the following reasons: First, it is fitting to God that it be continually acknowledged that He has been despised by man, that His righteousness neither permits man to approach to Him nor He to man, except by an atoning Surety who continually displays His atonement. He therefore "ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Secondly, since God's majesty had been despised, it could not be tolerated that He would come to man or even to the Surety, but rather that the Surety would come to Him, and that, so to speak, He would bring the ransom home and lay it down before His countenance.

Thirdly, in reference to man as well as to the gift of the Surety, God also wills that His free grace in the salvation of the sinner be displayed and ever be acknowledged. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Therefore, although the sacrifice of Christ is perfect and is of an eternally atoning efficacy, it must nevertheless be applied by way of intercession. "seeing then that we have a great High Priest ... Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 4:16). Thus even though there is satisfaction, it is grace as far as man is concerned and is acknowledged by him as such.

Fourthly, it was also necessary in reference to the Lord Jesus Himself. He was Surety and could not be released from His Suretyship as long as His elect had not in actuality been made partakers of salvation. In order to prepare a place for the elect, however, and to lead them unto salvation, intercession necessarily had to occur (cf. John 17:24; Hebrews 7:25). Thus, the Lord Jesus must continue with His intercession until all His elect will have been gathered into heaven.

Fifthly, the Lord also wills that the Lord Jesus be acknowledged as still being engaged to their advantage, so that they would come to the throne by Him, and in coming would there find Him to be an Advocate who brings their prayers before the Father (Revelation 8:3-4). "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23). This continual appearance before the throne on behalf of the elect is also necessary:

(1) In order that there be no remembrance of sin. In the Old Testament there was always a repeated remembrance of sins, because they had not actually been atoned for and because the blood of animals could not purge the conscience. The high priest time and again would return from the Holy of Holies, and every year would once again return (Hebrews 10:17). In order that there be no remembrance, however, the high priest would always have to be before the throne and forever sit down "... on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:17), "and thus God would no more remember

their sins and iniquities" (Hebrews 10:17), since the high priest would remain in the sanctuary and before the throne.

(2) Also in order that the wrath of God would not be aroused by daily sin, it is necessary that the Surety continually display the atonement before the throne. Paul pointed to this in Romans 5:10, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." And why are we saved by His life? "... seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). The second thing that must be considered in reference to intercession is the manner in which He prays.

First, even as Christ executed the first element of His high-priestly office as Surety, that is, the sacrifice of His body, He likewise administers the second element of His office, that is, intercession, as Surety. He does not merely stand before the throne as a friend who speaks well on behalf of His people but stands there as Surety, who has taken upon Himself to fully execute the salvation of His own. This is evident from Hebrews 7:22-25. In verse 22 the apostle expressly calls Him "surety." He also speaks of Him as such in the subsequent verses, that "He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood" (Hebrews 7:25), and "ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). Furthermore, since He executed the first aspect of His priestly office as God and man, the efficacy of His sacrifice being derived from His divine nature -- from the divine Person -- Christ must likewise be viewed as God and man in the second element of His priestly ministry. That the efficacy of His intercession is also derived from His Person, that is, from His divine nature, is demonstrated by the apostle in Hebrews 4:14, "seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." He is great, for He, being the Son of God, is equal to the Father. That is the critical point, and it is that which yields comfort and boldness. Therefore the apostle adds, "Let us hold fast our profession," and in verse 16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace."

Secondly, one must not think that Christ falls upon His knees there and prays with strong crying and tears (Hebrews 5:7); no, that was His engagement in His humiliation. His intercession, however, consists in His appearance in the sanctuary before the countenance of His Father with His blood, "that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24). It consists in the demonstration of the efficacy of His suffering and death.

Thirdly, it consists in His efficacious will whereby, on the basis of the covenant, He demands the fulfillment of all the promises for His elect both in this life (John 17:24-26) and in the life to come. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John 17:24). The Father gives Him license to make such demands by saying, "Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psalms 2:8). The Father has promised Him this. "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah 53:10). This the Son demands.

Fourthly, His intercession consists in advocating and pleading the cause of His elect against all accusations made against them. The apostle John therefore calls Him an Advocate (1 John 2:1). This is confirmed by the apostle, who says, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ ... who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:33-34). Since He is able to demonstrate that He has fully paid for each and every sin, and has fulfilled the law on their behalf

by placing Himself under and being obedient to the law, He concludes that there is no condemnation for His elect, but that they have a right to eternal felicity.

Fifthly, it consists in presenting the prayers of His children which, through the Spirit of grace and supplication, have been offered in His Name. Since they have been offered in His Name, His merits must have such efficacy that their prayers are heard. This is confirmed in Revelation 8:3-4 : "... that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." The third matter that must be considered in reference to intercession is its efficacy. Such is evident for three reasons.

First, there is the righteousness of the cause. Here, neither favoritism comes into play, nor is there a looking the other way, nor does Christ merely make a request. Rather, the matter which Christ pleads as Advocate is entirely just and is confirmed by superlative documentation. He appears on behalf of His elect with His paid ransom, which is so perfect that not one penny is lacking. "... He had by Himself purged our sins" (Hebrews 1:3), "by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12). He has so completely fulfilled the law on behalf of the elect that they are "the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us (Romans 8:4). This he demonstrates to His Father, and therefore this can only be followed by actual justification, and the bestowal of the right to possess eternal felicity.

Secondly, the efficacy of His intercession is also evident from the relationship between God and the elect, which is as between a father and his children. The Lord Jesus prays for those whom the Father has loved with an everlasting love, accepted as His children, designated to be the objects of His grace and benevolence, and towards whom His heart is tenderly inclined. The Father is therefore desirous that someone would speak to Him on their behalf. How can this Advocate then possibly be rejected?

Thirdly, this efficacy is also evident from the Person Himself who is the Advocate. He is the great High Priest (cf. Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 10:21). He is great in His Person, being coessential with the Father, and great is the friendship between Him and His Father. "For the Father loveth the Son" (John 5:20). With full acquiescence and total delight He has become Surety. By an oath He has been consecrated to His priestly office, and has been obedient to His Father in all things, even unto the death upon the cross. The Father Himself says to Him, "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee." How can such an Intercessor possibly be rejected? Now consider all of these things together. As such a High Priest -- the very Son of God who as the one party in the covenant of redemption has submitted Himself willingly and obediently to everything -- He represents the most righteous cause, which He can confirm by way of His passion and death and prove from His obedience to the law. With all of this He pleads the cause of His elect, doing so before a gracious and benevolent Father on behalf of His beloved children and heirs. For these reasons His intercession is efficacious to the superlative degree. It is thus most certain that it will prevail and the matter be given to His children. Yes, if Christ, while upon earth, was always heard (John 11:41-42), much more will He, now being in heaven, receive everything at His request. The fourth aspect of intercession to be considered is its all-sufficiency. This Intercessor alone is sufficient. No intercessors need to be added, nor are others able to be intercessors. The saints in heaven are

not intercessors for specific individuals upon earth. One is not permitted to approach God or Christ through them. This, first of all, originates with pagans who wish to come to God by way of inferior gods.

Secondly, this is an insult to Christ, as if He were neither fully adequate, nor sufficiently compassionate, nor sufficiently familiar with His elect: His bride, the members of His own body. This would imply that there must be other intercessors through which one could come to God or to Christ, but such are never found in Scripture. There is neither a command for nor an example of this in Scripture.

Thirdly, this is directly contrary to Scripture, which teaches us that Christ alone is Intercessor, and that there can be none other:

(1) The fact that Christ alone is Intercessor is confirmed by 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." In the original text we read *heis*, that is, one or only. It is mentioned in conjunction with the Godhead, and since there is only one God, there is likewise only one Mediator. This is also confirmed by 1 John 2:1, "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Scripture states that there is but one, and therefore whoever wishes to be scriptural may not fabricate additional intercessors.

(2) The Bible also teaches that there can be no other intercessors except the High Priest Jesus, since no one is qualified to be an intercessor except He who can intercede on the basis of atonement. "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12). Add to this those texts in which atonement and intercession are joined together: "It is Christ that died ... who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34); "For there is ... one Mediator ... who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5-6); "We have an Advocate with the Father ... and He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2). Deceased saints cannot be intercessors, for they are not mediators of reconciliation. They are also not able to go to God on the basis of a ransom paid by them on behalf of others, nor can they demand and request on the basis of such a ransom. The two aspects of the priestly office cannot be separated. It is thus a futile deception to make a distinction between a Mediator of reconciliation and a Mediator of intercession. For if the first is not a fact, the second can also not occur.

Fourthly, deceased saints do not have any special knowledge of the needs, desires, and sincerity of those who seek them out as intercessors. It is contrary to the nature of man to be able to perceive with one glance and to be aware in one moment of what transpires upon the entire earth -- to know the needs of every human being. How can intercession take place without this being true? Yes, even if the saints were aware of everyone's needs -- which is not the case -- this is no reason why they should be intercessors, intercession having a different foundation.

Objection: Believers upon earth pray for each other. Why do saints in heaven not pray for those who are upon earth?

Answer: Using the same argument one could conclude that the godly upon earth pray for the saints in heaven, for if there is mutual communion, there is also mutual activity. Besides one may not establish a relationship between the activity of man upon earth and of the saints in heaven. They each exist in an entirely different state. Intercession upon earth is commanded, but not a single word is written about the other. Those on earth may be aware of each other's needs. Those

in heaven are not aware of those on earth. Those who are on earth intercede for each other as equals, not on the basis of their own worthiness or merits, but in the name of Christ. To maintain the intercession of saints in heaven one must attribute to them majesty, worthiness, merit, and the ability to hear prayer. It thus is very evident that the intercession of saints is nothing but a fabrication, and it is idolatry to expect such intercession from them and to place your trust in this. The priestly office of Christ obligates us to be exercised in a twofold manner. First of all we must make use of Him as Priest, and secondly, as partakers of His anointing and consistent with our name "Christian," be spiritual priests in a manner becoming to us. The Believer's Use of Christ as High Priest

One must first of all make use of Christ as High Priest in reference to both His sacrifice and His intercession. In order to do so, one must first know his sins and feel them to be a heavy burden; one must abhor himself due to his polluted and abominable condition; one must have a lively impression of and acknowledge the hatred and wrath of God against the sinner, which can only be removed by perfectly bearing the punishment due upon sin: the curse in this life and eternal condemnation. It must be acknowledged that the sinner neither knows how nor is able to deliver himself. Meditate upon these matters until you sink away entirely in your misery, perceiving yourself as completely destitute and desperate. Present yourself as such to the Lord, declaring and confessing that you are in such a condition.

Everyone who had sinned in the Old Testament came to the Lord in this manner when bringing a sacrifice (Leviticus 4:1-35). The sinner who was desirous for reconciliation had to go to the priest with a sacrifice, and before the countenance of God had to lay his hand upon the head of the animal to be sacrificed in his place. In this manner he indicated that he cast his sin upon the sacrifice, and thus, by faith, upon the typified Messiah yet to come. Likewise, everyone who is exercised with his sin as described above, must come to Christ, acknowledging Him to be the perfect ransom, the only sin-offering, and perfect High Priest who sacrificed Himself for sin. He must acknowledge Him to be the compassionate and merciful High Priest who calls all apprehensive and timid [Note: The Dutch word use is "verlegen." This word is pregnant with meaning here, as it expresses the emotion of the sinner who, overwhelmed with the sense of his sinfulness, dares not believe he is welcome with Christ.] sinners to come to Him, annexing to this the promise that He will in no wise cast them out, but will reconcile them with God and grant them rest, peace, and salvation. In coming to Him, while acknowledging all this, one must lay his sin upon the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world (John 1:29). As the sinner in the Old Testament would stay near the sacrifice to witness the sacrifice of that animal on his behalf, such a sinner must likewise focus upon Christ and behold Him in His suffering and death, considering His sacrifice to have been offered on his behalf. As the sinner in the Old Testament on the basis of the sacrifice obtained ceremonial reconciliation, and true reconciliation if he believed in the Messiah, one must likewise apply Christ to himself as his atoning sacrifice for reconciliation and peace.

Secondly, since the Lord Jesus is High Priest, one must (as was done by way of the priest in the Old Testament), go to God by Him. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25). One must not end in the Lord Jesus as Mediator, but through Him must go to the Father.

Question: How does one go to God through Christ?

Answer: (1) By receiving this offered ransom as his own sufficient and perfect satisfaction, as well as His perfect fulfillment of the law as his own righteousness.

(2) By presenting this to the Father, asking Him, 'By the resurrection of Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 3:21) have not all my sins been paid for by His suffering and death? Has not Thy justice been satisfied? Am not I reconciled with Thee? Am not I at peace with Thee?

(3) On the basis of that sacrifice one receives all the promises which in Christ are yea and amen, as being made to himself, so that God is therefore our Father and we His children, by faith thus calling God, "Abba Father!"

(4) Thus one proceeds, requesting in the name of Christ all that which the soul desires: illumination, comfort, sanctification, and preservation -- as well as that which one desires for the body such as deliverance from crosses, health, and prosperity. We do so, believing that God, our merciful Father, hears us and will give us as much as is commensurate with our need. Here we rest and are satisfied, thanking God for everything, as all this does and will proceed from our Father in love and to our advantage.

Thirdly, the intercession of Christ renders much support in prayer. If one considers and believes that every prayer, every sigh, and the lifting up of the soul heavenward for God's Spirit and grace is a fruit of His intercession, whereby each believer receives the Holy Spirit (John 14:16); that He brings every motion of the soul and the expression of one's desires before the throne, presents it to His Father, and that all this transpires in His Name, in reference to His merits and by His Spirit; that on the basis of His merits these prayers can rightfully be heard, and furthermore that He makes their desires His own, adding His incense to them, thus making their prayer pleasing to Him; if all this is considered and believed, this will greatly stimulate prayer. It will cause us to pray attentively, fervently, and boldly. It yields confidence that our prayer, however feeble, is pleasing, is received, and will be heard. Yes, when we are not able to pray, be it due to a negative spiritual frame, or in the hour of death, and contemplate and believe that the Lord Jesus prays for us even then and remains active as the faithful Intercessor who will not neglect our affairs, but will bring them to a certain conclusion, not resting until He has brought us to Himself -- this yields much strength, causing us to surrender ourselves in quiet confidence into His hands. Due to His intercession we will be able to say calmly and confidently, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me" (Psalms 138:8).

Fourthly, great comfort may be extracted from this for all bodily as well as spiritual miseries. Do your sins weigh you down and do you go bowed down because of them? "He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2). Is the soul ashamed because of its nakedness? He is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6). He will clothe them with the garments of salvation, and will cover them with the robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). Is the soul troubled by the wrath of God? He delivers him "from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Do you fear eternal condemnation? "There is ... no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Does the soul long for communion with God? He will bring him to God (1 Peter 3:18). Is the soul experiencing desertion, sorrow, and grieving as a lonely sparrow? Is it discouraged and at wit's end? Do bodily troubles afflict such a soul -- being numerous, heavy, and of long duration? In all

these things great comfort is to be obtained from this High Priest. He is a Priest in name and in deed. He is the great High Priest, who is moreover a faithful and a merciful High Priest. Consider this attentively in these two texts: "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18); "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

If one believes Christ to be such as He is, why would we not take refuge with Him, and in taking refuge, not believe that He can be touched with our infirmities, will receive us, and will grant us the desire of our hearts?

Many who are weak in faith are of the opinion that the Lord Jesus is not as easily moved as when He sojourned upon earth. They reason that if they could but interact with Him as the disciples and the women did, enter a home in which He was present, converse with Him as familiarly as Mary and Martha did, or be in His company, then they would touch the hem of His garment, would wet His feet with tears, make their needs known to Him and beseech Him to have mercy upon them, to take away their sins, to give them another heart, and to cause them to feel His love. Then they would have hope that He would have compassion upon them and help them. But now He is so far away, so high in the heavens, and in such great glory, that they cannot address Him as it were in immediate proximity, nor will He allow Himself to be moved by the prayer of such insignificant persons as they are. Know, however, that such thoughts are earthly, proceeding from ignorance and a feeble faith. I assure you out of the Word of God that the Lord Jesus is as compassionate now as He was then, taking note of the misery and desires of man as carefully now as He did then. Therefore, also now one may speak to Him as freely and familiarly as then. It grieves me that one impugns the compassion of the Lord Jesus. Oh, that one would know Him as He is! How many a weak believer would then have bold access, pour out his heart with tears and supplications, and have confidence that He would help!

Take note therefore that the Lord Jesus, now being in heaven, is not only compassionate as God -- that is, in a manner which is natural to His divinity, proceeding from eternal and infinite love, by which He observes and takes to heart the grievous and sinful miseries of His children and is willing and ready to help them -- but He is also compassionate as man. In order to be able to be compassionate, He had to assume the human nature, which is evident from Hebrews 2:14-17 ff. For this reason He was tempted with many tribulations and was subject to anxiety and suffering, in order that He would know by experience how grievous suffering is and understand the frame of mind of the one who is in misery. He would thus be all the more able to have compassion on them (Hebrews 4:15). Now consider both natures together, and view Him as God and man, as Mediator and as high priest. This high-priestly office requires compassion of the most sensitive sort. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God ... who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity" (Hebrews 5:1-2). Since Christ is High Priest, He has the special quality which belongs to this office: compassion. How compassionate He was when He was upon earth! Repeatedly we read, "And Jesus was moved with compassion." Not only does the Lord Jesus have this same compassionate nature in heaven (for if a perfect nature can be

compassionate, this is likewise true for a glorified nature), but since there is perfection in a larger measure, the quality of compassion must be even more excellent since it flows forth out of love. The Lord Jesus being also High Priest in heaven, now ministers in this office with superlative excellence. Consequently, He possesses the quality of the High Priest, that is, compassion of the highest excellence.

Take note also of how intimately the Lord Jesus is united to His elect. They have been given to Him by the Father, in order that, as His children, He would deliver, preserve, and lead them to felicity. Would He then not exercise tender care over them, and be compassionate towards them when they are in distress? They are His bride, children, and members. He has their very own nature -- "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11). When they are in misery and sorrow, they weep and long for Him, and cry out to Him for help and comfort. How can it be any different but that the Lord Jesus is greatly moved to compassion, especially since He is experientially acquainted with the feeling of their suffering?

Perhaps you say, "I grieve over sin. This is a grief which the Lord Jesus has never experienced, and thus sin cannot move Him to compassion, but will rather provoke Him to anger."

I respond to this that it is true that Jesus was holy, and neither knew sin nor committed it. He tasted, however, all the bitter fruits of sin in such a manner as if He Himself had committed them. He experienced the hiding of God's countenance, the wrath of God, sorrow unto death, curse and condemnation. He suffered all of this in a measure which exceeds our comprehension. He knows the soul's disposition toward the commission of sin, and thus is able to and does have compassion by virtue of experience. It is true that sin itself is hateful, but He already has fully atoned for it, so that instead of wrath, only compassion remains. Consider all this together, believing that the Lord Jesus has such compassion for you, and seek to have a lively impression of Him as such. Would not this strengthen you in all your distress? Lament about your sorrow to Him in a filial manner, and comfort yourself in His compassion, knowing that He has been afflicted in all your affliction (Isaiah 63:9). You may say, "Why then does He not help, considering He is able?" My answer is, "It is not the time, and this is to your benefit. He is preparing you to be the recipient of additional grace, because it will be to the honor of God. Even if you have not been delivered as yet, the compassion of a Friend -- of such a beloved Lord, High Priest, and Friend -- nevertheless comforts. Therefore, await your deliverance with anticipation and in quietness." The Christian's Obligation to be a Spiritual Priest

Having considered how one ought to make use of Christ as Priest, it is necessary in the second place that we be exhorted to be spiritual priests, in harmony with our name Christian. God has given the name priest to believers. "But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord" (Isaiah 61:6); "And hast made us unto our God ... priests" (Revelation 5:10). They are priests, but not to sacrifice for their sins or the sins of others, for such is attributed to the Lord Jesus alone. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Rather, they are "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Their work as priest is first of all to approach unto God, to enter the Holy Place, and to be continually engaged there in the service of God. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart" (Hebrews 10:19; Hebrews 10:22). Thus our conversation must be in heaven (Php 3:20).

Secondly, the priests had no inheritance in Canaan, but God was their portion. They must likewise also turn away from all that is of the earth, leaving this for the men of this world, and look not at the things which are seen (2 Corinthians 4:18), but rather delight themselves in the Lord who is their portion (Lamentations 3:24).

Thirdly, they must be engaged in sacrifice:

(1) They must mortify the old man. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Colossians 3:5); "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

(2) Their prayers must be sacrificed upon the golden altar which is before the throne (Revelation 8:3). They must do so for themselves: "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Php 4:6); as well as for others: "Pray one for another" (James 5:16).

(3) They must sacrifice their goods to the Lord by being generous to the poor, "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

(4) We must sacrifice ourselves to God with heart, tongue, and deeds, confessing, "Lord, here am I. I surrender myself entirely to Thy service. I am Thine, and whatever I am, I shall be for Thee. I offer myself to Thee as a thankoffering." The apostle exhorts us to do so in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

(5) If therefore the Lord leads us in difficult ways, and brings us in a situation where we must lose our life for the truth's sake, may we then not love our life and deem it precious, but offer it willingly to the Lord as a sacrifice. Paul said, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6). There is no more glorious death imaginable than to die as a martyr for Christ. Oh, how blessed is he who may thus use Christ as Priest, and who himself may be a spiritual priest!

024. Chapter 21: The Kingly Office of Jesus Christ

----- CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE ----- The Kingly Office of Jesus Christ The kingly office is the third office of Christ. A king is a person in whom alone the supreme authority over a nation is vested. Thus, the Lord Jesus is King, and none but Him. This is true in a threefold manner:

(1) as God (being coessential with the Father and the Holy Spirit), He rules over the kingdom of power, to which all creatures belong;

(2) as Mediator He rules over the kingdom of grace upon earth; and (3) as Ruler over the kingdom of glory in heaven, of which both angels and all the elect are subjects.

Christ, the King of Creation

First, as God, the Lord Jesus has within Himself all majesty, worthiness, honor, glory, and power, even if there were no creatures. Having created creatures, however, He, due to the majesty, ruling power, and actual governing implicit in His Being, is the great and sole King over everything. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11); "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all" (Psalms 103:19). The Lord has no need of servants or of viceregents; however, it is the Lord's wisdom and goodness to govern all things mediately, and thus to govern one man by means of another. For this purpose the Lord has instituted governments which vary in structure and dignity. Such governments are neither sovereign nor independent, even though they may often imagine themselves to be. They are but insignificant viceregents (assuming that I may give them such a title, and that such a title is not too high for them) who, on God's behalf and by His power, must govern according to His laws. This dignity is not acquired by skill, power, or friends, nor does anyone remain in government because of these things. It is the Lord who establishes and deposes kings; He exalts and He humbles.

Christ, the King of His Church

Secondly, God has a special and peculiar people among men whom He gathers by His Word and Spirit and who are referred to by the name, "kingdom of grace." The Lord has established a special King to rule over this people: the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator. The church is neither a community without a Head, nor a flock without a Shepherd, nor a nation without a Ruler. Such can certainly not be true, even though it presently pleases Him not to demonstrate His glory and majesty as visibly as He has at other times. Even if it seems that no one is held accountable for misdeeds towards the church -- that one can trample upon, extinguish, and destroy the church without retribution -- and that the church has neither a Keeper nor a King, Jesus is nevertheless King over His church. He is not a King in heaven only, nor in a distant land, nor in the hearts of His elect only, but He is a King who dwells near and in His church: His own people, that gathered congregation, that visible multitude in the world who have accepted Him to be their Head and King, having sworn to be subject and obedient to Him and to live according to His laws.

Believers, hear this and rejoice; hear this, oh world, and be filled with terror! God “hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church” (Ephesians 1:22); “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36); “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour” (Acts 5:31); “Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion” (Psalms 2:6); “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His Name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

God has established Him in His kingdom and has consecrated Him by anointing (Psalms 2:6). As He did not exalt Himself to be High Priest, He likewise did not exalt Himself to be King. Rather, the Father has appointed and consecrated Him to this office by way of anointing (which signifies ordination and qualification), by uniting the two natures in one Person, and by the extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The ministry of His kingly office consists 1) in the gathering of His church, drawing her from the power of darkness and translating her into His kingdom (Colossians 1:13); 2) in protecting her against her enemies (cf. Psalms 72:1-20; Jeremiah 23:6); and 3) in governing her by His Word and Spirit. “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king” (Isaiah 33:22). The Excellency of King Jesus

Even if there are individuals upon earth who are kings, the excellency of this King is nevertheless incomparably greater than the excellence of them all.

(1) All kings have nothing within themselves, nor much wherein they excel other men. This King, however, is glory and majesty personified (Hebrews 2:9). He had glory with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), is “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3), and is crowned with glory and honor (Hebrews 2:7).

(2) Other kings govern but a small country and have but few subjects consisting of men, and their subjection is only physical in nature. This King, however, has “dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth” (Psalms 72:8), “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Php 2:10). He is the “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16), of whom it is written, “let all the angels of God worship Him” (Hebrews 1:6). He is the Shepherd and Bishop of souls (1 Peter 2:25).

(3) Other kings have but little power, are fully occupied in protecting themselves and their subjects, and are even conquered by others, but our King is “the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8). To Him is given “all power ... in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18); He is the “Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle” (Psalms 24:8).

(4) Other kings are often harsh and cruel towards their subjects. This King, however, is very gracious, gentle, faithful, and benevolent. He is a Savior (Zechariah 9:9). “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight” (Psalms 72:12-14).

(5) Other kings die, are deposed, exiled, and cease to be kings. This King, however, “shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32-33). Our Lord Jesus is indeed such a glorious and eminent King.

Christ's Kingship in the Old Testament The Lord Jesus is not only King by virtue of His presence in heaven, but was already King of His church in the Old Testament and when He was upon earth. This is evident from Psalms 2:6. As King He entered Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9) according to the prophecy. “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee ... riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9:9). And even though He is now in heaven, He continues to govern upon earth in His church until the end of the world. “And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:33). Yes, after the end of this world, He will eternally remain King over the kingdom of glory, even though, as far as administration is concerned, He will give the kingdom to His Father and He Himself will be subject to the Father. God will then be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24; 1 Corinthians 15:28).

Throughout history earthly kings have had an evil eye towards the church. They were of the opinion that their government was limited if they could not rule over the church. They have feared that the church would be detrimental to them, since they neither knew the glory of King Jesus nor understood the nature of the kingdom of Christ in the church. The kingdom of Christ is of an entirely different nature, as it is not of this world, but heavenly. “My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36). It is therefore called the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 3:2), which “cometh not with observation” (Luke 17:20). The subjects of this kingdom, even though they are men, are spiritual in nature (1 Corinthians 2:15). “And they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14). The blessings of this kingdom do not consist in the things of this world, but are spiritual, “for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). Its weapons are not carnal, but spiritual, the Word of God being the sword (Ephesians 6:17). “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God” (2 Corinthians 10:4). Thus, earthly kings need not fear this kingdom. If, however, their lust to govern is of such a nature that they do not desire Christ to be King, but instead wish to include the church itself in their domain; if they desire to determine what shall or shall not be preached, what must or must not be believed unto salvation, when or when not discipline will be administered; and if they themselves wish to either appoint or dismiss ministers and consistories; and whatever more they may desire, then we submit the following words for meditation: “But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me” (Luke 19:27). If the government does not desire to be judged, exhorted, nor rebuked by the church, she must remain outside the church; the church will then leave her alone and not involve herself with her. If government officials wish to be members of the church, however, they must bow under the scepter of Christ and should not oppose this King to whom they have subjected themselves; else they will experience that this King is too powerful for them.

The Separation Between Church and State

Since the Lord Jesus alone is King, it is undeniably true that He alone legislates in His church and is vested with authority. Nobody may therefore be emboldened to interfere with doctrine, life, or government of the church and act according to his own will. Everything must transpire in strict

conformity with Christ's rule. He wills that the church shall always be separate from the state, and that the church will be governed by ecclesiastical authorities as the state is governed by civil authorities. The church is not to rule over the state and the state may not rule over the church, but each must limit itself to its own domain. Not the least dominion may be exercised in the church by either ecclesiastical or civil authorities, but whatever transpires in the church must be by way of servanthood according to the rule and on behalf of the King. Whatever transpires in the state takes place authoritatively -- as a reflection of the sovereignty of God. The lording of men over the church is the work of the antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:4). As men, the members of the church are subject to civil governments. He who does not obediently subject himself to the government, and rejects and opposes the government, opposes the ordinance of God (Romans 13:1-5).

Thus church and state are fully separate from each other. The one is heavenly and the other earthly. The one pertains to souls and the other to the body. The one is characterized by servanthood, allowing no room for the least exercising of dominion; the other is characterized by authority and dominion. The one is not to meddle in the affairs of the other. The church labors to uphold the state, urging obedience to the government. Government must protect the church from all oppression in order that her members may safely conduct themselves according to the laws of their King. Happy is the land where this is true. 2 Chronicles 19:11 is a significant text in this regard: "And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites shall be officers before you."

Thus must everyone function within his own sphere. Let the church refrain from bringing the state under her dominion, but see to it that governments are honored, feared, and obeyed. Likewise, let all ecclesiastical authorities refrain themselves from "being lords over God's heritage" (1 Peter 5:3).

Governments are to refrain themselves from touching the crown and scepter of Jesus by imposing her authority upon the church as far as doctrine, life, discipline, and the appointment and/or removal of ministers and consistories are concerned. This must be so since 1) the Lord Jesus, who is also King over them, did not vest them with such authority; 2) the Lord Jesus has forbidden every form of dominion in the church; 3) He Himself has issued regulations for doctrine, life, and discipline; and 4) He has decreed in His Word the method by which He wills that ministers and elders of the church are to be called (cf. Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 6:2-4; Acts 13:2; Acts 14:23). As we have considered how we must make use of and imitate the other offices, so it is also necessary that we do this in reference to the kingly office. In view of the first duty there are several matters which must be practiced in reference to the kingship of the Lord Jesus. The Rejection of and Opposition Towards the Kingship of Christ

They who know the Lord Jesus in His royal glory and love Him in truth ought to have a heartfelt sorrow that the sovereign majesty of this great King is not known, feared, or obeyed. David said, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes" (Psalms 36:1). Thus a godly person endowed with wisdom must likewise say with sorrow, "All the activity of man, the behavior of great and small, the entire life, even of church members (with few exceptions), tells me that Jesus is neither known nor acknowledged as King. It seems as though there are not two kingdoms nor two kings on earth who are continually at war with each

other: the Lord Jesus and the devil, but rather as if there is but one domain. Externally it almost appears as if everyone has the same nature and the same objectives, and is subject to the same rule. It seems as if church and society are of one opinion, differing but little in fundamental principles. Who can perceive that the church has a King, such a great King, and is actually controlled and governed by Him?

One will probably admit that Jesus is King, but then only as a King in a distant land, with whom he has no association and whose only acquaintance with Him is by hearsay. One may say, "He is King, but let Him secretly and invisibly be King in the hearts of certain specific individuals." But who believes that the church is His kingdom and that He Himself actually rules there? Who views Him as sitting upon the throne? It appears as if it is a people governed by no one, being without shepherd, protector, and governor. There is no longer a fear to oppress and destroy the church, nor to torment, torture, and kill professors of the truth. They only deliberate how sufficient power can be amassed to utterly destroy and eradicate the church.

If but a few who bear the image and garments of this King manifest themselves, the nature of the devil and the enmity of the seed of the serpent towards the seed of the woman immediately reveal themselves. Men oppose them with all their power. The godly are the objects of entertainment, mockery, and various forms of slander, as well as nicknames such as "speckled birds" and "despicable wretches." They are considered to be a people which men can freely abuse and treat unfairly in all respects without fear of retribution. The one does this ignorantly, another recklessly, a third with evil intent, this person with delight, and someone else does so in order to please others. With full hatred and wrath men oppose the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The scepter of this King and the discipline of the church are viewed as tyrannical repression. All other organizations are permitted to exclude whomever they wish, and other sects may treat their members according to their rules, but the true church is not permitted to do so. Jesus ought to be silent and not stir Himself. Tares ought to be permitted to grow in this kingdom, and woe be to those who determine to remove them.

Men do not acknowledge Him as King in the sending forth of ministers, not acknowledging them to be ambassadors of Christ; and the King's wrath is not feared when injury and sorrow are inflicted upon His ambassadors. They merely view them as hired school teachers, yes, as an unprofitable element of the republic. Men view the consistory with resentment, as if it were a government within a government, desiring to undercut and assume the authority of the civil government. In one word, the Lord Jesus is not perceived and acknowledged as King over His church. Instead, it is as Pharaoh once said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord" (Exodus 5:2). Men speak and think likewise also today. "Who is the King of the church? I know Him not."

Even those who have received some measure of light, stand and observe this from afar and do not concern themselves with it, since it only pertains to Zion. They only shrug the shoulder when perceiving that the royal glory of Jesus is suppressed. Some may secretly complain of this to a friend, but lacking either insight or boldness to deal with it, this evil progresses continually. The Lord Jesus observes all this from the lofty heavens, but conceals His glory and restrains His governing might. He considers the inhabitants of the earth to be not worthy of a public revelation of Himself as the King of His church, yet keeps His church as the apple of His eye and is a fiery wall

round about her, protecting her against the attacks of the enemy and reproving her enemies, as He formerly reprov'd kings for her sake (Psalms 105:14).

Oh, all you who know and delight in this King, observe all this. Let it wound your heart; let your soul bleed; and for sorrow let your eyes cry rivers of tears by reason of the fact that this glorious King of His church is thus despised and scorned.

Pray continually for Him (Psalms 72:15) and to Him, that He would reveal Himself to His church as King before the eyes of the entire world.

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us" (Psalms 80:1-2).

Let the enemies of God's church tremble and let those who are angry with Zion fear, for you are first of all at war with this lofty King, who sits on the throne of God at God's right hand in the lofty heavens, who is the "KING OF KINGS," and "LORD OF LORDS," who in righteousness "doth judge and make war" (Revelation 19:16; Revelation 19:11).

Secondly, you are opposing a most benevolent King, who offers all His graces and blessings, and who commissions His ambassadors to beseech sinners in His stead to be reconciled with God through Him. It is therefore the ultimate wickedness to despise and oppose such a good and benevolent King.

Thirdly, what will be the end of those who do not desire Him as King? Of this we read in Luke 19:27, "But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

Exhortation to Know and Acknowledge Christ as King

Since Jesus is King, He must be known and acknowledged as such by every one of His subjects. For this purpose it is needful to consider Him in accordance with the description given of Him in the Holy Scriptures. Here we read that He is "the true God" (1 John 5:20); "... over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5); "the form of God" (Php 2:6); and "the brightness of His (Father's) glory, and the express image of His Person" (Hebrews 1:3). He, in order to be a qualified Savior, has assumed our human nature, being man out of man, of "the fathers ... as concerning the flesh" (Romans 9:5), "made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4), and "in all things ... like unto his brethren" (Hebrews 2:17). He is the Branch with whom the Lord established the Counsel of Peace (Zechariah 6:12-13) and the covenant of redemption (Psalms 89:28). By virtue of this He is the Surety of the covenant of grace (Hebrews 7:22). "The Son of man came ... to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28); "by one offering ... perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14); and "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). He, though in heaven, nevertheless rules as King in His church upon earth and takes careful note what transpires there and what everyone does. He chastises the unruly, and comforts the obedient.

Thus everyone ought to know and acknowledge Him as King and have such an impression of Him in their hearts that it causes such motions within as are requisite for such attributes.

Since Jesus is King, everyone ought to honor Him as such. "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23), for He is the King of glory (Psalms 24:10). In heaven all the angels worship Him (Hebrews 1:6). All His subjects on earth must likewise worship Him. Such worship consists in considering His various attributes, the approval of them with sweet delight, a rejoicing that He is such a King, a losing oneself in holy adoration when viewing Him as such, and a bowing before Him in worship, "for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him" (Psalms 45:11). It is to kiss Him in subjection and adoration (Psalms 2:12), and to cast yourself before the throne, exclaiming, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:13).

Since Jesus is King, all and everyone of His subjects must delight in Him as such. God has instilled in the nature of these subjects that they delight in their King because of the majesty and eminence to be found in Him. Therefore Jesus must also be loved by all His subjects -- indeed, love is a constituent element of their regenerated nature. "Thy Name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Thee" (Song of Solomon 1:3). The words "Beloved" and "my Beloved" are as it were on the tip of the bride's tongue throughout the entire Song of Solomon. The Lord Jesus Himself gives this testimony of His disciples, "For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me" (John 16:27). Upon the question of Christ, "Lovest thou me?" Peter answered resolutely, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love Thee" (John 21:16). Paul was so filled with love towards the Lord Jesus, that, due to the impulse of love, he did not act wisely in the opinion of some: "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause, for the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:14). This love moved him to pronounce a curse upon those who do not love that Jesus. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" (1 Corinthians 16:22)!

Wherever love for this King is active, there will be exceptional light, clarity, and delight within the soul. The soul looks to Him, beholds Him, and meditates and reflects upon His glory and preciousness, rejoicing that Jesus is so highly exalted and is crowned with honor and glory. Such a soul wholeheartedly desires this to be so, and delights to see how all the angels bow before Him and worship Him; how all the godly in radiating their love end in Him as their focal point; how the devils tremble before Him; and how all things are in His hand and must be subservient to Him. Of such reflection the soul can never have enough, and it grieves him that so often it is dark within, and that he must stand so far away. How he wishes to behold Him with more clarity and in closer proximity, and to be satiated with the brilliance of His glory! Such a soul exalts Him above all and has a high esteem for His majesty, which is delightful and awe-inspiring, and stirs up in him extraordinary reverence. It causes him to fall down before Him, kissing, as it were, the earth as an expression of this reverence. This love cannot tolerate separation or estrangement, for then the soul grieves. He hates all whom Jesus hates and delights in all in whom He delights. Such a soul, repulsed by all that is not in conformity to Him, finds a delight in all that resembles Him. How blessed are the footsteps of this King to such a soul! How it draws his heart in love to Him! His will is the soul's will, and it is the greatest delight of such to do and refrain from doing as pleases Him. Oh, how the soul longs for immediate communion with Him, to behold Him face to face, and to sink away eternally in this mutual and perfect love! Already on this side of the grave, the name of Jesus is written with golden letters in his heart. For His sake the soul would readily part with his honor, belongings, friends, husband, wife, parents, and children. His life is precious; yet he would readily

surrender it for Him. "Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned" (Song of Solomon 8:6-7).

Since the Lord Jesus is King, one must confess Him as such and not be ashamed of Him. "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33). This must be practiced with discretion, and yet at the same time boldly, willingly, manifestly (and thus without disguise), and in dependency upon the Lord Jesus, persevering therein until death.

Since the Lord Jesus is King, you ought to obey Him. "Hear ye Him" (Matthew 17:5); "Beware of Him, and obey His voice" (Exodus 23:21). He is the high and lofty One. "Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations? for to Thee doth it appertain" (Jeremiah 10:7). We are placed in subjection to Him. "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant" (Psalms 116:16). Know Him in His glory, submit yourself at once to Him, approve with delight your obligation to be subject to Him, and offer yourself. Seek to know His will, listen to His answer, and be zealous in your performance.

Since the Lord Jesus is King, you must trust Him, and with confidence consider yourself safe under His protection. Seek no protection apart from Him. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust" (Psalms 91:1-2); "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Psalms 2:12). In the Lord Jesus everything is to be found which can bring about rest. He is all-sufficient, omnipotent, good, faithful, and true. To trust in Him is to magnify Jesus in all His perfections. For such there are glorious promises. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever" (Psalms 125:1); "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5). The Duty of the Christian to Imitate Christ in His Kingship

Having considered how we must make use of the Lord Jesus as King, we will now proceed with the second point. In a fitting manner we must take note of Christ in order that we, being partakers of His anointing, may imitate Him, since He has deemed us worthy to be called Christians after His name. The Lord Jesus, by means of His merits, has made His elect kings, and honors them with this title. "And hath made us kings" (Revelation 1:6); "And hast made us unto our God kings ... and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10); "But ye are ... a royal priesthood ..." (1 Peter 2:9). They are kings, for they have a royal heart, are in a royal state, enjoy royal dignity, have royal goods, and exercise royal dominion. All of this they possess in principle, and it is their duty to earnestly conduct and manifest themselves as such.

First, they have a royal heart. There was an excellent spirit in Daniel (Daniel 5:12). They have a courageous heart, and therefore they are compared to "a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots" (Song of Solomon 1:9). They are called "his goodly horse in the battle" (Zechariah 10:3). They have a prince-like and free spirit (Psalms 51:12). They have a wise heart, for the Son of God "hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (1 John 5:20); "I speak as to wise men" (1 Corinthians 10:15). They also have a strong heart. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord" (Psalms 112:7). They consider earthly possessions to be insignificant, yes, as dung (Php

3:7-8), and have great and lofty things in view. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Thus, they persevere in all circumstances without fear. "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear" (Psalms 27:3). Let hell and the entire earth freely conspire -- the least of the subjects of this King will neither yield nor subject themselves to them. Rather, in all things they will be more than conquerors, and will always be of good courage (2 Corinthians 5:6; 2 Corinthians 5:8). Manifest yourself as such, Christians!

Secondly, they, as kings, are in a state of freedom. They are not subject to anyone as far as the state of their soul is concerned, except to the King of kings. They are "of the freewoman" (Galatians 4:23), "as free ..." (1 Peter 2:16), and the Lord's freeman (1 Corinthians 7:23). They have the Spirit, and "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). They "have been called unto liberty" (Galatians 5:13); the Son has made them free (John 8:36), and the truth has made them free (John 8:32). They have thus been placed "into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). Therefore, Christians, "stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Galatians 5:1), "be ye not the servants of men" (1 Corinthians 7:23), and be not "brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthians 6:12). I am not suggesting at all that one ought not to subject himself to the rule of those who have been placed over us in the domestic, civil, and other spheres. Even a pagan has said that true freedom is to be obedient to governments and laws. Every soul ought to be subject to the higher powers, since they are ordained of God (Romans 13:1). They are, however, not to be servants of men. They are not to allow anyone to control them by either favor or disfavor, or out of love or fear for them, and thus be drawn away from obedience to our sovereign King. They are to refrain from activity or neglect of that which in any degree would be contrary to the conscience, robbing them of their peace and hindering them in their walk with God, and thus be detrimental to their inner freedom. The Christian's objective is not to be subject in a slavish manner, but only because he has the Lord in view and serves Him in this manner, that is, in doctrine and life. Rather, his objective is above all to live in and with God in the enjoyment of peace and freedom.

Thirdly, they also have royal glory. When examining believers closely, one will detect the radiance of the image of God, which they may possess in principle and wherein majesty and glory are displayed (1 Chronicles 29:25). God says of His people, "And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel 16:14). Peter says of them, "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Peter 4:14). They are recognizable due to this glory within them; the godly honor them and delight in them. "But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all My delight" (Psalms 16:3). They are also known and revered by the unconverted due to the excellency within them. "And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed" (Isaiah 61:9). By their behavior the council knew that Peter and John "had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). The godly fill the unconverted with awe, for it is remarkable what is recorded in Acts 5:13, "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them." Consider also Mark 6:20 "For Herod feared John, knowing that He was a just man and an holy, and observed him." An ungodly master has more respect for his godly maid than for ten prominent but unconverted people.

One might think, "Why are they then despised in the eyes of the world, and why does the world persecute them?" My answer is: the world will first resist and suppress the esteem and respect they have for the godly, and then proceed to oppose them. Generally, however, the worldly have not observed the godly in close proximity, and have entertained erroneous prejudices towards them. This moves them to despise and persecute them.

Children of God, if there is such royal glory in you, manifest this glory by an increase in all holiness, humility, meekness, wisdom, and dignity. Keep from soiling this glory by your sins, a seeking of self, or by hypocrisy; for this will promote the honor of King Jesus.

Fourthly, the godly have royal benefits. All that is in the world is rightfully theirs. "For all things are yours, whether ... the world ..." (1 Corinthians 3:21-22). The least thing they possess is better than a thousand worlds. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). Therefore, leave the earth to the men of this world who choose earthly things as their portion, and who as swine despise the unknown pearls of the kingdom. You, however, delight and rejoice in these spiritual benefits, knowing that you are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17).

Fifthly, as spiritual kings, God's children also have royal territory and dominion. They are exalted high above the world and have conquered it. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4). They triumph over the devil and his kingdom. "Ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:13). "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11). They rule their spirit (Proverbs 16:32), sin has no dominion over them (Romans 6:14), "and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24). It is true that they still must do battle, but this does not remove the dominion afforded them. A king who is at war still rules. However, the enemies will not be victorious; these kings will most certainly prevail.

Therefore, children of God, as you possess all these things in principle (the one more and the other less), stir up this principle, use it with royal magnanimity, freedom, glory, and dominion, and manifest all this to the honor of the Lord Jesus, and as an ornament to the church.

025. Chapter 22: The State of Christ's Humiliation by Which He made Satisfaction for the Sins...

----- CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO ----- The State of Christ's Humiliation by Which He made Satisfaction for the Sins of the Elect

Having discussed the offices of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will now proceed to consider the states wherein the Lord Jesus has administered these offices. We will do so particularly in regard to the high- priestly office which He administered in the state of humiliation by way of sacrifice, and thus meritoriously, and in the state of His exaltation by way of intercession, and thus by way of application.

There are two states: the state of humiliation and the state of exaltation. Both are joined together in the Old Testament. "He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head" (Psalms 110:7); "When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah 53:10). This is also true in the New Testament. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory" (Luke 24:26); "But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant ... wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name" (Php 2:7-9). The Incarnation of Christ: Not a Step of His Humiliation The act of humiliation relates to the person of the Lord Jesus and not to one of His natures. Being a divine Person, His entire suffering was therefore a work of divine efficacy and value. The Person of the God-man as such did not humble Himself according to His divine nature. This is impossible, since His divine nature is immutable and incorruptible. He has, however, concealed His divine glory behind His assumed humanity, so that men did not perceive Him as He was, namely, as God; and thus they had the audacity to kill Him. Therefore the assumption of the human nature as such was not a humiliation in and of itself, but rather qualified His Person to be Mediator. The God-man Christ was born in poverty, had no reputation or beauty, but had the form of a servant, that is, of the most insignificant of men, yes, of all men. Due to the sinfulness of all humanity, He was likewise viewed as a sinner and considered to be one of them. All of this truly constituted a step of the humiliation of the God-man Christ. The assumption of the human nature itself, however, considered apart from those humbling circumstances, neither did nor can constitute the essential nature of His humiliation, for:

(1) Christ, prior to His incarnation, was not yet God-man; therefore He could not be humbled as such. According to His divine nature this humiliation, properly speaking, could not take place.

(2) Furthermore, the union of the divine and human natures will continue in His state of glory -- yes, to all eternity. Thus, the incarnation itself, without these humiliating circumstances (which should not be considered here at all), was not a humiliation. It was rather a qualifying of His Person, enabling Him to be Mediator. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 we read, "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." The reference here is not to the fact of the incarnation, but to the

humbling circumstance of poverty: "... made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4). Here is no mention of humiliation, even though being made under the law is humiliating. This does not imply that being made of a woman is an act of humiliation. "But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant" (Php 2:7). Here His humiliation is defined, not as the assumption of the human nature, but as consisting of humble circumstances: to be in the form of a servant, and to be obedient to the Father to the very death on the cross. The State of Humiliation: His Suffering and Submission to the Law The humiliation of Christ has two elements: His suffering for the purpose of making satisfaction, and the placing of Himself under the law in order to merit salvation for His elect. His suffering can further be subdivided into His suffering of soul and His suffering in body -- to which the suffering of the soul was conjoined. According to His divine nature He neither can suffer nor has suffered.

Christ did not only suffer in His body, but especially in His soul. He did so rationally, and thus not merely by identifying and sympathizing with the suffering of the body. He who considers the suffering of the soul to be no more than a sympathizing with the suffering of the body is exceedingly ignorant. The sense of God's wrath in the soul is the soul of suffering, even when the body does not suffer. The fact that Christ had to suffer in soul, and indeed has done so, is evident for the following reasons: First, this is so typologically. The sacrifices typified the suffering which had to come upon Christ. In the sacrifices the blood of animals had to be offered. Why the blood? The blood constitutes the soul of the animal, typifying that atonement could not be made for the souls of men except by the soul-suffering of the Surety. "For the blood is the life" (Deuteronomy 12:23); "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11).

Secondly, this is confirmed by the prophecies. "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin ... He shall see of the travail of His soul ... because He hath poured out His soul unto death" (Isaiah 53:10-12).

Thirdly, this is confirmed by the righteousness of God. The soul of man commits sin and therefore the soul also must be punished. Such a sin requires punishment commensurate to it (cf. Romans 1:27). "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). The curse -- separation from God and the wrath of God -- was threatened upon men and is due upon sin. "... indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Romans 2:8-9). The soul is the subject of this suffering. In order to remove all this, the Surety had to be punished in His soul and endure soul's distress.

Fourthly, this is confirmed by clear passages of Scripture. In Matthew 26:37-38, we read that "He began λυπεσθαι καὶ θορυβηθῆναι to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is περιλυπηθεῖσα exceeding (that is, fully surrounded by, through and through) sorrowful, even unto death. "And he ... began κθαμβεσθαι to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy" (Mark 14:33); "And being in an ὄγυνος agony ..." (Luke 22:44); "Now is my soul τεταρακται troubled" (John 12:27); and He "was heard in that He ἐλαβεως feared" (Hebrews 5:7). As is true for our English words, which are expressive of the highest degree of sorrow, the Greek words are exceptionally emphatic in order to convey this sorrow as being the exertion of effort of the highest degree.

Fifthly, in order to gain a deeper insight into His soul's suffering, consider, in addition to these expressions of grief, the results of this sorrow.

(1) "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Although His human nature was supported in a superhuman and extraordinary manner, enabling Him to endure suffering of an infinite magnitude, the human nature could not have endured a higher degree of sorrow without having succumbed and died. Not only was the body unable to endure a greater degree of sorrow, but the soul was also not able to endure any more, or, if this were possible, it would so to speak have succumbed and been destroyed.

(2) "And His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). This is neither an indisposition or weakness of nature in that perfect body, nor a physical labor which exceeded human strength. Rather, the anguish of soul so afflicted and troubled the heart that it forced blood out of the sweat pores. This did not merely consist in a bloody sweat, but great drops of blood fell from His body upon the earth.

(3) Take note here of the prayer of Christ. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matthew 26:39). One ought not to entertain the thought that Christ wished to be released from His mediatorship and was not willing to die for the elect. Indeed not! He did not regret the fact that He had entered into the covenant of redemption with the Father; He would rather have suffered a thousand times more. His will was not opposed to His Father's. Nothing of the sort is true, for He surrendered His will to the will of His Father. We insignificant human beings take no delight in suffering, it being painful. We are inclined not to suffer when we consider suffering in and of itself. It may nevertheless be true that we are willing to suffer because it is the will of God, albeit with tears in our eyes. Such is much more true of the perfect human nature of Christ. He did not know in advance how bitter this cup was. He presently felt it, and His natural inclination could have no pleasure but only be repulsed by suffering as such. He presented this holy inclination to His Father and prayed for deliverance, if it were possible. He knew quite well that He had to suffer. He neither refused nor tried to avert this, for He voluntarily wished to surrender Himself to this suffering. However, according to His human nature He did not know the extent of His suffering. Therefore He prayed, if it were possible, that sin could be atoned for by less suffering, that is, by some decrease of the anguish He suffered, or by bringing it to an end, and that He would not need to die in such darkness, desertion, and with such a sense of anger and wrath, for this would be the severest degree of suffering possible. He requested that He might be delivered from such a degree of suffering, but if not, He would be satisfied that the will of God be done.

(4) The greatness of His distress is also evident from the appearance of and the comfort afforded by an angel (Luke 22:43). His divine nature did support Him, albeit in a secret manner. The Father withdrew all sense of light and favor, and fully poured out His wrath upon Him; thus He found Himself alone, being in a condition of extreme sorrow. The angel did not come to help Him endure His suffering, for he did not suffer along with Him. Rather, the angel came to encourage Him, possibly by speaking to Him about Old Testament shadows, the prophets, the glory which He would subsequently receive, the impending redemption of so many souls -- all of whom He loved -- and the glory of His Father in all this, thereby strengthening and encouraging Him. It all came to such a climax that an angel came to comfort Him!

(5) The magnitude of His soul's suffering is also evident from His complaint upon the cross. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me" (Matthew 27:46). He was not forsaken by His divine nature, for the hypostatic union could not be dissolved. He was also not forsaken by the love of His Father, which remained immutable. Neither was He forsaken by the Holy Spirit, with whom He had been anointed in abundant measure; nor did He complain of being forsaken into the hands of men. Rather, He complained about the withdrawal of all light, love, help, and comfort during the specific moment when His distress was at its highest and when He needed them to the utmost. When Christ uttered the word "Why," He was not asking to know the cause, but it was instead an emotional expression of sorrow. It was not an expression of despair, for He said, "My God," "Father." It was rather indicative of a most comfortless, helpless, and distressful condition.

Question: What caused this extreme distress in Christ?

Answer: His suffering in Gethsemane which we have just discussed was not due to the sins of the Jews, their rejection, His pity with all the ungodly who perish, the betrayal of Judas, and the offense and contempt which would result from His suffering. He had foreknowledge of all this. It also was not due to fear of the violent and ignominious death before Him, for then He would have been weaker than many martyrs who with joy faced death and courageously endured it.

Instead, the true cause of all His soul's suffering was first of all that He felt the full extent of what sin is, as well as what it means to be a sinner. He Himself had neither committed sin nor had known sin, for He was holy, undefiled and separate from sinners. But He had removed all sins from the elect by taking their sins upon Himself as if He Himself had committed them, thus standing in their place. He now felt what it meant to break the relationship and the covenant with God, to forsake God, to be disobedient to God, to oppose God, to sin against His law and will, and to be conscious of being a partaker of sin. To behold sin as sin, and to feel it to be such, is unbearable, even if there were no punishment upon sin. This caused David to exclaim, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalms 51:4). The Lord Jesus, who was made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21), experienced sin as sin. This was an unbearable condition in Him who loved God perfectly.

Secondly, Christ felt the full force of being separated from God due to sin. It is neither imaginable, nor can it be expressed what terror, unrest, darkness, and misery are experienced, and what a sorrowful condition it is when God in indignation fully separates Himself from a sinner, withdrawing all favor, grace, and light; forsaking, rejecting, and casting him out; leaving him over to himself -- man not being able to live without finding relief for his soul somewhere. For a man to have a soul -- a soul which cannot satisfy itself and can only be satisfied by something external to itself -- and then to have nothing and be unable to find anything for fulfilment; to miss God, who alone is the satisfaction of a rational creature; and to be empty within while weeping in total separation from God, is both unbearable and intolerable. Such will be the eternal punishment of the ungodly, "who will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The elect were deserving of all this, but the Lord Jesus bore this in their place. Such sorrow of soul exceeds our comprehension.

Thirdly, Christ experienced the full force of the curse, the execution of what it is to be cursed (Galatians 3:10; Galatians 3:13), the just manifestation of divine wrath, the Lord's anger towards the sinner (Nahum 1:2), the terribleness of falling into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31),

and the experience of God being a terror (Jeremiah 17:17). As this cannot be understood by anyone who has not experienced it, so it can only be understood in a small measure by someone who has felt this in principle or by approximation, and cannot be fully understood and expressed by anyone. Let us take the most extreme conception of it as deduced from all the expressions of Scripture, and then consider our perception to be almost nil in comparison to what the Lord Jesus experienced in this respect. Christ was the Son of love, and as such God was not angry with Him. God was wrathful towards sin, however, and in righteously executing justice as Judge, caused Him who had taken sin upon Himself to feel this wrath.

Fourthly, Christ experienced the terror of the devil in full force (Luke 22:53). Due to sin, man has become the property of the devil (2 Timothy 2:26), and therefore the Surety had to endure all the attacks of the devil on behalf of His elect. The tempter tempted Him with subtlety (Matthew 4:1-25), departed from Him for a season (Luke 4:13), but came with his greatest power and severest attacks at the very end ... at the time and hour of his power. Imagine your feeling sin in all its abominableness, utterly forsaken of divine favor, sensibly experiencing the highest degree of the divine wrath and anger of God as just Judge -- and at such a moment being attacked and assaulted in the most subtle and horrible manner by the powers of hell. What an extreme state of unspeakable distress this must have been!

Such was Christ's suffering according to His soul. Let us now also consider Christ's physical suffering. In considering this we must understand that all of this came upon Him due to the righteous wrath of God, and that this suffering was at the same time a suffering of the soul, not merely as having sympathy, but in an immediate sense. The suffering of His body was added to increase the suffering of His soul. The elect had used their members as instruments of unrighteousness and had engaged in sin with their bodies, and thus they were worthy to also eternally suffer all manner of physical pain. In this suffering we can distinguish several steps. The Steps of Christ's Humiliation The first step consists of His suffering prior to His baptism and entering upon His public ministry. He was born in poverty and under contemptible circumstances. He endured the painful act of circumcision upon the eighth day; He had to flee His fatherland, and as an outcast and stranger sought refuge in Egypt. He most likely labored as a carpenter (cf. Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), thereby submitting Himself to the sentence, "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread" (Genesis 3:19), to earn His bread. The second step covers the period from His baptism to Gethsemane. He was tempted and assaulted by His archenemy, the devil, who to the utmost of his ability did not cease to stir up everyone against Him. He was hated and despised by the Pharisees, scribes, and rulers. They deliberately sought to trap Him in His speech, hoping to find something against Him. They forbade anyone to provide lodging for Him, while commanding everyone who knew His whereabouts to report Him. Everywhere He was despised, held in contempt, contradicted, reviled, and cursed. At one time they wanted to cast Him from a steep incline, and then again they took up stones to kill Him. He lived in poverty, suffering hunger and thirst, and had no place where He could lay His head. The third step consists of the last segment of His suffering in Gethsemane; being in the hall of Caiaphas and the judgment hall of Pilate; standing before Herod; and being on the way to and upon Golgotha. In Gethsemane He was immersed in the suffering of soul related earlier. He fell on His face, prayed, sweat blood, and was betrayed by His own disciple which was an unbearable shame and defamation! He was forsaken by all His disciples, captured by enemies and officers, bound roughly, and led as a

murderer to the judge. As a criminal He was brought before the ecclesiastical tribunal in the hall of Caiaphas, accused by false witnesses, struck upon the mouth by a servant, condemned to death as a blasphemer, mocked by wicked servants, and spit upon and hit in the face. Then He was delivered to the Gentile, Pontius Pilate, vehemently accused, sent to Herod, clothed in a garment for which He was ridiculed, led along the streets of Jerusalem as a fool, and delivered again to Pilate. He was put on par with a murderer; His death was demanded by the people; He was scourged mercilessly, crowned with thorns, and delivered to be crucified. As a condemned one, He was led out of the city bearing His cross. Upon Golgotha, the place of gallows, He was nailed to the cross and as a cursed one He was lifted up between heaven and earth, and placed between two murderers before the eyes of thousands of people. In His thirst He received vinegar mingled with gall to drink. In this state of misery He was ridiculed; stinging words penetrated His very heart and even the light of the sun was taken from Him. For three hours He hung in darkness; He died while experiencing the oppressing wrath of God. Behold the Man of sorrows! Can any manner of sorrow, contempt, and ridicule be imagined, with which the Lord Jesus was not afflicted? In this manner the Prince of life was killed, and the Lord of glory was crucified. The fourth step pertains to His burial. After the Lord Jesus had given up the ghost, a servant pierced His side and with his spear penetrated His very heart, resulting in blood and water flowing out of this wound. Joseph of Arimathea -- a rich, good, and righteous man, as well as an honorable counselor -- and Nicodemus, having requested and received permission from Pilate, took the body of Jesus. After wrapping it in fine linen with one hundred pounds of spices, they laid the body in a new grave which was hewn in a rock and closed it off with a large stone. He, who prior to this had been mocked and despised of men, was now removed from their view as one unfit to be viewed by them.

Christ's Descent into Hell In the twelve Articles of Faith it is written that He was buried and descended into hell. Even though the articles of faith agree with the Word of God in every detail and are the truth, this wording is nevertheless not recorded in Scripture in this context, but has been composed by men and accepted by the church as such. Therefore we need not regard the wording as if it were inspired by the Holy Spirit. But it does raise the question: Must these phrases be considered as referring to one and the same matter, or must each be understood as pertaining to a different matter?

We deem them to be essentially one in meaning, since:

(1) These two expressions were not placed together in the original Articles of Faith; some used either one or the other. At the council of Nicea, held in AD 325, it was only stated, "buried" or "laid in the grave." In the Athanasian Creed it only reads, "descended into hell."

(2) The two phrases have one and the same meaning, for the Hebrew word sheol, and the Greek word hades, refer either to places deep under the surface of the earth, the grave, or the domain of the dead. The latter means "being put beneath the surface of the earth in a pit or a grave." Since the place of the damned and the devils is below and the place of those who are glorified is above, this location is thus denominated as such. This agrees with the fact that our word "hell" originates from the word "hollow." For the same reason mentioned above we call the place of the damned "hell," for "hell" is still called "hol" in the Frisian dialect. Thus, even though the place of the damned is called sheol (hades), it nevertheless in its original meaning referred to a pit, grave, or hollow

cavity. For this reason we deem “being buried” and “descending into hell” to mean one and the same thing.

Although only one of these phrases was used originally, they have been conjoined at a later date and are interpreted as each having a different meaning. It is fitting that one understand “was buried” to refer to His lying in the grave, and “descended into hell” to refer to the suffering of Christ’s soul.

Roman Catholics are obviously in error when they consider the descent into hell as a step of Christ’s exaltation. They also understand by this that Christ, having died, went with respect to His soul, either to the place of the damned or to an ornate dwelling place for the deceased saints of the Old Testament in order to deliver their souls from this place. Instead, Christ’s soul went immediately to heaven. He commended it into the hands of His Father (Luke 23:46) and said to the murderer, “Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). The texts which are produced to support this error do not prove anything. “... His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:31). The word sheol which is found in Psalms 16:10, and the word hades found in this text, both signify “the grave” in their primary meaning. This is the case here and is also evident from what follows: it saw no corruption, that is, it did not decay as a body normally would in the grave. The word “soul” is here used figuratively, referring to the person, and more particularly to that part which is naturally inclined to decay, namely, the body; the soul does not enter the grave. If one understands this hell to be the place of the damned, the souls of the forefathers were not there, but were in heaven. According to their own view they would not be in the place of the damned, but in a purgatory.

Also 1 Peter 3:19 does not afford proof. “By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” The words “by which” refer to the antecedent, “quickened by the spirit.” The word “spirit” does not refer to the soul of Christ, for He was not resurrected by His soul. Thus, this text yields no proof. The Spirit by which He came and went is His divine nature, by which he made Himself alive. In this nature He spoke with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, and the other prophets, it being stated in 1 Peter 1:11 that the Spirit of Christ was in them. By the prophets He caused men to be exhorted, rebuked, and warned, so that He preached by means of those prophets who spoke by His Spirit. Mention is made in this chapter of Noah and the flood, and of people who then were disobedient and did not repent upon Noah’s preaching by the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 3:20). The ungodly who died were cast -- not in body but in soul -- into this prison, that is, into hell, the place of the damned, being condemned and rejected not according to body but to the soul, which is a spirit. The soul, being the rational spirit of man, is the object towards which preaching is directed, and is the primary and immediate subject of sin and disobedience. The soul, being immortal, is destroyed in hell (Matthew 10:28). The meaning of the text cited is that Christ, by His Spirit, preached through Noah unto the people who were then disobedient, and who, according to the body, were killed in the flood, and according to their soul or spirit were cast into hell where they still are in prison.

All the Suffering of Christ Atoning in Nature

Christ had to endure all the aforementioned suffering in fulfillment of the ceremonies and prophecies. This suffering in its entirety atoned for the sins of the elect -- not merely His suffering on the cross during the three hours of darkness. Such a limitation is not found in the Word of God.

This is evident for the following reasons:

First, whenever Scripture speaks of the satisfaction of Christ, it refers to His suffering in general without any exceptions and limitations as far as time or substance is concerned. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Who would be so bold that he would dare to selectively place a limitation on His suffering?

Secondly, Christ did not only suffer during the three hours of darkness, but also prior to this. His suffering according to soul and body in Gethsemane was thus also of an atoning nature. "And with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). He already hung on the cross prior to this darkness. Is not the crucifixion of the Lord of glory also of a satisfying nature? (1 Corinthians 2:8). This is also true for His poverty. "Yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Since His suffering prior to this darkness renders satisfaction, it cannot be limited to the three hours of suffering.

Thirdly, from the very beginning Christ was already the Lord's Christ (Luke 2:42), High Priest, King (Isaiah 9:6), and Savior (Luke 2:42). At the age of twelve He was doing His Father's business (Luke 2:42; Luke 2:49). From the very beginning He already was "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). He was all of these on behalf of His elect. From all this it is evident that He did not only make satisfaction during His three hours of suffering, but during His entire lifetime.

Objection #1: It is written, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day" (Zechariah 3:9).

Answer: (1) One ought then at least to include all that Christ suffered on that last day and not limit it to three hours.

(2) On one day He accomplished everything that was subservient to the elimination of sin. All this had to be finished before He had fully satisfied and paid to the very last penny.

Objection #2: Frequently reference is only made to the crucifixion of Christ.

Answer: (1) There is also frequent reference to other elements of His suffering.

(2) The crucifixion of Christ is most frequently mentioned since it is the greatest, final, and most public element of His suffering.

(3) On the cross He suffered both prior and subsequent to the darkness, and thus one cannot limit His suffering to three hours.

Concerning this suffering, three matters need to be considered in more detail: This suffering truly satisfies, perfectly satisfies, and satisfies for the sins of all the elect and for them only. The Veracity of Christ's Satisfaction

First of all we state that Christ by His suffering has in essence and truth on behalf of God's children satisfied the justice of God relative to their sins. The Socinians deny this. We maintain that Christ is not only a Savior because He revealed the truth and the way of salvation, confirmed this by His miracles and His death, was an example for us in His holy life, etc. and thus suffered and died to the benefit of man. Instead, we maintain that Christ as Surety has taken the place of His elect,

taking upon Himself all their sins; that is, original as well as actual sins committed both prior to baptism and conversion and to the very last moment of their lives. On their behalf He Himself has borne the punishments which they deserved, and thus has completely, essentially, and truly satisfied the justice of God without overlooking any sin or by accepting a part as being equivalent to the whole. On the basis of this satisfaction and His merits, He delivers them from all punishment, temporal and eternal. This is the cardinal point and distinctive of Christianity. He who errs here and denies this truth cannot be saved. This truth is confirmed by the following proofs.

First, this is proven by the necessity of satisfaction. God, due to His majesty, holiness, justice, and veracity, cannot allow sin to remain unpunished. He cannot receive the sinner in grace, nor grant salvation unto him, without perfect satisfaction of His justice by the bearing of deserved punishment. Man cannot make satisfaction. It is consistent with the justice of God, however, that this can be accomplished by a qualified Surety; and since the Lord Jesus is such a Surety, Christ has truly, essentially, and perfectly made atonement by His suffering and death. The first is true as has been proven in chapter 17, and it thus follows that the second is also certain and true.

Secondly, this is proven by the Suretyship of the Lord Jesus.

(1) It has previously been proven that the Lord Jesus is Surety, which is evident from the following texts: "By so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament" (Hebrews 7:22); "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted" (Isaiah 53:6-7). It is a known fact that a surety takes the place of another, be it that he is a fidejussor, one who is obligated to pay when a debtor cannot pay, (which in this case no sinner is capable of doing); or be it that he is expromissor, who first of all takes the debt upon himself, makes payment as if it were his own, and releases the debtor from all obligations. Paul made himself such a surety on behalf of Onesimus towards Philemon (Philemon 1:18-19). Jesus, being Surety, has taken their place, however, and paid the debt on their behalf.

(2) This is also confirmed by such texts in which the words *anti* and *huper* are to be found. "Even as the Son of man came ... to give his life a ransom *anti*, for many" (Matthew 20:28); "Who gave himself a *antilutron*, that is, ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). It is undeniably true that the word *anti* means "to take someone's place." "Archelaus did reign in Judaea *anti*, in the room of his father Herod" (Matthew 2:22); "An eye *anti* for an eye" (Matthew 5:38); "For her hair is given her *anti* for a covering" (1 Corinthians 11:15); "Will he *anti* for a fish give him a serpent" (Luke 11:11). Also the word *huper* means "in someone's stead." "For scarcely *huper* for (that is, in stead of) a righteous man will one die" (Romans 5:7). Thus, Christ died for, and on behalf of, the sinner. "... but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32); "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity" (Titus 2:14); "... that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9); "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18). In these texts the word *huper* is found. It is thus very clear that Christ, as Surety, has suffered on behalf of sinners and has made satisfaction for their sins. This is also confirmed in Isaiah 53:4, "surely He hath borne our griefs, and *sebalaam* carried our sorrows." This word means "to carry with great difficulty," "to bear a burden upon one's shoulders."

Thirdly, this is evident from the high-priestly office of the Lord Jesus discussed in chapter 20. [p. ###539] According to Scripture, Christ is High Priest (cf. Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 5:10). It was the task of a priest to sacrifice, and Christ, as Priest, did indeed sacrifice -- sacrificing

Himself (cf. Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 9:28). The sacrifices, that is, the animals which were sacrificed, were killed on behalf of the sinner. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls" (Leviticus 17:11); "And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son" (Genesis 22:13). The death of the sacrificial animal was imputed to the account of the sinner who placed his hand upon the head of the sacrificial animal, and by this the sinner was declared innocent as if he himself had made satisfaction for his sins (cf. Leviticus 4:4; Leviticus 4:15; Leviticus 4:20). This typified that the Messiah who was to come would likewise put Himself in the place of the sinner, would sacrifice Himself on their behalf, and His suffering would be imputed to all believers as if they themselves had made payment for their sins. Consider 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Christ has been made sin for us by the imputation of all the sins of the elect to Himself as Surety, as a sacrifice for sin. Thus, "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Since Christ has been made sin for us, we by virtue of His merits are made the righteousness of God in Him. This is also evident in the following texts: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24); "He is the hilasmos propitiation (an atoning sacrifice) for our sins" (1 John 2:2). Since the Lord Jesus as High Priest and the Sacrifice has sacrificed Himself for the sins of the elect, He has thus essentially and truly made atonement on behalf of the sinner by His suffering and death.

Fourthly, this is evident from the price that was paid. The suffering of Christ is referred to as a ransom: "... to give his life a lutron ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28); "Who gave himself a antilutron ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). He is called "redemption," that is, a sacrifice unto redemption. "In whom we have apolutrosin redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7). He is called a "propitiation." "Whom God hath set forth to be a hilasterion propitiation through faith in his blood" (Romans 3:25); "He is the hilasmos propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2). These words have a strong emphasis, and signify a redemption, an atonement -- the manner of accomplishment not being a matter of indifference but referring to that which must occur by payment for someone's redemption. If the suffering of Christ is such a price and ransom, it is truly sufficient and thus also atones. Add to this the texts in which the Greek words have special emphasis, as well as those which state plainly that the redemption of man occurs by the blood of Christ, it being the price paid: "Forasmuch as ye know that you are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19); "For ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20); "For Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood" (Revelation 5:9). Thus, we are redeemed, not by a mere release as a lord grants freedom to his slave or as prisoners of war are exchanged or released, but by a transaction in which payment is made of proper value. Such is true for the suffering of Christ.

Fifthly, it is evident from the fruits of the suffering and death of Christ. By the suffering and death of Jesus Christ real satisfaction has been made and peace has been established between God -- whose justice has been satisfied -- and the sinner. Scripture states this emphatically and clearly: "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10); "Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ ... to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19); "And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby"

(Ephesians 2:16). Not only did Christ make those two -- Jews and Gentiles -- one, and thus reconcile them to each other, but He has reconciled both with God. "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled" (Colossians 1:20-21). He not only has brought about reconciliation between all His elect, that is, those who are in heaven and upon earth, but He has also reconciled them to Himself, and thus they all have peace with God through the blood of Christ. There was enmity between God and man. God hates the sinner (Psalms 5:5); men are children of wrath (Ephesians 2:15; Christ removes this enmity (Ephesians 2:15); He delivers men from the wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 1:10); He reconciles them with God (Romans 5:10); and He brings them to God (1 Peter 3:18). He does not do this by merely pointing out the way of conversion to them, but through His blood as the ransom. Thus, Christ has essentially, truly, on behalf of sinners and by His suffering and death satisfied the justice of God.

Even though the proofs mentioned above are very convincing, we shall seek to remove some objections in order that there be no reason that anyone should be hindered from receiving this truth.

Objection #1: God was not angry towards men, but rather loved them (cf. John 3:16; Titus 3:4). God is also not said to be reconciled, but rather that man is reconciled, which is the result of 1) man's conversion to God, 2) gracious acquittal, and 3) the intervention of a Mediator -- and thus not due to the bearing of punishment, satisfaction of divine justice, and removal of wrath.

Answer: (1) It is clearly contrary to the Word of God to say that He is not angry with sin. "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness ... Thou hatest all workers of iniquity ... the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (Psalms 5:4-6). "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psalms 7:11); "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness" (Romans 1:18); "We ... were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:3).

(2) God loves humanity, but not with a love of delight, for in men there is nothing but sin, and they are the enemies of God (Romans 5:10). Rather He loves men with a love of benevolence which He manifested in the giving of the Mediator. As sinners, His elect were children of wrath; but as His elect, God loved them with benevolent love.

(3) It is contrary to God's Word to maintain that not God but man was reconciled. Did man receive something from God so that man in turn could have God be reconciled with him? Is man the one who has been satisfied? Instead, God was provoked to anger (man being the cause of this), God's wrath was appeased, God received the ransom, and the appeasement of God's wrath was to the benefit of the elect, who due to this paid ransom are received in reconciliation.

(4) It is nowhere recorded in Scripture that this reconciliation comes about by way of conversion. It is self-evident that conversion is not the same as atonement. Everywhere in Scripture reconciliation is attributed to the passion of Christ, as we have abundantly shown above. Acquittal does not occur apart from the satisfaction of divine justice, but on the basis of satisfaction. This acquittal and manifestation of grace take place toward men who have contributed nothing towards this satisfaction.

(5) Reconciliation does not come about by mere intercession and intervention, since the satisfaction made by the bearing of punishment is the basis for intercession. In order for Christ to enter into the sanctuary, He had to do so by His own blood (Hebrews 9:12). John therefore joins these two principles together. "We have an Advocate with the Father, ... and He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2).

Objection #2: The word "satisfy" does not occur in Scripture (in regard to Christ's work), and therefore one cannot prove that satisfaction has been made.

Answer: Even if the letters of that word do not occur, for a rational person it will be sufficient if the matter itself is expressed clearly and transparently. Scripture states that Christ has restored that which He took not away (Psalms 69:4), that He has given His soul as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28), for all (1 Timothy 2:6), that in Him we have redemption (or a sacrifice unto redemption) (Ephesians 1:7), and that He is a propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2), etc. Is not this the equivalent of making satisfaction? It does not matter whether one uses these words or the word "satisfy."

Objection #3: If Christ has made satisfaction for us, He has also made atonement for Himself, which is an absurdity.

Answer: Even though making payment on one's own behalf cannot really be associated with a transaction in which righteousness is acquired by way of exchange, this can very well be true of avenging righteousness. Why would a judge, who himself has done wrong, not be able to condemn himself and bring judgment upon himself? Would it be against all rhyme and reason if a judge, whose son has committed a crime and forfeited the right to both of his eyes, would cause one eye of his son and one of his own eyes to be put out? What I have just stated applies to human justice. Here the matter is both clear and transparent, however, for it is God who says that Christ by His suffering and death has removed the enmity between God and man, and reconciled man to God (Romans 5:10), has made peace (Colossians 1:20), and has brought man to God (1 Peter 3:18). This is therefore the end of all argument. He who wishes to understand this clearly should recognize that Christ as God-man and as Surety, did not make satisfaction to Himself but to His Father. When we consider Him as being coessential with the Father, as being of divine essence, then He indeed, as Surety, has made payment to God and thus to Himself, being both God and man. You must make a distinction between essence and personhood: the Father is one Person, and the Son is another Person. In doing so the difficulty will be cleared up.

Objection #4: In order for Christ to make satisfaction He had to suffer all that the sinner deserves. This means that He would have to suffer eternal damnation, be eternally in hell, and be in a state of despair. Christ did not suffer all this, however, and thus He has not made satisfaction.

Answer: (1) Christ did indeed suffer eternal damnation, for eternal damnation, death, and pain consist in total separation from God, in the total manifestation of divine wrath, and all of this for such a duration until the punishment upon sin was perfectly and satisfactorily born. However, Christ has suffered all this to the fullest extent, as has been demonstrated earlier. He suffered as long and in such a measure until He could say, "It is finished" (John 19:30), and "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4).

(2) Christ did not need to be locally in hell, for this does not belong to the essence of eternal damnation.

(3) His suffering did not have to be endless or eternal in duration. Man is subject to this due to his inability to endure punishment exhaustively and at the same time restore himself into a state of perfection. Consequently man would have to remain subject to it until he would make full satisfaction, which could not occur to all eternity. Since, however, the Surety has suffered everything to the most perfect degree and with utmost exertion, that is, as much as was necessary to satisfy divine justice, and since He fulfilled the demands of the law by His perfect obedience, it was neither possible to extend His suffering any further, nor "that He should be holden of" death (Acts 2:24).

Additional Objection: Christ's human nature, in which He suffered, was finite and thus was not capable of bearing infinite wrath. Consequently His suffering was not sufficient to atone for sin which merits eternal punishment.

Answer: We cannot determine to what degree Christ's human nature was fortified, but it always remained finite. In this nature Christ endured a total being forsaken by, and the full wrath of, the infinite God against whom the elect had sinned. One should note, however, that it was not the human nature which suffered, but the Person according to this nature, and since the Person is infinite, all that He suffered was of infinite efficacy and value.

Additional Objection: If the suffering of Christ was of infinite efficacy because He who suffered is infinite, then such would be true by virtue of having respect for His Person. This God will not do according to Romans 2:11. Thus, the atonement was sufficient by accepting a part as being equivalent to the whole -- this in view of the Person, but not because the nature of the punishment was such that it could match the deserts of sin.

Answer: To respect a person is to be moved to bestow upon that person some favor in response to some external circumstances or qualities. In this case, however, the word "person" does not refer to man himself as the object of activity. Such an argument does not hold here since the reference is to the Person Himself, rather than to the qualities which would motivate to respect or not to respect. This is also not a case where part is accepted as being equivalent to the whole, since the punishment is such that it deals fully with sin. Neither esteem nor consideration for His Person rendered the suffering of Christ sufficient; rather the suffering of this infinite Person was sufficient and infinitely efficacious due to its intrinsic, true efficacy and value. The rank of the person against whom a crime is committed proportionally aggravates the crime and determines the severity of the punishment. For why is it that he who hits the king in the face is worthy of death, and he who hits a beggar is not worthy of this? Is it not due to the rank and worthiness of the person? Likewise the suffering of punishment for the crime endured by a king is of greater worth and satisfaction, even if he suffers less, than that of a beggar who has committed the same crime and physically suffers more pain and shame. Such is the case here. Since the Person against whom men have sinned is infinite, sin indeed demands infinite punishment, and since the Person who bears the punishment is infinite, the satisfaction is indeed infinite as well, that is, fully sufficient.

(4) Christ also did not need to despair. He could not suffer this since despair is sin, and is not the essence of eternal punishment, but is due both to the unbearable suffering of a miserable creature and a being deprived of all means to ever be delivered. All this does not apply to Christ, since He was able both to bear the punishment and overcome His suffering.

Objection #5: Even if Christ had made satisfaction, it could only be of value for one person and not for all.

Answer: Scripture states that this one Christ has made satisfaction for all (cf. Romans 5:18; 1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9). One rich man can deliver many slaves. A king can take the place of many prisoners and deliver them as such. Thus, an infinite Person can make satisfaction for many.

Objection #6: If Christ has made satisfaction for us, we must thank Christ more for our salvation than God the Father.

Answer: This is incorrect logic, for everything proceeds from the Father who has ordained and given the Son.

Additional Objection: Then we need neither to keep ourselves from sin nor practice virtue, since all sin has been paid for and salvation has already been merited.

Answer: This objection reveals total ignorance concerning both the nature of a redeemed person and the nature of grace. "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). Sin is impurity, and therefore those that have been purified hate and flee from it as it is contrary to the regenerated nature. Holiness is their life and joy, and therefore they pursue it. They do not practice virtue to merit heaven, but to thank, serve, and magnify the Lord and to follow in this delightful and plain way until they may possess this merited salvation.

Additional Objection: It is inconsistent with the mercy and power of God to insist upon the satisfaction of Christ. God was either not willing to save the sinner without satisfaction -- which would be contrary to His mercy -- or He was unable, which would be contrary to His power.

Answer: If God could have saved the sinner without the satisfaction of Christ, it would have been inconceivably merciless of God to cause the holy Christ to suffer so much and so severely. Nevertheless, if God does not save the most abominable and stiffnecked sinner who dies in his sin without the least manifestation of sorrow, then this would be either because He is not willing, which would be contrary to His infinite mercy, or because He is not able, which would be contrary to His omnipotence. Coming to the point, power is not the issue here, but justice and holiness which cannot tolerate that sin should go unpunished. Since His justice will not tolerate unpunished sin, He is also not willing to do so, for His will is in harmony with His nature. It is not an act of mercy to violate justice; instead, His power and mercy are exceedingly magnified by saving the sinner on the basis of Christ's satisfaction. "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6); "He hath shewed strength with His arm" (Luke 1:51).

Thus we have confirmed the veracity of the satisfaction rendered. The Perfection of Christ's Satisfaction The second thing we must consider concerning the suffering and death of Christ is the perfection of the satisfaction of Christ. We must do so especially in defense against Roman Catholics and Socinians. Four things must be noted here:

(1) that Christ's satisfaction is so perfect that the notion that a part was accepted as being equivalent to the whole or that some sins were overlooked is unacceptable;

(2) that other satisfaction is neither to be added to this nor can be added;

(3) that the satisfaction does not only pertain to sins committed prior to baptism, but rather that satisfaction has been made for all sins, great and small;

(4) that satisfaction was not only made for all incurred guilt, but also for all punishment due. All these matters are clearly evident from what we have stated concerning the doctrine of satisfaction, so that proof is no longer needed. In order that no hiding-place be left unsearched, however, we shall consider each point individually. The suffering of Christ itself, when considered in its essential nature, is such a perfect suffering that the notion of a gracious evaluation, that is, acceptance of a part as being equivalent to the whole, is nonexistent and cannot be entertained. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, if the avenging justice of God as Judge is so impeccable that it cannot be satisfied except by the exhaustive bearing of deserved punishment, and if the Lord Jesus has satisfied this impeccable justice, then His satisfaction is so perfect that the very last penny has been paid. In no wise was any sin overlooked, nor did a gracious acceptance of a part as being equivalent to the whole occur. The first proposition has been proven to be true in chapter 18, as well as earlier in this chapter, and therefore the second proposition is also true.

Secondly, the Surety who has made the atonement is infinite in His being, majesty, holiness, and righteousness. Would such a Person become a Surety and leave something undone which He neither could nor was willing to pay? Since He is infinite, His entire suffering is consistent with His nature and therefore is of infinite (that is, of perfectly sufficient) efficacy. This we have briefly demonstrated above.

Thirdly, this is also confirmed by Hebrews 10:14, "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." What has been left undone? What has been overlooked? Nothing! The suffering of Christ is so perfectly sufficient that the notion that satisfaction by men by way of suffering (either in this life or hereafter in a fabricated purgatory) is necessary, neither can nor may be entertained.

First, satisfaction made for men by way of personal suffering is either necessary or not. If it is necessary, then Christ is not a perfect Savior, which He most certainly is. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25). If such suffering is not necessary, it also is insufficient, for Scripture makes no mention of this at all, and Christ has made atonement with one sacrifice (Hebrews 10:14); therefore nothing can be added to this.

Secondly, the suffering of Christ is so efficacious that it results in the complete removal of sin, complete forgiveness, and complete perfection.

(1) It completely removes all sin: "... He had by Himself purged our sins" (Hebrews 1:3); "How much more shall the blood of Christ ... purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14).

(2) It results in complete forgiveness: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7); "... through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43); "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

(3) It results in the complete restoration of the elect: "... so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19); "... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). If Christ's suffering is so perfect, what remains to be added? What could be fabricated as a supplement to it?

Objection: The suffering of Christ is applied to us through our suffering, and thus it is necessary for application.

Answer: Our suffering would then not be a satisfaction, which is nowhere to be found in Scripture. Application occurs through faith (Romans 5:1). He who maintains that Christ has merited so that we can merit ourselves, should know that Scripture makes no mention of this whatsoever, and thus this is a fabrication and invention of men. What would men have to merit if Christ has merited all that is to be merited? Man, by meriting it again would fully undo His merits. This would be tantamount to accusing God of unrighteousness, who would then demand a twofold punishment for the guilt of sin. The suffering of Christ is so perfect that He not only made satisfaction for sins committed prior to baptism, but also for original and all other actual sins--great and small, from the most extensive sin to the least, and from sins committed from the beginning to the end of life: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7); "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Psalms 103:3); "... having forgiven you all trespasses" (Colossians 2:13). Which sin then remains? For which sin will man make payment? "All sin" is an all-inclusive statement.

Christ's suffering is so perfect, that He not only made satisfaction for eternal but also for temporal guilt and punishment; thus He not only has removed temporal guilt, but also temporal punishment.

First, it is contrary to justice and reason that punishment should remain after removal of guilt. *Sublata causa tollitur effectus*: If the cause is removed, the effects are removed; these two are inseparable. What benefit would be derived from deliverance of guilt if the punishment remains? If a field commander forgave a soldier his guilt, and then hanged him, what good did this forgiveness do him? Such a view makes a mockery of the satisfaction of Christ, for then He would have made satisfaction for guilt without purpose.

Secondly, Christ would then not be a perfect Savior, for there would be something for which He would not have made satisfaction.

Thirdly, it is contrary to the justice and mercy of God to punish after guilt has been removed, and this would be equivalent to punishing a perfect person who was not deserving of this.

Fourthly, Scripture states very clearly that punishment ceases upon forgiveness of guilt. "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (Matthew 9:2; Matthew 9:5-6). Here we see that the two are inseparable. To forgive sin is to say, "arise." Upon removal of sin, the punishment is removed. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses,

your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6:14); "... forgiving one another" (Ephesians 4:32). Suppose one were to acquit someone of guilt, while at the same time taking vengeance upon this person, retaliating for the evil committed. Would this be considered forgiveness? Who would not despise such a forgiveness? Therefore when God forgives sin He also removes punishment. In making satisfaction for the guilt of sin, Christ has also made satisfaction for the punishment of sin.

Objection: A murderer, converted in jail, has the forgiveness of sin, but is punished with death. Thus, the punishment remains even if guilt has been forgiven.

Answer: As far as God is concerned this is not a punishment, that is, for the making satisfaction for sin, but rather as far as men are concerned who must act according to established law. Various objections are made to this truth which need to be answered.

Objection #1: "Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions" (Psalms 99:8). Behold, there was forgiveness, while yet vengeance was taken of the inventions of Moses and Aaron.

Answer: The reference concerning forgiveness and punishment here does not relate to Moses and Aaron. The word "their" refers to the people of Israel. In this psalm Moses and Aaron are presented as priests and intercessors (vs. 6). God gave testimony concerning them that they had kept His ordinances (verse 7). They did not pray here for the forgiveness of their own sins, but God here indicates the efficacy of their intercession for Israel, as He had threatened several times to destroy Israel due to its wickedness (cf. Exodus 30:10). The answer was a fruit upon their prayer. To forgive was not to destroy Israel (as God had threatened to do), but to preserve them as His people. To nevertheless take vengeance was to visit them with plagues, not holding them entirely guiltless. God thus revealed His righteousness by causing many tribulations to come upon that people, in the majority of whom God found no pleasure. Thus, the reference here is not to the forgiveness of guilt while maintaining punishment, but to the degree in which punishment was meted out.

Additional Objection: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee ... the Lord also hath put away thy sin" (2 Samuel 12:11; 2 Samuel 12:13). Here is an example of sin being forgiven while yet raising up evil.

Answer: This evil was not a punishment, but a chastisement.

Objection #2: "... and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh" (Colossians 1:24). Behold, here we have that which is left behind of the afflictions of Christ. Thus, Christ did not satisfy for these, but left them for others. Paul suffered and fulfilled these for the benefit of the congregation.

Answer: (1) Christ has left nothing undone, but has completely finished everything as is evident from John 17:4 and John 19:30.

(2) The "afflictions of Christ" do not refer to Christ's suffering, but to the afflictions Paul had to endure as a result of preaching and confessing Christ, here referred to as the cross of Christ (Php 3:18). Paul never used the word "affliction" to refer to the suffering of Christ.

(3) The residual effects of the afflictions of Christ do not constitute a suffering of the same sort, as they are not atoning in nature. Rather, these are the tribulations which Christ had foretold would come upon them for His Name's sake, and would remain the portion of the church. Paul "filled them up," that is, he bore them on behalf of the congregation. He did not do this to make satisfaction on her behalf, for if there were something remaining for which satisfaction was to be made, then he and each member of the church would have had to do so for himself. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" (Psalms 49:7). However, in this respect nothing had been left undone. Paul, however, suffered for the congregation in order to establish them in the truth by his steadfastness during suffering, and to exhort them also to follow his example to endure all suffering for Christ's sake. "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear" (Php 1:14).

Objection #3: "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor" (Daniel 4:27).

Answer: (1) This text does not speak of suffering, and therefore is not applicable here.

(2) The reference here is to an unbelieving heathen, while the point in question relates to the temporal punishments inflicted upon believers.

(3) It is stated here that sins must be broken off, that is, they must be refrained from, and opposite virtues are to be practiced. This is therefore an exhortation to repentance rather than to pay for sin and thus satisfy for them. It thus remains certain that the suffering of Christ is efficacious, not only for the payment of guilt but also for eternal and temporal punishments. The Extent of Christ's Satisfaction: Particular or Limited

We now must consider the third aspect of Christ's suffering: the limitation of the satisfaction of Christ for the elect only. Here we must do battle against Roman Catholics, Arminians, and Amyraldians. The question is not whether all men will be saved, nor whether Christ's death could have been efficient for all if He had so willed it. The question is also not whether Christ became substitute for all men, taking upon Him all their original and actual sins and thus satisfying the justice of God for them all, thereby bringing them all into a reconciled state, granting them the right and possession of eternal felicity.

Rather, the question is: (1) Whether Christ by His suffering and death has atoned for original sin, and thus has brought the entire human race into a reconciled state.

(2) Whether Christ made satisfaction for original sin and for all actual sin committed prior to baptism, which is the view of the Roman Catholics.

(3) Whether it might be proposed that Christ had the salvation of men in view, to make them partakers of it -- His objective being only to satisfy the justice of God in order to enable God to transact with men concerning their salvation in a manner pleasing to Him. This would then either be by way of a new covenant of works, or by grace, replacing the law with faith, so that Christ would achieve His goal even if not one person were saved. Christ would thus have died for everyone, that is, for the entire human race, and would have merited restoration in the state of grace, thus acquitting them from guilt and punishment due to original sin. This means that Christ's death would be sufficient for this, not only due to its inherent efficacy, but also due to it being

sufficient indeed. Christ would thus have merited salvation, but He would not have applied all of it. Since God has determined that faith, conversion, and good works are to be the cause of man's salvation, and since man has the power to fulfil these conditions but does not do so, salvation is not applied to all men. Such are the sentiments of the Arminians.

(4) Whether Christ has died for all men upon condition of faith and repentance; and since man is unable to fulfil these conditions, God by a different decree has determined to grant faith and conversion to some and thus save them through Christ. These are the sentiments of the Amyraldians. Such is the variety of sentiments and therefore we have presented them individually.

We maintain, however, that Christ, in conformity to His Father's and His own objective, has become the Substitute only of some -- the elect, and not for others. He has truly taken upon Himself as Surety all their sins (original as well as actual) which have been committed from the beginning to the end of their lives, and by His suffering has made satisfaction for both temporal and eternal guilt and punishment. He has so perfectly delivered all the elect, and them only (to the exclusion of all others), granting them in actuality the right and possession of eternal felicity, as if they themselves had perfectly satisfied the justice of God for their sins and had perfectly fulfilled all righteousness. Thus, Christ will most certainly apply to them the salvation which He has merited only for them.

We therefore reject the first propositions mentioned above as errors which reverse the very nature of the work of redemption. However, that which is comprehended in the last paragraph above we embrace as divine truth, deeming it to be full of comfort and to the glory of God. This is evidenced by the following considerations:

First, Christ has suffered as Surety, becoming the Substitute for those for whom He suffered, taking upon Himself all their sins; that is, original sin and the actual sins committed from the beginning to the very end of their lives. Thus, by His suffering and death, He satisfied the righteousness of God on their behalf, removed all temporal and eternal guilt and punishment, merited eternal life for them, and made them heirs of eternal salvation. The others do not perceive it as such; otherwise they would not promote universal redemption. They understand the suffering of Christ to have an entirely different meaning, one being of this opinion, and the other having that opinion, as we have expressed in the questions previously proposed. If, however, the suffering of Christ is to be understood in the manner we have just stated, others will readily have to admit that Christ did not make satisfaction for all men. It is, however, in harmony with divine truth that Christ's satisfaction is such. This we have clearly and lucidly demonstrated a bit earlier in this chapter. This being infallibly true, it follows that Christ did not make satisfaction and die for all men. All men, never having been in such a state of felicity, will not attain to it. They will not all be saved, but many will suffer eternal damnation, which could not be true if all guilt and punishment temporally and eternally had been atoned for and if they had been made heirs of eternal salvation by the meritorious suffering of Christ. God is just and will neither punish where guilt is absent nor refuse what has been merited.

Secondly, Christ's high-priestly office consists of sacrifice and prayer. These two elements are inseparable. It was not sufficient for the High Priest to sacrifice only, but he had to proceed into the sanctuary, and he could only enter this sanctuary with the blood of the sacrifice. This is true for the entire priestly ministry in the Old Testament, and can also clearly be observed in the high-priestly

ministry of Christ (cf. Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:12; 1 John 2:1-2; chapter 21 above). From this we conclude that for those whom Christ is High Priest He performs the two parts of this office: sacrifice and prayer. It is now evident that Christ excludes many -- yes, the majority of men -- from His intercession, limiting it to some only. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me" (John 17:9). Consequently, His sacrifice, suffering, and death are not for all men, but are limited to those whom the Father has given Him, to the exclusion of all others in the world.

Evasive Argument: There is a twofold intercession of Christ, one being general and the other particular. This general intercession is for all men and is based upon the universal satisfaction whereby Christ prays for transgressors and for those who have crucified Him. "He ... made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12); "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). His particular intercession is for believers only.

Answer: (1) It is not true that there is a twofold intercession, for then there would also have to be a twofold sacrifice, one for everyone, and another for those given by the Father. There is but one sacrifice (Hebrews 10:14), and since there is but one sacrifice, there is also but one intercession.

(2) Christ's prayer is always heard and cannot be rejected. "And I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John 11:42). His prayer for transgressors is meant for those who were transgressors, which is true for all the elect, but this is not true for all who are transgressors. He prayed for those who crucified Him, to whom He, who is always heard, also granted salvation; such was true for the murderer. It thus remains certain that if Christ limits His intercession to the one and not the other, His suffering and death are likewise limited.

Thirdly, it is also evident from the fact that the merits of Christ and their application are inseparable. It is impossible that Christ would not make those partakers of salvation for whom He had merited it, for:

(1) It was the entire objective of both the Father and Christ to bring them to salvation. "For it became Him -- in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10); "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing" (John 6:39); "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19); "Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us" (Titus 2:14); "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins ... that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Thus, the objective is obvious. Since God and Christ cannot be kept from accomplishing their objective, it is therefore certain that salvation is also applied to those for whom it is merited.

(2) The application and meriting of salvation belong together. "I lay down My life for the sheep, and I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:15; John 10:28); "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:19); "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10). Notice how inseparably the meriting and application of salvation are joined together.

Evasive Argument #1: Christ's objective was only to remove the obstacle from God's side in order to enable Him to transact with men.

Answer: (1) We adamantly deny this, and the contrary has been proven earlier.

(2) The removal of the obstacle from God's side is neither a meriting of salvation for man nor is it the application and impartation of salvation.

Evasive Argument #2: All the abovementioned texts refer to the application of what has been merited upon condition of faith.

Answer: This is not true. Believers do not obtain salvation because they believe, but because Christ has merited it for them. He applies it to them through the instrumentality of faith. Faith is a fruit of the suffering of Christ; it is not the cause of Christ's suffering for them. Christ is the cause of all blessings (Ephesians 1:3), as well as of faith. He is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). Since the benefits of Christ are not applied to all men -- yes, are not even offered to most men [Note: Most men never have an opportunity to hear the gospel.--Ed.] -- but are only applied to those for whom He has merited them, it follows that Christ has not died for all men, but only for those who were given to Him.

Fourthly, Scripture expressly limits the death and merits of Christ to some:

(1) "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). All men, however, are not the people of Christ. "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19); "I know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:14); "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9) -- and thus not all kindreds, tongues, peoples, and nations.

(2) "I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:26); however, all men are not Jesus' sheep. "But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep" (John 10:26).

(3) "Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:51-52). All men are not God's children, however, for many are children of Belial, cursed children.

(4) "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). All men do not belong to His church. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

(5) "I pray ... for them which Thou hast given Me" (John 17:9). However, all have not been given to Christ, for those who are given to Him are contrasted with the world. He prayed not for the world, but for those who were given to Him.

Evasive Argument #1: These texts make mention of application, and it is true that this does not occur to all; however, they make no mention of the meriting of salvation.

Answer: 1) As we have stated above, Scripture knows of no such distinction. 2) These texts clearly also make mention of the meriting of salvation. They make reference to "laying down His life," "dying," and "giving Himself."

Evasive Argument #2: It is not stated that it is only for them. These texts include them, but do not exclude others. Answer: All others are excluded, as we have demonstrated with each text by way of contrast.

Objections Answered Relative to the Word "All"

Objection #1: Scripture states that Christ has died for all. For example: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18).

Answer: The limitation is clearly stated in the text, since it refers to all who have been made partakers of this justification unto life. However, all do not become partakers of the justification unto life, but only the elect. Thus, "all" must not be understood as referring to all men, but only to the elect. Adam is designated as the source of the misery of all who are comprehended in him as all men were comprehended in him, and have fallen in him. In contrast, Christ is presented as the cause of grace for all who are in Him, and all they -- and only they -- are in Him; that is, all who become partakers of justification unto life.

Additional Objection: "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14b-15).

Answer: It is not stated as "all men." The word "all" refers to all those of whom is spoken here. The reference is clearly to all who have died to sin, and who are alive through regeneration. All men have not died to sin, however, and are not partakers of spiritual life. Christ therefore did not die for all men, but for all who, through Christ's death, have died to sin and by virtue of His resurrection have received spiritual life. They are exhorted to manifest this death and this life to the honor of Christ.

Additional Objection: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Answer: (1) The text says the opposite of what many have in view here, for it is certain that all men are not made alive in Christ, nor will be made alive in Him. Mention is here made of all who are made alive in Christ, to the exclusion of all others. The text, however, does not speak of Christ's satisfaction, but of the elect being made alive. Here two heads, Adam and Christ, are contrasted, along with the consequences of this. Adam brought death upon all who are in him, and Christ has given life unto all who are in Him.

(2) He speaks of all those to whom he writes, generally addressing them with the pronouns "we" and "our." These are "the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia" (2 Corinthians 1:11). This therefore does not pertain to all men in the world, but is limited to those mentioned.

Additional Objection: "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32).

Answer: This text speaks of the hardening and the conversion of the Jews, which is indicated throughout the entire chapter. Thus, this text neither speaks of the satisfaction of Christ, nor of all men upon the face of the earth.

Additional Objection: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who

gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:4-6).

Answer: The text itself indicates that the word "all" does not refer to all men, head for head, but refers only to the elect from all nations, and all social ranks.

(1) It is impossible to pray for every man, head for head, for one need not pray for someone who has sinned against the Holy Ghost (1 John 5:16), knowing that God will not be merciful to them. Christ did not pray for all (John 17:9), nor did Paul (cf. 2 Timothy 4:14; Galatians 5:12).

(2) The mention of kings and those who are placed in authority confirms that "all" means "various" (cf. Matthew 4:23; Luke 11:42; Ephesians 1:3; 1 Corinthians 10:25). It is the apostle's wish that as far as someone's salvation is concerned we ought not to entertain any prejudice.

(3) The text does say that God will have all men to be saved. If, however, all men are to be understood by this, then all of necessity should also be saved, for no one can resist God's will as He always accomplishes it and no one is able to resist His hand. If one maintains that God wills when men are willing, we reply that this is not written anywhere, for salvation does not originate in the exercise of man's will. God knew indeed that only a small minority would be willing, and thus it is not possible that He willed the salvation of all.

(4) The apostle joins together salvation and the knowledge of the truth, and experience teaches that God is not willing that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth, for it is not revealed to all.

(5) Christ gave Himself as a ransom antilutron, that is, to put Himself in the place of another, to pay the debt, to bear the punishment, to set others free, and to make them partakers of this freedom. Christ, however, does not do this for all men, but only for those who believe in Him. From this it is evident that the word "all" does not refer to all men, head for head, but only to believers from every nation and every social rank.

Objections Answered Relative to the Use of "World" in Scripture

Objection #2: To contradict the truth presented above, also such texts are produced in which Christ is said to have suffered for the world. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Answer: It is not stated here that Christ died for the world nor that God has loved all men in the world, but that He loved the world. Love for the world is the same as love for humanity (cf. Titus 3:4). He did not manifest His love to the angels who sinned, but to the human race, so that love for the world is not love for every single person in the world, but a love for men in general. God has manifested this love in the giving of His Son, which, however, is not to the benefit of all, it being restricted to believers only. This does not imply that the Son would only remove the obstacle from God's side and thus translate the entire human race into a state of reconciliation without making them partakers of salvation. Rather Christ delivers believers from condemnation and gives them eternal life (John 3:17). It is stated "to save the world." This does not only imply a meriting of salvation -- which those who use this text for rebuttal wish to maintain -- but also its application and impartation. It is undeniably true, however, that this does not occur with every single person, but is only true for believers, as is stated in the text. Therefore the word "world" refers to the

human race in general, and not to each person in particular. There also is no mention of the meriting of salvation, but of the application and impartation of eternal salvation. Only believers are partakers of this and no one else.

Additional Objection: "... which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

Answer: I repeat that the word "world" refers to the human race. This is in contrast to the fallen angels, as Scripture itself makes this contradistinction, albeit in a different context. "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16). Whatever is said of the world in general may not be applied to every individual person. The first world perished in the flood (Luke 17:33). This is not applicable to every person, for Noah and his family remained alive. This is frequently to be observed in other texts of Scripture as well; as is in this text, for Christ gives life to the world, according to Luke 17:33. He does not, however, give spiritual life to every person but only to His elect. It should be very clear that the reference here is not to the meriting of salvation, but to the application of the merits of Christ. No one will propose that this is true for all men, for experience demonstrates the contrary.

Additional Objection: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Answer: The "world" refers to the human race. From a general truth one may not make a deduction for each individual situation, for then we would have to reason as follows: The first world perished, the flood eliminated all men, and thus also Noah and his family. The world has not known Christ (John 1:10) and thus this would also be true for believers. The world hates Christ (John 7:7), and if this excludes no one, this would also be true for the converted who, however, love Christ. The old serpent deceives the entire world (Revelation 12:9) and thus also the elect. The whole world lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19) and thus also the saints without exception, for it is stated to be true for the whole world. Who cannot perceive that these deductions are flawed? Thus we can see that whatever is said of the world in general is not applicable to every individual person. Sometimes evil is pronounced upon the world, which is only applicable to those who are evil; at times something good is said of the world, which is applicable to another group. Therefore, when the word "world" is used, one may not conclude from this word that this is true for every person, but from the context it must be deduced who are to be understood. The text here conveys that "world" must be understood of those who are reconciled with God, whose trespasses are not imputed to them. It is clear that the wrath of God abides upon the disobedient, indicating that this wrath was never removed, that all men are not in a state wherein their sins are forgiven, not being imputed to them -- which is to be blessed indeed (Psalms 32:1-2). Thus, it is obvious that the word "world" is not inclusive of every person without exception, but only refers to those whose transgressions have not been imputed to them. This text demonstrates at once that "reconciliation" and "not imputing transgressions" are parallel concepts. Since all do not experience the application of salvation, all also do not experience reconciliation.

Additional Objection: "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Answer: (1) One may no less make the deduction that the phrase, "the whole world," is applicable to every individual person than we may from the word "world," for of the first world it is written that

the flood destroyed all its inhabitants (Luke 17:27). It is also written that the devil deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9), and that the whole world lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19).

(2) The words “not ... only, but” indicate that there is a contrast between Jews (which John and the believers of that nation were), and Gentiles, who by way of contrast are referred to as world, not only here but also in Romans 11:12; Romans 11:15. As one may not conclude that the word “world,” being a general reference to the human race, refers to every individual person, one may also not do so in this contrast. Sometimes this refers to the ungodly, and at other times to the godly in a given nation, which is evident from Romans 11:12; Romans 11:15, “Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world ... for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world ...” Not every Gentile will be the recipient of the spiritual riches of Christ as a result of the fall of the Jews, nor will every Gentile without exception receive reconciliation, but only the converted, that is, the believers among the heathen. Everyone will have to admit to this. If therefore it is written that Christ is the propitiation of the sins of the whole world, one cannot understand this to refer to every individual person, but only to believers among the Gentiles.

(3) John here joins the two elements of Christ’s high priestly office: He is an Advocate and a propitiation. We have demonstrated above that these two cannot be separated, and that for those for whom He is the one, He is also the other. Since Christ does not intercede for the reprobate world (John 17:9), He is also not the propitiation for them, but only for the elect world which receives reconciliation by virtue of the fall of the Jews. It is thus evident that Christ did not die for each individual person in the world.

Texts Examined Which Seem to Imply that Christ has Redeemed All Men

Objection #3: As a rebuttal against the truth presented above, men produce those texts in which it is stated that Christ has also sanctified and purchased ungodly men, such as in Hebrews 10:29, “who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace.”

Answer: This text does not speak of Christ’s death for all men, for all men do not come to that state which is described here. Even if Christ were to have died for some ungodly men (which is not the case), one could not yet conclude that Christ died for all the ungodly. Mention is not made here of reconciliation by the death of Christ. The word “sanctified” refers to an actual state, so the reference here would be to application and not to the meriting of salvation, which is the point of contention. The phrase, “to be sanctified,” does not refer here to a change of heart by regeneration, but to a separation from the common populace by virtue of being called to the fellowship of the church. The verb, “to sanctify,” frequently makes reference to being set apart for a holy purpose, as is stated concerning all ceremonial objects and the people of Israel. “For thou art an holy people ... the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people” (Deuteronomy 7:6). Thus, to sanctify means “to set apart”; “... the accomplishment of the days of purification” (Acts 21:26). We deny emphatically that “to sanctify” here refers to a holy state of the heart, but maintain that it refers to being set apart from the general populace in order to be included in the fellowship of the church. True saints cannot fall away, which we will prove at the appropriate place. If one were to suggest that this sanctification occurred by virtue of the death of Christ, I reply that by virtue of His death Christ has received power over everything in heaven and upon earth, that He might use it to bring about the salvation of the elect. Thus, the death of

Christ also has objectives other than reconciliation only.

Additional Objection: "... even denying the Lord that bought them" (2 Peter 2:1). Here we perceive that even deniers of the truth are bought by the Lord Jesus.

Answer: This text does not speak of all men, for all do not come into such a situation. The word "buy" does not afford any proof that there is a universal redemption by virtue of Christ's death, for one may buy things for various purposes. One buys vessels for contemptible purposes and also to be used as ornaments. One can buy slaves in order to set them free or to perform the most menial task. One can also buy donkeys to bear burdens. In like manner, these false prophets were bought by the Lord, who here is not called Kurios, that is, Lord or Master, but despotes, that is, Master of the house. They were called to perform a task in His house, that is, to be teachers in His church, which was an office they abused and thus became false prophets. By virtue of His death the Lord Jesus has received a claim upon everything and has been appointed heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2). The Lord has subdued all things under His feet (1 Corinthians 15:28) and at His Name all knees must bow (Php 2:10). Thus, also these teachers were under His jurisdiction. He bought them in order to use them to the benefit of the elect, buying them, however, as slaves or donkeys, but not to be His children.

Rebuttal to the Argument that All Men are Commanded to Believe in Christ, and thus Christ Died for All

Objection #4: In an effort to rebut the truth presented above, one will also use this syllogism: Whatever one is obligated to believe is true. Since all men are obligated to believe that Christ died for them, such is of necessity true.

Answer: The first proposition is correct, for faith has nothing but truth as its object; however, the second proposition is nothing but untruth, for:

(1) The gospel is neither proclaimed to the majority of men, nor have they ever heard a word about Christ, and therefore they are not guilty of the sin of not believing in Christ.

(2) All who are called are not obligated to believe that Christ has died for them. The contrary is true. They must believe that as long as they remain unconverted, they are outside of Christ.

(3) It is true, however, that all who are called must receive Christ by faith, and refusing to do so, they will make their condemnation all the heavier. It is one thing to believe in Christ, that is, receive Christ unto justification and sanctification, and another thing to believe that Christ is my Savior and has died for me. To this end one must perceive the evidences of truly having received Christ, and of being truly converted. The Second Element of Christ's Humiliation: His Active Obedience

Thus far we have discussed the first aspect of Christ's humiliation, being the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ whereby He completely satisfied for the sins of the elect. The second aspect of His humiliation consists of subjecting Himself under the law. This raises the following question: Is the active and actual obedience of Christ, that is, His subjection under the law and the perfect accomplishment thereof, imputed to the elect unto justification and salvation? We answer in the affirmative. The active obedience of Christ in subjecting Himself under, and fulfilling, the law is not only a necessary requisite for Him who would be Mediator (all of which is true for Christ), but this active righteousness of Christ is a part of His satisfaction for His own. As He delivered them from

all guilt and punishment by His passion, by His active obedience, fulfilling the law on their behalf, He has also merited a right unto eternal life for them. These two aspects coalesce in Christ and neither may nor can be separated from each other. Christ has merited salvation atoningly and has made atonement meritoriously. Likewise the elect, in being delivered from guilt and punishment, receive a right to eternal life, and in receiving that right are delivered from guilt and punishment. Nevertheless these two aspects of His humiliation -- the atonement for guilt and punishment, and the meriting of eternal life -- are not identical, but essentially differ from each other. The active and passive obedience of Christ are equally beneficial to the elect. This is first of all evident from the necessity that the Surety had to subject Himself to the law on behalf of sinners to perfectly fulfil the law on their behalf. This has been demonstrated previously. Since this was required of the Surety, Christ has performed it in order to perfectly execute His Suretyship.

Secondly, we read in Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's disobedience (that is, Adam's) many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (that is, Christ) shall many be made righteous." The law demands perfect conformity to itself. A man's transgression of the law results in nonconformity to the law, even if by the bearing of punishment he is free from guilt. One can only be conformed to the law by fulfilling its demands -- by perfect internal and external holiness. The law does not demand either punishment or holiness, but both. Therefore by removal of guilt the Surety cannot make anyone righteous unless the law has also actually been fulfilled. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous" (1 John 3:7). Since Christ makes His elect righteous, He of necessity must subject Himself to the law on their behalf, fulfilling it in obedience. Thus, by His obedience He makes His elect righteous.

Thirdly, we read in Romans 8:3-4, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." The law was weak, not in and of itself since it is and remains a perfect rule, but due to sin. The law was weak, not to sentence the transgressor to punishment, which it is always authorized to do, but to justify the sinner and to declare him an heir of eternal life, which had been promised upon perfect obedience. "The man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Romans 10:5). The demand of the law was not to bear punishment upon transgression, but obedience to it. Whereas Christ fulfilled the demand of the law for us, He did not do so by the suffering by which He made satisfaction for the threat of the law, but by subjecting Himself to the law, performing it on behalf of God's children. This is stated by the apostle in Galatians 4:4, "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law."

Fourthly, Christ's righteousness is imputed to His elect and He clothes them with it; thus in Him they are perfect and are the righteousness of God. Observe this in the following texts: "But now the righteousness of God without the law (that is, the righteousness of Christ) is manifested, being witnessed (that is, being approved of) by the law and the prophets" (Romans 3:21); "... not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Php 3:9); "And ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10); "... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21); "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10). Suffering is not righteousness. Christ's suffering was not His righteousness (that is, when considering the definition of suffering), but His righteousness is His perfect fulfillment and performance of the law. If therefore Christ's righteousness is imputed to us and we are the righteousness of God in Him, then His being

subject to and His performance of the law is imputed to us.

Objection #1: Christ was obligated to be subject to and perform the law on His own behalf, since He, according to His human nature, was a rational creature. Whatever one is personally obligated to do cannot be done on behalf of another. Therefore the righteousness of Christ cannot be our righteousness.

Answer: (1) Whatever Christ was, He was on behalf of His elect. If it had not been on behalf of His elect, He would not have become man. He has become man on behalf of His elect: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given" (Isaiah 9:6). Consequently all was to the benefit of His children; that is, whatever He was, whatever He suffered, and whatever He performed.

(2) Every human person is subject to the law by and for himself, and is obligated to fulfill it. However, Christ's personhood is not human but divine, and thus He was not subject to the law on His own behalf; He was above the law. As Surety, however, this divine Person, which was above the law, subjected Himself under the law according to His human nature, and thus His righteousness is ours.

Objection #2: Salvation has been merited by Christ's suffering (1 Peter 3:18). Therefore He did not merit the right to eternal life for His elect by His active obedience.

Answer: (1) We have stated above that these two cannot be separated from each other, and that both are essential. When the one aspect is mentioned, the other is not excluded but included.

(2) "To bring to God" is equivalent to being "reconciled with God."

Objection #3: If Christ has fulfilled the law for His elect, they are relieved from the obligation to obey the law, as well as of the bearing of punishment. Thus, their transgressions can no longer be viewed as sin.

Answer: (1) It is true that they are not obligated to the law as a condition of the covenant of works in order to thus obtain a right to eternal life. There is another relationship and another purpose which obliges them to obey the law of love. Obedience to the law is their life, joy, and felicity. Even if they were not obligated to it, it would be their desire; their whole heart would yearn to keep the law, for the demand of the law is perfect love.

(2) Their transgressions must still be viewed as sin, and as such are worthy of eternal death. However, satisfaction has already been made for them by Christ.

We have thus considered the humiliation of Christ from every perspective.

Exhortation to Meditate Believingly upon, and to Make Improvement of the Suffering of Christ As necessary as it is to know the truth and perfection of Christ's satisfaction in the state of His humiliation, as well as its restriction to God's children only, so beneficial and soul-stirring it is also to make application of it by faith. To consider this truth by way of holy meditation, to persevere in obtaining a proper frame of heart, and to grow by virtue of this frame, are exercises which are hidden for many, even for believers. Truly if a person had more faith to clearly perceive these truths and were to be more occupied with a quiet and sweet meditation upon the suffering of Christ, the severity of that suffering would be better perceived. He would have a deeper insight into

the abominable nature of sin and the sublime nature of God's righteousness. He would rejoice more in the truth and perfection of the satisfaction accomplished by that suffering. He would love Christ more, hate sin more, have a heart more steadfast in the practice of godliness, and proceed with more courage, comfort, and peace. Therefore actively and increasingly engage yourselves in these considerations.

(1) This is even the work of angels, who for this reason were positioned with their faces towards the mercy seat in the temple. Of them Peter says, "... which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:12). If angels do this and find felicity in so doing, we ought to do so all the more.

(2) Such observance was depicted in the erection of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, the observance of which healed those who were bitten by the serpents. This practice has also been prophesied. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him" (Zechariah 12:10). Such examples and prophecies which have preceded us ought to readily stir us up to be engaged in this practice.

(3) This has been the practice of the godly. The bride of Christ says, "A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts" (Song of Solomon 1:13). What else is this bundle of myrrh but the suffering of Christ, which is bitter but wholesome, protects against corruption, refreshes, strengthens, and is of a sweet savor? The bride not only carried this by day between her breasts as an ornamental bouquet, but even by night it lay upon her heart. In meditating upon this, she would fall asleep; and upon awaking, she would still be occupied with this. The prophets were likewise engaged, "searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:11). Paul frequently engaged in such meditation. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Php 3:10). The frequency with which the godly have occupied themselves with this (not only at the beginning of the New Testament dispensation but also since the Reformation), is confirmed by their writings. If they fared so well in doing so, if it was a blessed practice which became increasingly sweet and precious, how this ought to stir us up to exercise ourselves in such meditations, for this sweetness will not be tasted without some diligence.

(4) It is a most advantageous exercise. By way of reading and hearing one will readily understand and retain the history itself, but the efficacy and warmth of this history will only be experienced by much meditation, and by applying it. In doing so we will, first of all, extract the most excellent instruction: (1) Only then will one truly learn the horrendous nature of sin. Then one will neither focus on sinful deeds alone, nor view sin from a natural perspective, but everyone will perceive the abominableness, filthiness, and hatefulness to be found in every sin, viewing it as it is: an act of denial of God, contempt towards God, and desertion of God. Thus man, due to his sinfulness, will abhor himself and be ashamed that he is such a horrible, hateful, and intolerable creature.

(2) You will thus perceive the essential holiness of God's justice, who can only forgive sin by punishing it fully in the Surety. In doing so you will not only perceive that you cannot entertain a quiet hope upon your supplication for forgiveness -- as if that might be acceptable with God (an argument by which thousands deceive themselves, and subsequently perish) -- but out of love for the justice of God you will desire to be saved only on the basis of the satisfaction of divine justice.

(3) You will thus perceive the infinity and unsearchableness of God's love, mercy, wisdom, and power, so that in the satisfaction of Christ you will detect much more than deliverance from guilt and punishment, but the soul will find wonderful delight in adoring the perfections of God and will be sweetly stirred up in love, praise, and thanksgiving.

Secondly, meditation upon Christ's suffering will yield strong consolations: (1) You will perceive the perfect satisfaction of divine justice and how perfect the sinner is before God in Christ in spite of the fact that he remains sinful in himself.

(2) You will perceive how certainly and truly salvation has been merited, how certainly a beneficiary of this suffering is appointed an heir of eternal life, and how infallibly sure it is that he will become a partaker of it.

(3) In meditating upon His suffering you will find peace of conscience in God and free access to the Father.

(4) When considering His passion, all the suffering of this life becomes light and one perceives that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). Thus, the soul may find eternal comfort in all this.

Thirdly, meditation upon Christ's suffering will yield heavenly instruction and direction:

(1) Here is an example of how we must die to the world and sin. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

(2) It yields the most powerful motives to mortify sin and live holily. To perceive that Jesus underwent such bitter suffering out of love for us will quicken our love for Him, causing us to hate and flee sin and to walk in a manner pleasing to Him.

(3) Yes, you will become aware that meditation upon His sufferings will presently yield strength and fortitude to mortify sin. Thus, here we have the fountain of true spiritual life, of true progress, and of the exercise of virtue, all of which will have the proper form and nature of spirituality.

(4) Such meditation will strengthen us in a wonderful way, if and when Christ calls us to suffer and to be martyrs for His Name and cause. Therefore, you who bear the name of Christian and desire to be true Christians indeed, engage frequently in meditating upon the humiliation of Christ, for there is much more to be found in it than you are aware of.

Come, children of God, meditate upon the suffering Jesus. Do not do so by viewing it as merely a history, nor as the suffering of a martyr, but as the suffering of your Surety who took your place and paid for your sins.

First, meditate attentively upon the Person who suffered. He was not a wicked, insignificant, and contemptible man, nor merely a martyr whose death is precious in God's sight and is held in great esteem by the godly.

(1) Rather, this person is God and man, who is over all, God blessed forever, very God, and the Lord of glory. He, in order that He would be able to suffer and die, assumed our human nature from a human being within the context of His Personhood, and became like unto us, sin excepted.

This is a miracle in the highest sense of the word, exceeding the creation of heaven and earth. Pause and reflect upon this until the greatness and magnificence of this Person may become evident to your heart, and you in all humility acknowledge Him as such. Then adoration will ravish your soul and you will exclaim, "Has such a Person suffered and made atonement?"

(2) Consider Him also in His relationship towards you, and you in your relationship towards Him. Believers, do you not know Him? He it is who appeared to you when you were dead, blind, and immersed in sin and darkness. He illuminated you with His light, made you alive, and still continually draws you to Himself, causing you to look, long, cry out, and wait for Him. He it is who supports you as you stumble along, who secretly supports you in your crossbearing, gives you courage, strengthens you, and gives you hope. He it is who at times revealed Himself to you, who at times kissed you with the kisses of His mouth, and caused you to feel His love. He it is who has said to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He it is towards whom all your desire is, your Lord, your Head, your Bridegroom. It is He who out of love -- I repeat, out of love -- took your place as Surety, who took all your sins from you and took them upon Himself, taking them upon His account. He has received the stripes which you deserved, and the chastisement of your peace was upon Him. Reflect upon this and may your love be stirred up in the acknowledgement of His love for you. Hear your Beloved as it were speak to you, "My friend, I love you so dearly. Consider the evidence of My love. I suffered to make atonement for your sins. This suffering which is so bitter and so heavy a burden to bear caused Me to be covered with blood from head to toe; as well as the fact that I was so distressed within due to God's wrath pressing me down -- all of this I suffered willingly. I would rather suffer all this thousands of times than to see you go lost and tolerate the thought that you would not be with Me in eternal glory." Would this not soften your heart and generate love in return? Would this not cause you to melt sweetly in tears of love? The acknowledgement that Jesus is so lofty a Person, who yet is so near to you and who does all this out of love for you, will stir within and render your meditation upon the suffering of Christ efficacious. Do not remain in your unbelief, nor give in to it, for this will render your meditation fruitless. Lift yourself up in faith and behold the suffering Jesus making atonement from such a perspective. It will certainly cause you to rejoice and cause your heart to be warm with love.

Secondly, who are you for whom Christ has suffered all this? In yourself you are nothing but sin within and without, and therefore your nature is so hateful, abominable, intolerable, and damnable. What incompatibility there is between Jesus and you! Sink away in your wretched condition and acknowledge yourself to be unworthy that anyone, let alone God and the Son of God would look after you and think upon you. Above all, consider that everything is to be found in you which would cause the Lord Jesus to be repulsed by you and refrain from doing good to you. Focus on your wretched condition until you perceive yourself to be entirely as we have just described you to be, and then betake yourself in faith to the Lord Jesus. Be humbled, but be not unbelieving, by this view which passes all understanding; namely, that Jesus should love you, and that He would love you to such an extent that out of love for you He would suffer and die. Believe, however, that such is the case, and confess, "This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvelous in my eyes."

Yes, proceed further, and consider the small number of men for whom the Lord Jesus has become Surety, in comparison to the great multitude of men whom He neither loves nor looks upon, and for whom He was not willing to be a Surety. Then consider, "Why me? Why me in comparison to others -- who am the most despicable, evil, foolish and intolerable sinner of them all? Why does

the Lord love me out of so many thousands? Why do I belong to those few, to the elect? Why is Jesus my Surety? Why does Jesus love me with an everlasting love, considering that so many millions go to hell? Why, why do I belong to the favored ones who are led to heaven?" This is too great, too high for me! Here I must stand still until, in the state of perfection, I shall be able to comprehend more, be more capable of adoration, and be more able to love in return and to give thanks. Since you give evidence of possessing the principal fruits of grace, beware that the greatness of this matter and your own insignificance do not draw you away towards unbelief. This would offend the love of God, and exalt man too highly, as if his loveliness was the primary cause of the love of God. This would turn the entire work of grace upside down and would prevent Him from receiving the praise for His magnificent grace. Therefore, remain steadfast in the faith.

Thirdly, in this frame proceed from the cradle to the cross; focus upon every aspect of suffering particularly and reflect upon them. Christ's suffering has not been described for us in such detail without reason. It should therefore not weary us to consider it from step to step. Each element of His suffering contains something special; each element reveals a particular sin, a particular punishment consistent with this sin, and its removal. This will cause you to perceive the comprehensive nature of His suffering, that your sins are the cause, and that with your sins you have brought this suffering upon Him. There would not have been a need for Jesus' suffering if you had not sinned. Oh, how sweet it is to be sensibly ashamed over our sins as being the cause of Christ's suffering and to say, "Oh dear Jesus, it grieves me that I have been the cause of Thy suffering. Why do I not rather suffer myself? If it were possible, and if I could prevail in it, I could not tolerate that Thou wouldest thus have to suffer for me; I would bear the punishment myself. I can neither endure nor prevail in it, however, and would have to endure it eternally. I therefore acknowledge Thy love and value Thy grief. I truly rejoice that Thou hast taken my place, hast satisfied for my sins, and hast merited eternal life for me. To all eternity I desire to acknowledge this, and to love and thank Thee."

It is remarkable that one is so seldom moved and stirred within about the suffering of Christ. Everyone is conscious of this within himself and complains over the hardness of his heart. Do you ask what the cause of this is? I answer:

(1) In some it is due to ignorance, they having only general thoughts about the fact that Christ died for sin. They are neither acquainted with the dreadfulfulness of sin, nor with the severity of God's wrath, and therefore cannot properly value His suffering.

(2) In some this is due to familiarity, they having heard this so frequently, and therefore inner workings concerning this have disappeared.

(3) In some this is due to a lack of familiarity, as they are not accustomed to focus upon this suffering.

(4) In some this is due to unbelief -- not historical unbelief, but at least unbelief due to lack of application. Since it is not for them, they have neither desire nor interest within their heart to consider this matter, or to make an effort to reflect upon it.

(5) It is due to a lack of spirituality, laziness, and a disparaging of this suffering. Be ashamed of this and be diligent, for the more you engage in such reflection, the easier and sweeter this practice will be to you.

Fourthly, while persevering in this frame, consider the suffering of Christ to your comfort by applying the same as a remedy against guilt, as well as for occasions when you must suffer in likeness to Him.

Believing Reflection upon the Suffering of Christ: A Remedy Against Guilt

(1) Consider it as a remedy against guilt. If the soul finds itself beset with great and small sins, sins against God and against his neighbor, sins against every commandment, sins that press down heavily as a burden too heavy to bear; and if the soul becomes aware that God hides His countenance, that the way of approach to Him is closed, feeling the wrath of God, having a terrified conscience, and being fearful of yet going lost -- then the soul must especially strive not to yield to this ill frame. This would be injurious. Rather, engage yourself in meditating upon the suffering of Christ. Consciously consider the truth of Christ's satisfaction on behalf of the sinner, the perfection of this satisfaction for great, small, and multiple sins -- yes, for all original and actual sins, which have been committed by us from our first moment until the time of our death. Meditate long upon this until you perceive from God's Word that this is truth, and until this may become truth within and you may be fully assured that Christ as Surety has made a perfect satisfaction.

Consider how unspeakably happy a man is for whom Christ has made satisfaction. There is not one sin in him which is not atoned for, and therefore God is the reconciled Father of such a sinner and he most certainly is an heir of eternal life. He will indeed become a partaker of this, be the way along which he is led to it ever so dark and undesirable. Having come to a general conclusion that this is an infallible divine truth, then turn to yourself and consider whether the Lord has wrought grace in the least degree in you. Consider whether your soul has not found, or still finds, itself under conviction of sin, damnation, and impotence; whether the Lord has not given you a different heart than before, so that you now love what you hated before, and hate what you loved before; whether the world and sin cause you sorrow rather than joy; whether a living afar from God now causes you bitter grief, and it would be all your desire to walk in the light of God's countenance in truth, uprightness, obedience, and with singularity of heart. Consider whether you do not know Jesus as Surety, yearning, desiring, praying, and crying out for Him; whether you have not frequently presented yourself to Him, surrendering to Him to be both justified and sanctified; whether you have not frequently received Him as Surety, to be reconciled to God by the ransom of His suffering and death. Consider whether it is now your desire and objective not to live in sin and in the world, but rather a life pleasing to God; and whether the Lord upon your frequent seeking, praying, supplicating, believing, and surrendering yourself to Him has not at times granted peace, quietness, and hope in your soul, or also at times granted you assurance and joy. In considering all this together, this ought not only to cause you to conclude that Christ is your Surety, since such graces are only wrought in those who are partakers of the suffering and death of Christ, but this must also cause you to apply the suffering of Christ. For it is my objective to apply this truth to your soul, so you might view this suffering as atoning for you, as having been suffered in your stead; and that therefore your sins have been fully paid for, God is satisfied with you, and you are designated as a child and heir of God. Unto this end the wrestling of faith is necessary; that is, the actual receiving and true believing until the soul can say in faith, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Then you will properly value the suffering of Christ and glorify the Father and the Son. Therefore be engaged in such reflection and rest not until you can rejoice in it.

Believing Reflection upon the Suffering of Christ: A Comfort when We Must Suffer in Likeness to Him

(2) Reflect upon the suffering of Christ in order that you may be comforted when suffering in likeness to Him. I need not convince you that a similar suffering according to soul and body will be your portion in this world. You are sufficiently aware of this by experience, and perhaps you are currently tasting it. You will frequently have to experience the bitterness of sin, God's displeasure concerning it, the hiding of God's countenance, an unrestrained and troubled conscience, fear for death, distress pertaining to damnation, the assaults of Satan, poverty, contempt and scorn (which will either be your fault or in response to godliness and the name of Christ), and oppression for the sake of the Word, even though you may not perceive it as such. You may possibly also be called to martyrdom and thus seal the truth with your blood. You may also be called to suffer physical pain and sorrow, albeit the one more and the other less -- yes, all manner of Christ's sufferings.

Believers, you may, however, not view this suffering as a manifestation of God's wrath towards you, for Christ has made satisfaction for all guilt and punishment. God is just and does not require punishment for sin twice. The Surety has made satisfaction and therefore you are free. They are not punishments in the true sense of the word nor manifestations of wrath towards the believer. The sting and the curse have been removed from them. They are fatherly chastisements upon you which proceed from love and are for your welfare. It is the way which the Lord has ordained to lead His children to heaven. Therefore in all your tribulations fix your eye upon the suffering of Jesus Christ and apply this to yourself by a living faith until you have the lively assurance that He has removed guilt and curse from you, and that these sorrows are assigned to you in love. Remain near this suffering Jesus, and let it suffice you that you are conformed to your Lord. Take up your cross and follow Him; He has compassion upon you, will support you, and will time and again deliver you. Keep your eye fixed upon future felicity and look away from this world, for this is not the land of your rest. Rejoice in the hope of glory. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6); "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalms 27:14).

Christ's Suffering: An Example to Be Followed by the Christian

Fifthly, reflect upon the suffering of Christ in order that you may imitate Him, and thus behave yourself in your suffering as He behaved Himself. Let Christ's suffering also be an example; deal with the old man as Christ was dealt with due to your sins.

First of all, behave yourself in suffering as Christ behaved Himself:

(1) Christ was not without feeling, and therefore you also are permitted to feel the least discomfort.

(2) Christ complained to God and to man about His anxiety inflicted upon Him from within and without, and yet remained with them. You, too, may complain to God and man. To complain due to grief or sorrow is neither an expression of impatience nor of sorrow. Do not forsake the company of people, for woe to the person who is alone! Christ occupied Himself with prayer, and thus you must be engaged likewise. "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray" (James 5:13).

(3) Christ considered all suffering as coming from God. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it" (John 18:11). Therefore you also ought to exercise faith in the providence of

God and at all times learn to perceive it as the hand of God. To be assured of this requires diligent effort.

(4) Christ persevered in faith and exercised it in His greatest darkness and desertion, saying even then, "My Father, My God." Therefore you likewise ought not to cast away your faith and liberty; the proper bearing of your cross must issue forth from them. If you succumb in faith, you will bear a double cross.

(5) Christ persevered in the endurance of His suffering. He did not wish to resign until all had been finished. May patience also do its perfect work in you. As you should not ask God for a reason why He deals thus with you, but should rather be satisfied with the will of God, lest you be judging whether or not God's dealings with you are right, so you may likewise not limit the Lord as to the time and duration of your suffering.

(6) Christ comforted Himself with the promise of a good outcome, keeping glory in view. For the joy set before Him, He despised the shame and endured the cross. Therefore you ought also to focus upon the promises, which are yea and amen. Enliven yourself with this; consider the state of glory, reflect upon eternal rest, joy, and felicity, for then the bearing of your afflictions will be easier, your conduct will be holier, and you will experience that they are but light afflictions which will pass very shortly.

Secondly, hold the suffering of Christ before you as an example to deal with the "old man" and to mortify sin. View the world and all sin with scorn and contempt; view them as hanging on the gallows and as being crucified. Crucify the flesh with the lusts thereof. How can you still engage in that for which Christ had to pay so bitterly? Will the love of Christ and the esteem for His suffering not arouse in you a holy vengeance in return, to afflict and put to death that which has caused Christ so much sorrow and put Him to death? While thus holding Christ before you as an example and as a powerful motivation to mortify sin, virtue and strength will go out from Him due to union with the suffering Jesus by faith, which will enable you to proceed with the work of crucifying the flesh and mortifying sin, causing you to increase in strength for that task. Therefore, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11); "Judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ... that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). An Exhortation to the Unconverted to Reflect upon the Suffering of Christ

Unconverted friends, you also must come and attentively reflect upon the suffering of Christ in order to perceive as in a mirror what will befall you temporally as well as eternally if you do not repent. May this reflection be a means to work repentance and faith in you.

(1) I therefore address myself to you who as yet are ignorant of sin in its abominable and bitter nature and do not perceive and feel your misery, but live in sin with delight, esteeming the same as long as it is delightful and does no harm, while having no regard for whether or not this is sin.

(2) I address myself to you who burrow in the earth as a mole -- the one to make a living, the other for riches, another for honor, respect, or status, doing so as if all depended on this. Your thoughts only focus upon this; all your concerns and desires relate to this, you have nothing else in view and you labor for nothing but this.

(3) I address myself to you who as yet do not feel what a dreadful condition it is to miss God, to be separated from Him, to live forgetful of Him, not realizing how blessed a state it is to be reconciled with God and to have communion with Him. As a result of this you are neither troubled by the one nor desire the other.

(4) I address myself to you who as yet are ignorant of the necessity of satisfaction of divine justice; and are of the opinion that if you but feel remorse over the commission of grievous sins and if you but pray for forgiveness, all will be well.

(5) I address myself to you who as yet do not know Christ as Surety who satisfied for the sins of those who will be saved; to you who are ignorant of the manner in which one receives Christ by faith, and have neither wrestlings nor exercises of faith.

(6) I address myself to you who live civil lives, frequently attend church, are baptized, partake of the Lord's Supper, and live in such a fashion that no one will be able to say anything against you, and who on this basis build your confidence that you will be saved.

Poor people! You are still dead in sins and trespasses, blind, without Christ, and stand without as far as salvation is concerned.

Come, therefore, and consider each detail of the suffering of Christ; search for the reason why Christ had to suffer thus. Consider that this is only the portion of those who are converted, that is, for believers. Be sensibly convinced that you have no part in this, but that if you remain thus and die in this state, you will suffer the same to all eternity. For if the righteousness of God is so provoked to wrath towards the Surety, due to the sins of the elect whom He has loved with an everlasting love, how can you be of the opinion that you will go free? Oh no, "for if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry" (Luke 23:31). Conclude therefore with a lively impression that you are neither a partaker of Christ nor of all He has merited, but that you, as you now are, must eternally endure the absence of God and be subject to the dreadful and unbearable wrath of God. May God apply it to your heart and cause you to tremble and shudder. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, betake yourself to this Jesus, seek Him, and endeavor to believe in Him in order to come to God through Him and thus be saved. If you will not heed this, considering such fears to be the anxiety of a coward; and if you turn your heart away from this, you who hear this read or read it yourself, proceed if you wish, but know that you have been warned, and that your condemnation will be the heavier.

027. Chapter 23: The State of Christ's Exaltation

----- CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE ----- The State of Christ's Exaltation

Having considered the state of Christ's humiliation in which He merited salvation for the elect, we shall now proceed to discuss the state of exaltation in which He applies salvation to His elect, making them partakers of it. This state is referred to either as a state of exaltation, as we read in Php 2:9, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," or a state of glory as in Luke 24:26, "Ought not Christ ... to enter into His glory?" Since Christ, being a divine Person, did not suffer according to His divine nature but according to His human nature, exaltation as such did not occur according to His divine nature. In this nature He remained the Most High, the most glorious One, and the unchangeable One. This divine nature, however, which was generally concealed in the state of His humiliation, manifested itself very clearly in His exaltation. He is nevertheless exalted according to His human nature. As Christ performed and suffered everything as Surety and Mediator in the state of His humiliation, He was also exalted as Surety and Mediator. Though He had merited glory for Himself according to the covenant of redemption, it was all to the benefit of the elect and all of this descended from Him upon them.

Four steps are generally distinguished in Christ's state of exaltation: His resurrection from the dead, His ascension, His sitting at the right hand of God, and His return to judgment. The Resurrection from the Dead The first step is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This is the cardinal doctrine of our Christian religion, as salvation hinges upon faith in and confession of this truth. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14); "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). This truth is therefore abundantly and clearly presented in God's Word. It is referred to as rising (Matthew 28:6), being raised (Romans 4:24); and to be alive (Revelation 2:8). We must take note of the veracity, necessity, and benefit of it. The Veracity of Christ's Resurrection The veracity of Christ's resurrection from the dead is first of all evident from the history of the resurrection recorded in Matthew 28:1-20, Mark 16:1-20, Luke 24:1-53, and John 20:1-31.

Secondly, it is confirmed by the testimony (1) of the angels (Matthew 28:11; Luke 24:7), (2) of the enemies who guarded the grave (Matthew 28:11), and (3) of the apostles, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32); "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33); "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead" (2 Timothy 2:8).

Thirdly, it is confirmed by the appearances of Christ to believers after His resurrection. "To whom also He showed himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). He appeared to:

(1) Mary Magdalene (John 20:14; John 20:18), (2) the women who came to the grave (Matthew 28:2; Matthew 28:10), (3) Peter (Luke 24:34), (4) the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke

24:13-31), (5) the eleven in the absence of Thomas (John 20:19), (6) the eleven in the presence of Thomas -- eight days later (John 20:26), (7) seven disciples who went fishing (John 21:1), (8) eleven disciples in Galilee where Christ had summoned them to be (Matthew 28:16), (9) more than five-hundred brethren at once (1 Corinthians 15:6), (10) James (1 Corinthians 15:7), (11) the apostles when He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9), (12) Stephen after His ascension (Acts 7:55), (13) Paul (Acts 9:17, 1 Corinthians 15:8), (14) and John, to whom He gave the Revelation.

Christ thus appeared to His people, deeming the ungodly who had so contemptuously rejected Him unworthy of His appearance to them. Concerning Christ's resurrection, several matters need to be noted:

(1) Christ's resurrection was accompanied by an earthquake. When He died, the earth shook and the veil of the temple was rent. The earth shook again at His resurrection, which was not only a proof of His divinity, but also of the wrath of God against the Jews and their land which would be destroyed and left destitute. The inhabitants would perish miserably and their religion would be taken from them and be transferred to the Gentiles. It also indicated that all temporal ceremonies were now terminated and that an unchangeable religion had taken their place.

(2) Christ's resurrection was also magnified by the descent of an angel in heavenly glory, whose countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow. This angel removed the stone from the door of the grave in view of the watchmen, who were terrified and became as dead men. But to the women he said, "Fear not ye ... Jesus ... is not here: for he is risen, as he said," which was subsequently confirmed by two angels in white, this being indicative not only of their holiness but also of the joy and triumph of Christ's resurrection.

(3) As far as the time of year is concerned, Christ's resurrection occurred during the spring, at the time when day and night were of equal length. As far as the day is concerned, His resurrection occurred on the third day after His death. He did not spend three twenty-four-hour periods in the grave, for then He would have arisen on the fourth day. Instead, He was in the grave on three successive days: on Friday before sundown (which terminates the Jewish day), from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday, which was the second day, and from sundown on Saturday to sunrise on Sunday, which was the third day. In deeming part of the day to be the whole, Christ was thus three days in the grave and arose at sunrise on the third day. Therefore in order to find three days, one need not begin with the suffering of Christ in the garden nor with the three hours of darkness at the cross. He who is the Morning Star (Revelation 22:16), the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2), the dayspring from on high (Luke 1:78), and the Light to lighten the Gentiles, became alive again at the breaking of the day. Christ arose no sooner, so that men would be fully convinced that he had truly died; He did not arise any later so that His body would not be subject to corruption, according to Psalms 16:10. His entire body would thus remain fit to receive the soul again:

Christ was in the grave during the Jewish Sabbath. The Sabbath, however, did not typify Christ's lying in the grave.

[1] This is nowhere to be found in Scripture.

[2] Christ was also in the grave on Friday and on Sunday.

[3] The Sabbath was a day of joy, and Christ's residing in the grave was a matter of utmost sorrow.

[4] The burial was a step of Christ's humiliation and not of His exaltation. It belonged to the suffering of Christ, soul and body being separated from each other, and thus His residing in the grave was not a time of rest for Christ. When His flesh is said to rest in hope in Acts 2:26, this does not imply that Christ was at rest in this state, finding His delight in it, but rather that He rested in the hope of His resurrection of which He was assured.

[5] If the Sabbath were typical of Christ's burial, we no longer would have a Sabbath, as it would then have been terminated along with all the ceremonies. The commandment concerning the Sabbath, however, is of eternal duration; this will be demonstrated comprehensively in a subsequent chapter. It therefore was not typical. Christ arose on the first day of the week, and since the entire ceremonial worship was terminated, it was necessary that the day on which the ministry of shadows and types was especially performed would be changed and that from that moment on the Sabbath be observed on the day of Christ's resurrection -- which John called the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10), and since that time it has been observed on this day.

(4) Christ arose quietly and with wise design. As someone who awakens from sleep, removes his night clothing, and dresses himself, so Christ left His burial garment in the grave, and the napkin which covered His face. They were wrapped together and put in a specific place (John 20:7).

Christ Himself is the cause of His resurrection. The human nature consists of body and soul. These were separated by death, but both elements remained united to the divine nature. They were and remained the soul and body of the Son of God. At His resurrection the divine Person sent forth His soul again from Paradise, the third heaven, and by renewal united it with His body. He thus made His own assumed humanity alive again by His divine power, so that Christ was not resurrected by the power of another, such as is true for ordinary men. Christ, however, actively and truly arose and was made alive by His own power. The divine nature resurrected the human nature. This is evident from the following texts:

First, we read in John 2:19, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The temple of which Christ spoke was His body (vs. 21). This temple, that is, His body, the Jews would destroy, that is, kill, and then the Lord Jesus Himself, and not someone else, would raise it up again. "I will raise it up."

Secondly, we read in John 10:17-18, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." By the same power which enabled Him to lay His life down, He would be able to take it again. By this power He did the one as well as the other.

Thirdly, we read in Romans 1:4, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The apostle presents the resurrection as a powerful proof that Christ is truly God. However, to be merely made alive and to arise from the dead is no proof of divinity, for this has occurred with others and will occur with all men. Thus, His resurrection, which proves Him to be the Son of God, occurred by His own power; no one can resurrect the dead, much less man himself. Only God can do so. It is also evident from the fact that the natures of Christ are contrasted in Romans 1:3-4 and are clearly distinguished from each other. Christ is presented there according to the flesh, and *kata sarka* according to the Spirit, that

is, according to His divinity (Hebrews 9:14). As He died according to His flesh, that is, according to His human nature, He was made alive by His eternal Spirit, that is, His divinity. It is thus evident that He resurrected Himself.

Fourthly, it was necessary that He would resurrect Himself, for the Surety who took this suffering upon Himself would also have to triumph over it. If someone else had resurrected Him, He would neither have triumphed over death, nor delivered Himself, and consequently would also not be able to deliver others.

Objection: The Father is frequently said to have raised up Christ, and thus He did not resurrect Himself.

Answer: Since Father and Son are one and the same God, their power is likewise one and the same. Whatever the Father does, the Son does also (John 5:19). When the resurrection is ascribed to the Father, this indicates that He was satisfied with and took delight in the resurrection of the Surety.

Since Christ by His own power has truly arisen under extraordinary and illustrious circumstances, He arose with the identical body which was put to death on the cross. It was identical in every detail and retained all characteristics of a body. It remained visible, tangible, and local. It retained the scars of the nails in His hands and feet as well as of the spear in His side. "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me" (Luke 24:39); "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side" (John 20:27) -- this in response to the condition stated by Thomas in verse 25.

Upon His resurrection, this same body, while retaining all bodily characteristics, is immortal. "Now no more to return to corruption" (Acts 13:34); "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more;" (Romans 6:9); "I am alive for evermore" (Revelation 1:18). It is also a glorified body, "... like unto His glorious body" (Php 3:21). It has not been recorded, and thus is unknown, to what degree He was glorified; that is, whether at His ascension His body was glorified internally to a greater degree than during the previous forty days. He may possibly have held back His full glory while interacting with His disciples. He ate with His disciples (Luke 24:43) to further assure them of His resurrection, not because He was in need of nourishment. His stomach also did not digest this nourishment, since this would be inconsistent with a glorified body. Rather, by His omnipotence He caused the food to disappear. So much concerning the veracity of His resurrection. The Necessity of Christ's Resurrection

Secondly, we need to consider the necessity of Christ's resurrection. We do so for the following reasons: First, it was necessary in order that the prophecies be fulfilled, as Christ Himself states, "Ought not Christ ... to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:26-27). Paul speaks likewise, "And that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:4). It is certain that the Old Testament contains more prophecies concerning the resurrection than we can discern. Those texts concerning which we have little light we cannot use as infallible proof. The following texts are clear, however. "For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalms 16:10). According to Peter these words are a prophecy concerning Christ's resurrection (Acts 2:31). "He shall drink of the brook in the way (a

reference to Christ's humiliation): therefore shall He lift up the head" (a reference to Christ's exaltation) (Psalms 110:7). Hebrews 1:13 confirms that this psalm speaks of Christ. In Isaiah 53:8-12 we find the following expressions concerning His humiliation: grief, judgment, to be bruised, to make His soul an offering for sin, and to pour out His soul unto death. Concerning His resurrection we find the following expressions: Who shall declare His generation; He shall see His seed; He shall prolong His days; He shall be satisfied; a portion shall be divided to Him with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong. Acts 8:32; Acts 8:35 and the New Testament in general confirm that this chapter speaks of Christ.

Secondly, the types had to be fulfilled. Many things can be presented which in some way are congruent with the resurrection of Christ and which can be applied to it.

(1) Such is the case with Isaac, concerning whom Paul states that he was received "even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Hebrews 11:19).

(2) Consider also Joseph, who was delivered from the pit, after this from prison, and subsequently was highly exalted (Genesis 41:1-57).

(3) Consider Samson who carried away the gates of Gaza, and delivered himself out of the hands of his enemies (Judges 16:1-31).

(4) Consider the scapegoat Azazel (Leviticus 16:1-34), and

(5) the two birds, one of which was killed above running water, and the other flew away after having been dipped in the blood of the dead bird (Leviticus 14:4-7).

(6) Consider also Daniel who was delivered from the lions' den, and his companions who came out of the fiery oven unharmed (Daniel 6:23; Daniel 3:26). All these examples have something in common; they are applicable to the resurrection of Christ. However, whether they truly typify Christ's resurrection is not certain. The following two examples are more probable types, but even this is not certain. The first is the rod of Aaron (Numbers 17:1-13). This rod, dead and barren, was placed in the tabernacle of witness, hidden from human vision. "It came to pass that on the morrow, behold, the rod of Aaron was budded" (vs. 8). It is beyond dispute that Aaron and the Levitical priesthood typified the High Priest Jesus Christ, of which frequent reference is made in the letter to the Hebrews. Christ died as High Priest, in death was placed in the earth (and thus concealed from human vision), and as such He again appeared alive and brings forth glorious fruits. Aaron's staff, however, was not placed in the earth. The second example of Jonah, even if not entirely applicable, is presented by the Lord Jesus Himself (Matthew 12:39). His stay in the belly of the whale would typify Christ's residing in the grave. The duration of three days and no longer, as well as his coming on shore again, would typify Christ's resurrection from the dead upon the third day.

Thirdly, the necessity of His resurrection is also evident from the office of the Mediator itself. The Mediator (1) had to conquer death (Hosea 13:14), (2) had to be an eternal King (Psalms 45:6), (3) as High priest had to enter into the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 9:24), and (4) had to send forth the Holy Spirit from heaven to His elect (John 16:7). All this He could not do unless He had arisen from the dead. So much for the necessity of His resurrection. The Efficacy and Benefit of Christ's Resurrection In the third place we must consider the efficacy and benefits of the resurrection of

Christ. This is most extraordinary, and therefore Paul was so desirous and continually occupied in reflecting upon the resurrection of Christ. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection" (Php 3:10). The first fruit is justification. "But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:24-25). As long as the Surety still suffered and death had power over Him, the final penny had not as yet been paid. His conquering of the last enemy, death, and His triumphant appearance as being alive, were evidences that sin had been fully atoned for, the ransom had been paid, God's justice had been satisfied (being satisfied with this atonement), and that thus the Surety was justified (1 Timothy 3:16). Consequently all God's children have been reconciled in Him. There is not one sin, not even the least part thereof, for which satisfaction has not been made, and therefore they are free from all guilt and punishment. If someone senses the dreadfulness of guilt and punishment, views God as being provoked by sin so that there is no peace but only terror within the conscience (to such justification is most desirable), let him then turn about and by faith behold this Surety as having risen from the dead, which is the evidence of perfect satisfaction. Receive Him by faith who calls you and offers His fullness without price. Let such a person go to God and ask the Lord, while pleading upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead (1 Peter 3:21), "Are not my sins punished? Has not my guilt been atoned for? Has not my Surety risen from the dead and thus entered into rest? Art not Thou my reconciled God and Father? Am I not at peace with Thee?" May such a person thus wrestle to apply all this to himself on the basis of the promises made to all who receive Christ by faith, until he experiences the power of Christ's resurrection unto his justification and being at peace with God. The second fruit is sanctification. The apostle demonstrates this in Romans 6:4-5, "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life, for if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:5). The apostle emphasizes this also when he states, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Colossians 2:13); "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above" (Colossians 3:1). Even if believers may know themselves to be justified, they cannot find satisfaction in this. Their whole desire and life is to discern the image of God within themselves, to be conformed to that image, to thus be united to Him and to live in Him -- that is their salvation. They cannot but find delight in knowing God, in loving Him, in fearing Him, in being subject to Him, and thus in thoughts, words, and deeds be in a spiritual frame which is fully and entirely in agreement with His will. Sin is therefore despicable to them: they abhor themselves: they are ashamed before God and inwardly sorrow over their deeds. How it would be their delight to be delivered from the sins which so grieve them! How this causes them to long for heaven, knowing that they will there behold God's face in righteousness, being satisfied with His likeness when they awake (Psalms 17:15)! Oh, yield to this heartfelt desire and let it motivate you to be engaged in the way of holiness, for it is the Lord's way to cause His children, while thus engaged in battle, to increase and proceed with joy in sanctification.

(1) View Christ's resurrection as an example and a pattern. Christ arose in the morning. Accustom yourself to meditate upon Christ's resurrection as you awake. Let every occurrence of waking up and arising out of bed stir you up to arise with Christ. Christ arose on the first day of the week. Therefore commemorate the resurrection of Christ on each Sabbath day and, uniting yourself with

Him in the resurrection, let it be a renewed revival of your spiritual life. Christ departed from the grave, the place of the dead. You likewise must avoid (as much as your profession will suffer you to do so) familiar interaction with worldly and ungodly men. They are dead, they stink, and their stench is contagious. Christ left His burial garment behind in the grave. You likewise ought to hate the garment which has been polluted by the flesh. Leave all that is sinful behind in Sodom and Egypt, that is, in the grave, and depart from honor, goods, entertainment, and whatever belongs to the world. Christ appeared alive. Let your light therefore also shine and let everyone perceive that there is much distance between you and sinners. Show by your actions that you denounce whatever the world cleaves to. Manifest your love, humility, and heavenly-minded [Note: Dutch: "Uw verheven leven," that is, "your elevated life."] life in the love and fear of God. Let the image of God and the likeness of Christ within you be manifested, doing all this not to be perceived by others as such, but to the glory of Christ, the conviction of the world, and the encouragement of the godly. The purpose of Christ's association with men was only to convince His own of the veracity of His resurrection and to strengthen them. He also did so to the benefit of His church unto the end of the world, even though this lasted but forty days, after which He ascended into heaven. Let it likewise be the objective of your life to walk godly upon the earth in order that those who are acquainted with you may be convinced and encouraged. Let it also be a preparation for going to heaven itself.

(2) Let Christ's resurrection motivate you to live a holy life. This is taught by the apostle, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, for if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:11; Romans 6:5); "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: ... that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Follow the example of the apostle and thus arrive at the following conclusion: Since the Lord Jesus as my Surety has removed all my sin by His death, and as evidence of this has arisen from the dead, should I then yet live in sin? Should not I then arise with Him from the death of sin and live with Him in all holiness? The power needed for our spiritual resurrection is inherent in the resurrection of Christ, "which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3); "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection" (Php 3:10). Every believer is a member of the Lord Jesus. The same Spirit which is in Christ is also in them, and they live by that selfsame Spirit. Whatever the Head experiences, the members must also experience. Since Christ the Head has arisen, life-giving power flows into all His members. Believers are ingrafted into Him as the trunk, for as a graft becomes the recipient of sap and life-giving power, it likewise cannot but be that all believers receive the life-giving power of Christ. If one then unites himself with the risen Christ by faith, one will also become aware of the life-giving power which proceeds from Christ to quicken our souls. The third fruit of Christ's resurrection is the blessed resurrection of believers. It is God's way to lead His children to heaven by way of many crosses. Temporal death also belongs to this. This is not a punishment upon sin as such, but is nevertheless a difficult and painful way which they must traverse together with all men. Their death, however, by virtue of the death of Christ, is without sting and curse, and thus is but a departing in peace. In consequence of Christ's resurrection, they will be resurrected unto salvation. "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He (the Father) that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth

in you" (Romans 8:11). The resurrection is attributed to the Father here; however, the reason that Christ's resurrection is mentioned together with ours is to demonstrate that His resurrection is the meriting cause of ours. "For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him" (2 Timothy 2:11); "But now is Christ ... become the firstfruits" (1 Corinthians 15:20); "And He is ... the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18). This will therefore transpire with the entire harvest, that is, with all believers after Him, since the church is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all, that is, Christ (Ephesians 1:23). The entire congregation of Christ, being members of His body, must therefore arise so that the entire mystical body of Christ may live. Believers may and must apply this to themselves and rejoice in the hope of glory, saying, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). They may also say with Job, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:25-27). So much concerning the first step of the exaltation of Christ, the resurrection.

The Ascension of Christ The second step of Christ's exaltation is His Ascension. As with the resurrection, we must again observe its veracity, necessity, and benefit. The Veracity of Christ's Ascension

First of all we will consider the veracity of the ascension. Sometimes it is expressed in the active voice, as being the work of Christ Himself. Such is true for the verb "ascend." "I ascend unto My Father" (John 20:17). The following words are also used:

- (1) go, "And if I go" (John 14:3);
- (2) go away, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away" (John 16:7);
- (3) enter, "Whither the forerunner is for us entered" (Hebrews 6:20);
- (4) pass into the heavens, "... that is passed into the heavens" (Hebrews 4:14).

Sometimes it is expressed in the passive voice, as the work of the Father towards Him. It is referred to as being:

- (1) carried up, or taken up, "... carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:51); "... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven" (Acts 1:11);
- (2) as being exalted, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted" (Acts 2:33); (3) the pleasure of the Father in giving Him His promised glory, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" (Php 2:9). In reference to all this we must say something about the Person, the act, the time, the location, and the manner of occurrence. Concerning the Person, the same Person -- being God and man, who has suffered, died, and has risen from the dead as a Mediator -- also ascended to heaven as Mediator. This act is the work of the Person, but does not properly belong to the divine nature. Prior to this moment He was already in heaven in His divine nature (John 6:62), and had glory with the Father before the world was (John 17:5). As He concealed His divine nature behind His humanity in His descension, He revealed it all the more clearly at His ascension. Since this nature is infinite and without dimensions, however, it can neither change location nor in actuality descend or ascend. Rather, this properly relates to the Person according to His human

nature, in which He also suffered. It was not an act of His human nature, it not being a Person but rather the work of the Person according to His human nature. "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens" (Ephesians 4:9-10). The Person is named here, and to Him the work is attributed, this properly belonging to one or the other nature. The act itself is the act of ascending. This word is indicative of a change of location. When a body changes location, it departs from the place where it was, and in traversing through either space or other localities arrives at a locality at which it was previously not present. Likewise Christ, ascending according to the body, left the lower parts of the earth where He had resided for such a long time. He traversed through the atmosphere and the universe until He arrived in the third heaven, the paradise of God and the house of His Father. The time of its occurrence was forty days after His resurrection. The number "forty" frequently occurs in God's Word. Moses was forty days upon the mountain with God (Exodus 34:28); Israel was forty years in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:2); Elijah went forty days without food until he came to Horeb, the mountain of God (1 Kings 19:5-8); after forty days a man-child had to be presented to the Lord (Leviticus 12:2-4); on the fortieth day the child Jesus was brought to the temple and presented before the face of the Lord (Luke 2:22); after forty days of fasting in the wilderness, the Lord Jesus began His public ministry (Matthew 4:1-25); after having had communication with His disciples, He ascended to heaven forty days after His resurrection (Acts 1:1-26). His ascent did not take place earlier so that His disciples would be fully assured of His resurrection, being instructed concerning the things of the kingdom of heaven. Prior to this they could not have endured this event due to their weakness (John 16:12). His ascent was not at a later date. They were thus kept from cleaving too much to His bodily presence while being delivered from the notion that the kingdom of Israel would be established at that time. The general location from which He departed was the earth. "Again, I leave the world" (John 16:28), and particularly the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12); it was Bethany, a place on the mountain (Luke 24:50). The space through which he traversed consisted of the visible heavens, the atmosphere, and the universe: "... that is passed into the heavens" (Hebrews 4:14). His destiny was the third heaven, the place where the holy angels reside together with the elect who are presently rejoicing in eternal bliss. Heaven here must neither be understood as God Himself nor as familiar communion with God or heavenly joy. Rather, it is a location above the visible heavens (Hebrews 7:26), far above all the heavens (Ephesians 4:10), which is the third heaven, the paradise of God (2 Corinthians 12:2; 2 Corinthians 12:4), and the house of His Father (John 14:2). Thus, Christ's ascension did not occur figuratively. It did not merely consist in the body disappearing or becoming invisible, thus being glorified and becoming bodily omnipresent, for this would be a change of state rather than a change of location. Indeed, Christ's ascension was a true change of location. The manner of Christ's ascension is most remarkable:

(1) Christ ascended into heaven while He was blessing (Luke 24:52). He spoke with them, and in a familiar and friendly manner bade them farewell. He pronounced blessings upon them which He immediately applied, for they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:52).

(2) He ascended to heaven visibly. The apostles were in His presence, spoke with Him and He with them and "while they beheld, He was taken up" (Acts 1:9). Just as Elisha gazed upon Elijah upon his ascent into heaven, the apostles also gazed upon the ascending Jesus until a cloud came between the ascending Jesus and the standing apostles, thus removing Him from their

sight. This does not mean that the cloud ascended straight up towards heaven, carrying Christ heavenward as in a chariot. The glorified body of Christ had no need of this, and it also would be contrary to the text which states that the cloud received Him away out of their sight, so that they could no longer gaze upon Him.

(3) He ascended into heaven in a glorious manner, triumphing over death, devil, and hell, being accompanied by many thousands of holy angels; and thus He entered into the third heaven before the throne of God. "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet" (Psalms 47:5). From all this it is evident that Christ essentially, truly, locally, and visibly ascended into heaven. This we wish to prove more extensively against the Lutherans with the following proofs:

First, as Christ was not omnipresent in His human nature prior to His ascension, He likewise was not so afterwards. When He was at one location, He was not elsewhere. "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there" (John 11:15). It is therefore clearly stated about Him that after His ascension He was neither upon earth nor in the world. "... again, I leave the world" (John 16:28); "For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always" (Matthew 26:11).

Objection: Such texts are applicable to His visible presence, but not to His bodily presence.

Answer: Such an argument is without foundation. God's Word knows of no such distinction and it is contrary to nature, as all bodies are visible. Elijah, in speaking with Christ upon the mountain, was visible even though he had a glorified body.

Secondly, the angels confirm this. "While they beheld, He was taken up" (Acts 1:11). The fact that they could no longer see Christ was not due to Him becoming invisible, but the result of a cloud coming between them which received Him out of their sight. In response to this the angels said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Visibly He ascended into heaven, and on the day of judgment He will come again upon the clouds of heaven and will be seen of all men (Matthew 24:30). Whenever the reference is to a body, the words "taken up" and "ascend" are always indicative of a change of locality. The apostles give abundant witness to this (cf. Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51; 1 Timothy 3:16). If one were to use such expressions as "to ascend," "to go away," "to leave the world," and "to be taken up," in reference to a person, and yet insist that he was nevertheless at the same place where he had just been seen, such a person would rightfully be laughed at by both children and fools. If this manner of speech is indicative of a change of locality as far as men are concerned, this is likewise true for Christ, since He also is very man and has a true body as others.

Thirdly, it is also confirmed by those texts in which Christ is said to have been seen in heaven. Stephen saw Jesus "standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55); "And last of all he was seen of me also" (1 Corinthians 15:8). Thus Christ remained visible while being in heaven.

Fourthly, as the earth is a place below, heaven is a place above. Enoch and Elijah are locally in heaven, which is also true for the souls of believers, as well as for any who are there bodily; they are locally in heaven, that is, at a specific location. After the resurrection all the elect will be in heaven, a specific place; thus heaven is a place. Christ refers to heaven as "Paradise" (Luke 23:43); Paul called it the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2); Christ calls it His Father's house (John 14:2-3) where He prepares a place for His elect, where He will take them to Himself to be where

He is, and where they will always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17). It is certain that Christ at His ascension has entered into this place (Hebrews 6:20). Thus, Christ has essentially, truly, visibly, and locally ascended into heaven, and His ascension is neither a disappearance nor a transformation to omnipresence.

Fifthly, it is contrary to the nature of a true body. This we will demonstrate extensively when we deal with the papal mass in chapter 40.

Objection #1: Christ's human nature is united to His divine nature, and therefore His human nature is present wherever the divine nature is, and thus is omnipresent.

Answer: (1) This argument refutes itself, for it is as if one said that the sun is united with the universe and therefore the sun must be where the universe is; that is, at the same hour, and thus always surrounding the atmosphere and the globe.

(2) Then Christ, having been conceived within the body, would already have been omnipresent prior to His birth, and the body lying in the crib would not only have been there but everywhere in heaven and upon earth. This reasoning contradicts Scripture as well as nature, for it is evident that one body cannot be at the same location where another body is. Otherwise, all men would exist within the body of Christ and all bodies would be in the same place where His body is.

Objection #2: The following argument has a similar thrust: Christ sits at the right hand of God; since the right hand of God is everywhere, the body of Christ is also everywhere.

Answer: (1) It is never written that the body of Christ is at the right hand of God. (2) This is stated concerning the Person according to His human nature. Even if this were so, the sitting at the right hand does not occur locally, for God is a Spirit and therefore neither local nor corporal. It rather refers to being exalted to a position of honor and glory.

(3) If Christ is omnipresent according to the body, being at the right hand of the omnipresent One, then also all believers will be omnipresent in the day of judgment; for they will stand at the right hand of Christ who is omnipresent according to His Godhead. If the conclusion by way of such reasoning were correct, they would also be omnipresent according to the body, since He is at the right hand of God and they are at His. Since the latter statement is clearly false, the first statement is likewise false.

(4) The syllogism is incorrect in forma.

Objection #3: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things" (Ephesians 4:10). Since being "far above all heavens" (which includes the third heaven), is not a location, Christ's ascension is therefore not a change in location, but rather results in being omnipresent. Since He fills all things, He is therefore omnipresent.

Answer: (1) "All heavens" refers to the visible heavens, the atmosphere, and the universe with all its galaxies -- beyond which is the third heaven. Christ in going into the heavens (Hebrews 4:14) has entered the third heaven, of which the Word frequently states that He resides there where His children will be with Him.

(2) To fill all things is not the same as filling all places corporally, for then several bodies would have to occupy the same place simultaneously. Furthermore, neither in Scripture nor in secular writers does the word “things” refer to places. Rather, the filling of all things refers to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit whom He has poured out upon His church by virtue of the efficacy of His ascension (John 16:7). This is pointed out in Ephesians 4:11, “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”

(3) The reference here is to the Personhood of Christ, and that which properly belongs to His divine nature. He did not descend from heaven in His human nature, but rather in His Godhead. Thus “He that descended is the same also that ascended.”

Objection #4: The descent into hell cannot be taken literally; therefore His ascension into heaven cannot be taken literally.

Answer: (1) One cannot argue that because one thing is stated figuratively concerning Christ that therefore all things stated concerning Him must be viewed figuratively.

(2) The statement “descended into hell,” found in the articles of faith, is meant to be understood literally, for it means as much as being laid in a “hollow,” that is, to be buried in the grave.

(3) If Christ is said to have descended from heaven according to His divine nature, this is a metaphor, not as far as location is concerned but as far as the act itself. Thus, when He is said to have ascended, this is figuratively true for His divine nature. One cannot, however, draw the conclusion from the Godhead that this is likewise true for His human nature and His body, for a body can literally descend and ascend.

Objection #5: While being in heaven, Christ is nevertheless present with His own upon earth, and thus He is omnipresent. “And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20); “For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

Answer: Christ is both God and man, and therefore whatever can be said of the one nature cannot be said of the other nature, and whatever can be said of the Person, cannot be said of both natures. It is said for example that Christ is from eternity, and that Christ died; Christ is infinite, and Christ is locally in heaven; Christ is always present with His own, and Christ is not always with His own (Matthew 16:11). When Christ promises His presence to His own, this is stated of His Person according to His divine nature and not according to His human nature. The cited texts do not speak so much of the presence of His Person, however, but rather of His assistance, help, comfort, and blessings for all who seek Him, as well as of the power which would accompany His Word. So much as far as the veracity of His ascension is concerned. The Necessity of Christ’s Ascension

There was also a necessity for Christ’s ascension into heaven. “Ought not Christ ... to enter into His glory” (Luke 24:26).

First, it was necessary in order that the prophecies and the types would be fulfilled:

(1) It was prophesied, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in” (Psalms 24:9); “Thou hast ascended on high” (Psalms 68:18-19).

The apostle clearly applies this to Christ's ascension (Ephesians 4:8).

(2) It was also typified for instance in the ascension of Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11). The bringing of the ark of the covenant to Mount Zion also applies to this, of which David said, "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet" (Psalms 47:5). The most eminent type of Christ's ascension is to be observed in the entering of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16:1-34), which the apostle applies to the ascension of Christ (Hebrews 9:24; Hebrews 6:19-20).

Secondly, the high-priestly office of Christ also demanded His ascension. In the Old Testament it was not sufficient for the High Priest to kill the animal. His office required that he would enter into the Holy of Holies with the blood. It was likewise not sufficient that Christ suffered and died without the gate and that He died to atone for the sins of the people, but with His blood, that is, with the efficacy of His suffering, "Christ ... entered ... into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24). These two elements of His high-priestly ministry cannot be separated, "for if He were on earth (that is, if Christ had not entered) He should not be a priest" (Hebrews 8:4).

The Benefits of Christ's Ascension The benefits of Christ's ascension are exceedingly great and many. First, in reference to Christ, this event is a cause of extraordinary joy for believers. He who for our sake became poor, was a man of sorrows, and endured the contempt of men, has conquered all and triumphantly ascended into heaven. It was a day of extraordinary joy for all of Israel when David, accompanied by all his people, removed the ark from the house of Obed-edom and brought it to Mount Zion; all Israel rejoiced, and David, being filled with the Holy Ghost, danced before the ark (1 Chronicles 15:1-29). The psalmist sings of this, "They have seen Thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel" (Psalms 68:24-26). When Solomon was anointed to be king, and was placed upon the throne of Israel, the whole nation came behind Solomon with such rejoicing that the earth shook and rent (1 Kings 1:40). With how much more glory and joy the Lord Jesus made His entry into heaven! With what joy the heavenly legions must have accompanied Him upon His entry! With what joy the glorified saints must have beheld Him! With what delight the Father must have received Him! How fitting it therefore is that we also would follow Him and exclaim with joy, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12).

Secondly, the ascension of Christ is also of great benefit to believers as far as they themselves are concerned. By His ascension all that He has merited for them by His suffering and death is to them. Particularly David (Psalms 68:18) and Paul (Ephesians 4:8) conjoin these two matters to the ascension of Christ: He has led captivity captive, and He has received gifts for men.

(1) He has led captivity captive. The elect, and also you who may read or hear this, were by nature captive to the devil, and consequently to the world and the lusts of the flesh. Christ, however, having conquered these enemies by His death, triumphed openly over them in His ascension. The Romans, after conquering their enemies, made a triumphant entry into Rome, at which time they triumphantly led their captives with them. Christ did likewise in His ascension; those who held His children captive have been taken captive themselves by Him, manifesting this in His ascension.

You therefore, who are partakers of the Lord Jesus, view the devil, the world, and your flesh as captured and shackled enemies, and yourselves as having been delivered from their violence and dominion. Rejoice over this in faith and jubilate, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory" (1 Corinthians 15:55). They will no longer have dominion over you. It is true that they often assault you fiercely, inflict many wounds, and cause you much grief. They can only go as far as the Conqueror allows the chain with which they are bound to extend; and He knows how far He can let this chain go without incurring danger. He wishes to demonstrate to His children from what dreadful lions and bears He has delivered them, so that they would be all the more thankful. He wishes to exercise them in this battle and make them conquerors over their enemies, that they may triumph with Him. Be therefore encouraged in this battle, knowing that the enemies of Christ will not rob one sheep, but that he who has the least strength will yet overcome and be crowned as conqueror.

(2) From the ascension of Christ also proceed gifts for men. One who loves Christ will be very desirous to honor His Lord and to bring others to Christ. For this they are in need of various gifts, such as knowledge, wisdom, boldness, aptness to teach, etc. The Lord Jesus has merited these by His death, and by virtue of His ascension He has received power to give them to His elect, giving them to everyone as they have need of them in his task, and as their desire for these gifts is directed unto Him. If anyone therefore desires with heartfelt love to make Christ known in His beauty and to be instrumental in bringing others into fellowship with Christ, he ought to believe that Christ, who now is in heaven, has received gifts for the purpose of distribution, and that these will be given to him who humbly requests them to this end. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

Thirdly, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is also a fruit of Christ's ascension. Also prior to Christ's ascension believers received the Holy Spirit by virtue of His future ascension. They would otherwise neither have been Christ's property, nor could have been regenerated, have lived, believed, or prayed. They prayed for this Spirit. "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalms 51:11); "Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalms 143:10); "The Spirit of Christ which was in them" (1 Peter 1:11). His presence, however, as far as both His Person and the measure are concerned, was not as abundant and evident. After Christ was glorified, however, He poured out the Holy Spirit in abundant measure, which was according to prophecy. "I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed" (Isaiah 44:3); "... for I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 39:29); "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28). The fulfillment of this can be observed in Acts 2:16-18. The Lord Jesus promised this on several occasions. "But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39). Consider also John 16:7, "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

Believers know that inner spiritual motions must be wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. They are very desirous for communion with the Spirit as well as for His indwelling in them. They continually pray for this and are grieved if they neither perceive Him, nor sense His efficacious operation. They must always hold on to the truth, however, that He Himself remains within them and will remain within them to all eternity. As certainly as they know that Christ has ascended into heaven, so certain is this fruit: they will enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Therefore always consider

the ascension as a basis of perseverance in prayer for the increase of the operation of this indwelling Spirit. A fourth fruit of Christ's ascension is His administration of the second element of His high-priestly office, namely, intercession, which we have discussed in the previous chapter. Hereby He prepares a place for them (John 14:3). There He functions as their Head and there they sit together with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). He is there as a forerunner (Hebrews 6:20), having paved the way whereby believers may continually approach unto the throne of God. The apostle urgently exhorts us to do so. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:19-22). Therefore, exercise your faith and come to the throne by way of Christ's ascension, where you will find and see your Jesus, and then request whatever your soul desires, as if you were there yourself. Rejoice over the fact that Jesus is there on your behalf, prepares a place for you, and at last will take you to Himself to be there eternally. The ascension of Christ is also efficacious unto sanctification. Since the Head is already in heaven, all His members must also become heavenly-minded, and by way of the ascension must continually stir themselves up to holiness of life. This the apostle urges us to do when he says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).

Children of God, what is there upon earth that would keep you there?

(1) Christ is not there, for He left the earth and has ascended into heaven.

(2) In addition to this, you know by much experience that all is vanity and cannot satisfy; or else you do not obtain that which you desire, as it eludes you as quickly as you pursue it. Thus, this vain desire and unrest makes you tired and worn-out. Even if you obtain what you desire, you experience that it is not what you had in mind. It is often nothing more than a thorny bush, and by embracing it, you find that you have harmed yourself. Yes, it was nothing but pollution by which you defiled yourself. How frequently you have discovered that it has dismayed the soul, affected your peace of conscience, taken away your spiritual liberty, disturbed your fellowship with God, caused you to continually live in unrest, and pricked your conscience! Oh, how the soul is anesthetized by earthly things! How lethargically, restlessly, and without freedom one engages in prayer! How it prevents the familiar enlargement and perseverance in prayer, causing one to come away empty from the exercise of prayer!

(3) Moreover, how readily the desire for tangible things will increase in strength, and how quickly spiritual life is ill-affected by this. Oh, how long it sometimes lasts before one is freed from these snares and before the head is brought above water again!

(4) Since you also have been called out of the world as Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees and as Israel was called out of Egypt, you ought neither to remain in it any longer, return to it, nor look back to Sodom as did Lot's wife. Rather, lift yourself above the things of time and sense, and let your walk henceforth be in heaven as Paul said concerning himself and believers (Php 3:20).

First of all, Christ is there. Does your heart not will to be where your treasure is? Is not Christ your treasure, desire, life, and love? He is in heaven and it is the comfort of believers in this world that they will once be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). Therefore let your thoughts, conversation, and exercise of love be such as is consistent with your citizenship, and let them thus be where Jesus is.

Secondly, heaven is truly your native country. Acknowledge yourself then to be but guests and "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and seek this country looking "for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Hebrews 11:13-16; Hebrews 11:10). Thence is the origin of your spiritual birth, for "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:26). It is your Father's house (John 14:2) and your house, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). This is where your brothers and sisters reside as well as the angels with whom we are in partnership (Hebrews 12:22-23). This is your inheritance, "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). As a man's heart, thoughts, and desires are all drawn towards an earthly inheritance, this ought to be much more true for this heavenly inheritance.

Thirdly, heaven alone is truly delightful. The small rays which may be enjoyed upon earth yield unspeakable joy to the soul. How Jacob rejoiced when something of this was revealed to him! He said, "surely the Lord is in this place ... how dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:16-17). Moses' desire was, "show me Thy glory" (Exodus 33:18); David's comfort was, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psalms 17:14); Asaph's delight was: "It is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:28). Since we are permitted not only to seek this in some degree and measure, but also to enjoy it as our delight, let us engage ourselves to seek this delight and to continually rejoice in it.

Fourthly, by maintaining our walk in heaven with Christ, our soul without being conscious of it will also shine as Moses' face shone after he communed with God for forty days upon the mountain. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Fifthly, take note of the drawing power of the Lord Jesus. He is now in heaven, and He foretold that when He would be lifted up on the cross, on the basis of which He would enter heaven, that He would draw all men to Himself (John 12:32). Believer, you experience this drawing whenever you lift your heart heavenward, looking for light, life, and communion, and praying, "Draw me, we will run after Thee" (Song of Solomon 1:4). Therefore do not allow Christ to draw in vain. As you perceive this drawing, yield to it willingly and you will experience that you will more readily have your conversation in heaven. To that end continually reflect upon what is recorded in God's Word concerning heaven. Take special notice of the accounts of others who have been led into the Lord's inner chambers and have received foretastes of heaven. Frequently seek to recall what the Lord has revealed to your own soul, and how sweet this frame was. Be much engaged in prayer and as you pray, reflect upon Christ as being in heaven, and upon the joy of the angels and of the glorified saints. Consider how they bow before the Lord Jesus, the nature of the light with which they are illuminated, the love with which they look upon Jesus, and how they jubilate, "Blessing,

and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever" (Revelation 5:13).

Christ's Session at the Right Hand of God The third step of Christ's exaltation is His session at the right hand of God. We will consider both the veracity and benefit of this step. The Veracity of Christ's Session at the Right Hand of God

Let us first of all consider its veracity. The session at the right hand of God is frequently confirmed in God's Word. This was promised in the Old Testament. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand" (Psalms 110:1). Acts 2:34 and Hebrews 1:13 confirm that this is said concerning Christ. In the New Testament it is stated that this has actually occurred. "He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19); "... where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1); "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). This is a figure of speech, for God is a Spirit and has nothing in common with a body nor with anything resembling it. Thus God has no right hand, but it is a figure of speech derived from human language. Men are generally strongest in their right hand, and primarily carry out their tasks with this hand. Therefore God's right hand is symbolic of strength and powerful execution. "And the vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted" (Psalms 80:15); "The Son of man sitting on the right hand of power" (Matthew 26:64). Since men consider their right hand to be the most worthy, they will place those whom they wish to honor at their right hand. Solomon did this with his mother (1 Kings 2:19). Therefore Christ's session at the right hand of God conveys that He is exalted to the highest degree of glory. "He ... sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3); "... on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1). In view of this Christ is said to be crowned with glory and honor (Hebrews 2:9). The sitting at the right hand is not indicative of superiority over him at whose right hand one is, for the bride, the church of Christ, is also presented as standing at Christ's right hand. "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir" (Psalms 45:9). Nevertheless she is and remains subordinate to Christ. Such is also the case here. It only conveys the supreme glory of Christ, and thus it is without any reference to the glory of the Father in regard to greater or lesser. Without controversy, God is and remains the Most High, and no one can be above Him. It is senseless to imagine His having a right, middle, and left hand. His sitting at the right hand is of no special significance, for sometimes Christ is said to stand at the right hand (Acts 7:55), and sometimes that He is there (Romans 8:34). One may, however, distill sweet meditations from this "sitting":

- (1) it renders Him more honor, since it is proper for servants to stand;
- (2) it conveys the actual engagement and execution of His mediatorial office, for kings who are seated upon their throne or judgment seat are engaged in the execution of their government;
- (3) it conveys the sweet rest which Christ enjoys after His labors;
- (4) it is indicative of His permanent residence in glory. Such considerations are both true and sweet, but whether this is implied by the "sitting" is not so certain. However, the sitting, standing, and being at God's right hand are indicative of the very greatest glory which can be bestowed upon a creature. To this glory only the Mediator, Christ, according to His human nature, has been exalted, far above the holy angels. Concerning this the apostle states, "But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on my right hand" (Hebrews 1:13). It is something different when God is

said to be at someone's right hand, that is, when one may experience His mighty help; and it is another thing to be at God's right hand, which is indicative of the highest honor and glory, and thus properly belongs to Christ alone. Believers are indeed promised that they will sit with Christ upon His throne (Revelation 3:21), which refers to the communication of His benefits and glory which Christ has merited for them in His humiliation and exaltation; however, they are never said to sit at the right hand of God. The Lord Jesus, as Mediator, sat down at the right hand of the Father. According to His Godhead, He is coessential with the Father and eternally coequal with Him, so in this respect He cannot receive more glory. His session at the right hand reveals, however, that He, the Mediator, is the only glorious God, a fact which in His humiliation He nearly always concealed behind His humanity. He refers to this when He says, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5). In His human nature He is glorified far beyond our comprehension, and the measure of light, love, and enjoyment of God He receives according to His soul are the ultimate of what a creature can absorb. In His bodily glory, He excels all who are roundabout Him. Paul, speaking of this, says, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Php 3:21).

Christ's Execution of His Offices at the Right Hand of God His session at the right hand of God as Mediator pertains to His three offices. First of all it pertains to His office as High Priest. His priestly office is foundational to the execution of His kingly and prophetic office. It had been promised that, upon execution of the established conditions which He had to perform as High Priest (Isaiah 53:10), He would be King and Prophet for the protection and instruction of His people. His session as High Priest at the right hand of the Father is evident from Hebrews 1:3, "... when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The act of purging sin belongs to the priestly office, and is here conjoined to sitting at the right hand, and thus to the high-priestly office itself. Therefore it is as Priest that He is at the right hand of God. This same combination is also demonstrated in Hebrews 10:12, "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Add to this the following clear text, "We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1).

Secondly, He also sits at God's right hand as Prophet, He being said to send forth His Holy Spirit from there in order to instruct His people. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted ... He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. ... He saith Himself, The Lord said unto My Lord, Sit thou on My right hand" (Acts 2:33-34).

Thirdly, He also sits as King at the right hand of God: "... and hath set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion" (Ephesians 1:20-21); "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Peter 3:22). Sometimes this session at the right hand is called a work of Christ, "... He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19; cf. Hebrews 8:1). He had accomplished all His work upon earth, but still had to accomplish much work in heaven; however, not in a state of humiliation as upon earth, but in glory. After having merited this glory for Himself and for the benefit of His children, He took possession of this, consistent with the covenant established with Him. This session at the right hand is also frequently attributed to the Father. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted ..." (Acts 2:33); "Thou crownedst Him with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:7). Since He had fulfilled the

condition, the Father justly granted Him that glory in accordance with the covenant. "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great ... because He hath poured out His soul unto death" (Isaiah 53:12). When it is said in Php 2:9 that the Father has given Him a Name in His favor (the Greek rendering), this does not have Christ in view as if He had not merited this, but rather it is mentioned in reference to the Father who, upon His requirements having been fulfilled, in full favor and love has given Christ this Name above every name. It can also be understood as a reference to the elect, to whom and for whose sake Christ has been given in divine favor, in order to execute everything that was needful for their salvation. So much concerning the veracity of this doctrine. The Benefits of Christ's Session at the Right Hand of God In a general sense, the benefit of Christ's session at the right hand of God, is the efficacious execution of His offices.

First, since He is seated as High Priest at the right hand of the throne of Majesty, how efficacious His intercession is! How could the Father deny Him anything when He Himself said to Him, "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee" (Psalms 2:8)? How efficacious is the intercession of Him who stands at the right hand of the Father and pleads such a righteous cause!

Secondly, since He is Prophet at the right hand of His Father, He will provide His church and children with sufficient gifts and graces. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

Thirdly, since Christ is King at the right hand of God, He will efficaciously gather His elect together as one Church. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel" (Acts 5:31). He will thus powerfully preserve His church, so that not a single one of His elect will perish, nor will the gates of hell prevail over them (Matthew 16:18). He will therefore punish and destroy the enemies of the church. "sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Psalms 110:5). The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall wound the heads over many countries (Psalms 110:5-6).

Christ's Return to Judgment The last step of Christ's exaltation is His return to judgment. The previous steps of Christ's exaltation were invisible to the world; believers only can behold them by faith. This step, however, even though it is embraced by faith as a certain future event, will be visible to the eyes of all men, none excepted. The certainty that Christ as Judge will come to judgment and that this is a step of Christ's exaltation are evident in the following texts: And then shall all the tribes of the earth ... see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30); "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory" (Matthew 25:31); "And (the Father) hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man" (John 5:27). The word "because" has reference to His suffering and death as a fulfillment of the condition of the covenant of redemption by which He is authorized and empowered to be Judge. More we shall not say at this time, since we shall discuss this in volume three.

Christ's Exaltation Applied

Having concluded the state of Christ's humiliation by way of general application, we shall likewise consider the steps of Christ's exaltation all together, and make application. May faith make the previously discussed matters a present reality. Frequently join Mary Magdalene in visiting the

grave and remain there in quiet meditation. Behold, as it were, Jesus dead in the grave, the glorious descent of the angel who removes the stone from the grave, and the glorious and triumphant manner in which the Lord Jesus, being alive again, exited from the grave. Focus upon the appearance of the angels and all the appearances of Christ. Listen to all His conversations with the women and the disciples, and thus allow yourself to be quietly led into the truth and glory of Christ's resurrection, considering how all has been finished and conquered by Him. Accompany the disciples to the Mount of Olives; listen to the last blessings of Christ and behold Him ascending into heaven, taking His place upon His Father's command at the right hand of God, surrounded with incomprehensible glory. Harken to the jubilation of the inhabitants of heaven, "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet" (Psalms 47:5). How the glorious angels did rejoice, who also rejoiced when the Lord founded the earth (Job 38:7), and who magnified the Lord when the Messiah was born, exclaiming, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14)! How innumerable must have been the multitude which in orderly arrangement reached from earth to heaven! How large was the multitude which preceded Him and followed Him! How they must have rejoiced and bowed themselves before the King of glory at His triumphant entry! And how they must have trumpeted forth His honor and glory! How the glorified saints must have yearned to see Him! How they rejoiced in beholding Him, bidding their Surety and Lord welcome, and bowing down before Him jubilating, Hallelujah! Therefore fix your eye at once upon this King of glory and behold this King in His beauty. As He with deep-felt sorrow truly tasted all bitterness, anxiety and shame in His human nature, He has likewise, as man, truly rejoiced; this day was for Him a "day of the gladness of His heart" (Song of Solomon 3:11). How He must have rejoiced over the glory which God His Father received, by bringing to Himself His Son whom He had sent forth to perform so great a task which He had so faithfully performed! How He must have rejoiced in the redemption of His brethren, and in the fact that He would now prepare a place for them! With what delight the Father has received Him and placed Him at His right hand, crowning Him with glory and honor! In one word, all of heaven was filled with joy, and all its inhabitants would sing in turn, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory" (Psalms 24:7-8; Psalms 24:10).

Exhortation to Meditate upon a Glorified Christ

Even though we are not permitted to see the heavens opened in such an extraordinary manner as Stephen, and thus behold the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56), and are not permitted with Paul to enter the third heaven to behold Him there in close proximity (which, however, we shall be permitted to do after death), we may and must by faith behold "Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:9). Let faith therefore be for you the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; and occupy yourself in beholding the glorified Jesus. It is not sufficient merely to observe the truths which are presented in Scripture by considering the letter of the Word, but one must penetratingly reflect upon the matters themselves. To only focus upon oneself, surrender by faith to God, do battle against sin, mortify the flesh, deny yourself, and seek for a quiet and peaceful conscience in the blood of Christ, are not sufficient in and of themselves. It is not sufficient to reflect only upon Christ's humiliation, seeking and beholding in His humiliation the atonement. To reflect only on these matters is the cause of much

deadness, unbelief, and instability, and it also prevents spiritual growth as well as the proper glorification of Jesus. However, the consideration of Christ's humiliation in conjunction with His exaltation will yield much growth, comfort, and strength. That is the beginning of heaven, where the beholding of Christ in His glory will be the eternal joy and occupation of the elect according to the prayer of Christ, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me" (John 17:24). To facilitate our engagement in this here below, He also reveals Himself as such here upon earth, according to His promise, to those who love Him. "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). The promise will motivate one to seek; such revelations will stir up love; love will cause one to think upon Him; and meditation upon Him is rewarded by ever clearer revelations. Thus the one brings forth the other. Accustom yourselves to reflect upon this glorified Jesus, and let your meditation upon Him be enlarged in various respects.

First, view the glorified Jesus as God. Jesus our Mediator is not only a glorious and eminent man, but He is, "over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5), "the true God" (1 John 5:20), "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3), "in the form of God," and "... equal with God" (Php 2:6). This presents an infinite dimension for reflection. When the soul is permitted to behold Jesus as the only and eternal God and may behold Him in His perfections, doing so one by one, becoming aware of His all-sufficiency, sovereign majesty, omnipotence, righteousness, glory, love, and mercy, beholding in each of them an infinity which cannot be perceived, much less comprehended by the insignificant intellect of a creature, the soul will lose itself. If one may do so, not by mere intellectual reflection, nor gathering it from hearsay, but rather with experiential vision, presently experiencing and tasting the efficacy and sweetness of these incomprehensible perfections; if one considers Him as Mediator in all this and that He manifests Himself as such, considering that "in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9), that is, truly and evidently; and if one may behold "His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14); then, I repeat, the soul will lose itself. Then, then is the soul fit and wholeheartedly inclined to give Him honor and glory and, while bowing before Him, to "speak of the glorious honour of His majesty" (Psalms 145:5).

Secondly, proceed and behold Jesus, crowned with honor and majesty, as Mediator amidst the glory bestowed upon Him. Paul speaks of this when he writes, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:9-11); "Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Hebrews 1:4). Of this glory Peter, James, and John saw but a small glimpse upon the holy mount, as is to be observed in Matthew 17:2-5. How much more glory has He now received, having conquered all, and being set down with His Father in His throne (Revelation 3:21)! There He is as conqueror, honored as the Savior of all His elect as being the One by whom the manifold wisdom, grace, righteousness, truth, etc., is revealed to angels and men. There He is declared to be and is "appointed heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2). Without exception He is heir of all things in heaven and upon earth, thus also of sun, moon, and stars, of rain, wind, hail, and snow, and of all animals upon earth, from the greatest animal to the very smallest ant. Yes, He is heir of all the ungodly and even of the devils, using them according to His

will to the benefit of His fellowheirs and to the glory of His Father. He does not merely bear the title of heir, but is heir in very deed. He has been appointed to possess, use, and govern this His inheritance. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18); "I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psalms 2:8); "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalms 72:8); "For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25); He is the great High Priest at the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:14-16); He, as the only great Prophet "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Acknowledge Him to be such and give Him glory.

Thirdly, proceed by considering how all behave themselves towards Him. "All the angels of God worship Him" (Hebrews 1:6). They are ready at His bidding, and He sends them forth to execute His commands (Revelation 1:1). Upon receiving a singular command from Him, they execute it as "a flaming fire" (Psalms 104:4). Take note also how the devils tremble before His glory. He has conquered them, having bruised their head, and in their opposition they are so under His control that they cannot even enter into the swine without His permission. Reflect upon the fact that all believers throughout the world look to Him only and meet in Him as the focal point in whom their view of faith culminates. Consider how they all flee to Him as their salvation, how they trust under His wings and humbly bow themselves before Him, exclaiming, "Glory and honor, and blessing, and power, be with the Lamb for ever and ever." When a believer may attentively reflect upon all these matters, how frequently His heart will then be ignited in love! He will rejoice over Christ's glory, and as it were hear the doxologies of the angels, the glorified saints, and believers upon earth. He will find his heart ready to join this singing multitude, jubilating with them, "sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of His holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: He is greatly exalted" (Psalms 47:6-9). In order to further stir up our souls to engage in this holy reflection, consider the following motives: First, your mind cannot be void of thoughts, and the more glorious the object is upon which it reflects, the more the mind will delight itself in this and increase in perfection. Our understanding cannot focus on a more glorious object, however, than the glorified Jesus, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). That which is of the world is too base, unrefined, and defiled for your mind to be occupied with. Why would you focus your eye upon that which is nothing, that is, upon that which, if God is not to be observed in it, is not more than a shadow and a transitory vanity that harms, oppresses, and corrupts your soul? This glorified Jesus is beyond the reach of the children of this world, and therefore they gravitate towards occupying their minds with earthly objects and find some delight in doing so, there being nothing else for them. But believers, you who know and love Jesus, with what else should the eye of your understanding be occupied than in beholding the King in His beauty (Isaiah 33:17)? If one begins to get a view of Him, all that is here below will of itself lose its luster and glory and it will be a light task to withdraw your love and attachment from the earth. Be ashamed that your eye so frequently turns away from Jesus. You will experience daily that this prevents your soul from being joyful and in a heavenminded frame, and that it will cause much darkness. It will cause the soul gradually to gravitate towards earthly things. Frequently much time and labor are required to be loosened once

again from all these earthly affairs in order to have fellowship with Jesus in solitude and detachment from the world, and to view Him with the eyes of a dove.

Secondly, there is nothing more delightful for a child of God than to behold Jesus. It is God's desire that His children be joyful, for He frequently exhorts them to this, promising that He will meet "him that rejoiceth" (Isaiah 64:5). There is nothing in which they find more inward and consistent joy, than in beholding the glorified Jesus. Therefore let your meditations of Him be sweet. After having sweet communion with the Lord, Moses had liberty to express the desire found in His soul, saying, "I beseech thee, show me Thy glory" (Exodus 33:18). The Lord was so good that He did not entirely deny him this request. He said to Moses that he was too weak to endure the luster of His glory. He would nevertheless show him His glory by causing His Name to pass by his countenance and by proclaiming that Name -- which indeed occurred (Exodus 34:6).

Reflect upon this and judge whether there be anything more desirable and delightful for you than the following: Suppose that the Lord Jesus were to take you by the hand and lead you into His inner chamber, revealing to you all the heavenly mysteries pertaining to the work of redemption, revealing Himself to you in His divine perfections and in all the glory He has received as Mediator. Let us suppose furthermore that He would assure you with love that all His glory and fullness is for you and to your benefit, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have been mutually engaged to exalt you to incomprehensible and unspeakable felicity, and to satisfy and encompass you both now and hereafter in eternity with His love and all-sufficiency. In your opinion, can there be anything more delightful than this? It was with this promise that the Lord Jesus comforted and gladdened His disciples. "I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:21; John 14:23). Add to this all the expressions you have read about this in God's Word, all the delightful accounts of the godly who have ever beheld the Lord, also what you have ever been privileged to experience yourself. I am certain that your heart will long for this with much desire and that you will grieve over having ever turned your eye from this delightful view, this being the reason why He has withdrawn Himself from your vision. May this therefore stir you up to look unto and focus on Him continually in His glory until you may have a clearer and closer view of Him and delight yourself in that view.

Thirdly, it is not only wonderful and delightful to behold Jesus crowned with honor and glory, but such beholding also has a sanctifying and soul-transforming effect. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). As Moses' countenance shone after forty days of fellowship with the Lord on the mountain, those who may behold the glory of Christ will likewise shine forth with such a holy luster. This is indeed that which you long, pray, and sigh for. This you may attain to, however, by beholding Jesus' glory, for:

(1) The soul which is privileged to behold Him as such, will be so filled with sanctification and joy, that it neither desires nor thinks of any other delight. Therefore all that is desirous to the eye, all earthly beauty, and all that is sweet and delightful does not affect such a soul. These things have lost all their glory, effect, and sweetness, and there is no longer any love for them. The soul only delights in being near to the Lord.

(2) The soul, finding such delight and felicity in this beholding of Jesus, would not willingly lose this view. Since he knows that sin would cause this view to be obscured as by a cloud, he will be most

careful to refrain from sin. In view of the promise, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8), he will painstakingly take heed of his heart, seeking to keep it pure and undefiled, and thus always be in a frame in which to see God.

(3) He who beholds Jesus in His glory will behold in Him a worthiness of honor, service, and obedience. Such a view will cause the soul, without much argument or contemplation, to oblige itself with all willingness and readiness to be all for Him, and to do whatever is pleasing to Him.

(4) In viewing the perfections of the glorified Jesus, the soul will behold His holiness in all its eminence; not as at Horeb, where it instilled fear and pronounced a curse upon transgressors, but in its essential nature and delightful beauty. Such a view will at once stir up all the affections of a lover of Jesus, causing a desire to be holy as He is holy.

(5) The soul who may behold the glorified Jesus will become aware of the eternal and perfect love of Jesus towards him, as well as of the preciousness of Jesus Himself. It cannot be otherwise but that the soul will thereby be excited to love Him in return. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The nature of love is such that it will do all in its power to please the one who is loved, while at the same time attempting to be conformed to this beloved one. Behold, thus the one who may behold Jesus in His glory will be set aflame with love, which is the fountain, heart, and very essence of holiness.

(6) Beholding Him as such will cause the soul to be more intimately united with Jesus; and hence, the more virtue will go out from Him. The more the soul may receive the strength and influence of the Spirit, the less strength sin will have within him, and the more zealous he will be to be pleasing unto the Lord. From all this it may therefore convincingly be concluded that beholding the glorified Jesus has a sanctifying influence.

I know quite well that not everyone of the godly is privileged, with the three disciples, to behold Jesus in His glory on the mount, or with Paul, to be drawn into the third heaven. I also know that some who read this will become distressed, and sink down in discouragement, thinking, "How dark it is within me, how inferior is my spiritual life; never during my lifetime shall I attain to such a view of Jesus in His glory!" Know, however, that to be acquainted with these matters mentioned, to perceive a stirring of love, a desire, and a yearning for these things within as you hear or read concerning them, and to be distressed and sorrowful because you are so far from all this, are evidences of the principles of grace. Therefore such motions ought to stir us up to actively strive for this. If we persevere in prayer, waiting, hoping, and believing, we shall discover that the Lord will reveal Himself to such. Therefore, "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart" (Psalms 31:24).

028. Chapter 24: Concerning the Church

----- CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR ----- Concerning the Church

After having briefly presented to you the nature of the covenant of grace, we promised to discuss three subjects more extensively: 1) the Surety of the covenant; 2) the partakers of the covenant, who constitute the church; and 3) the ways whereby the Lord Jesus leads His partakers of this covenant to glory, or the benefits of which the Lord makes them partakers. The first subject we have already discussed in chapters 17-23, and we will now proceed to discuss the second subject: the partakers of the covenant. When considered together, they are referred to as the church or congregation. The Church: Known from the Word of God

First, it is necessary to state clearly and succinctly what the church is in her essential nature, in order that everyone may know which congregation he ought to join. They who belong to the true church ought to rejoice, exclaiming, "Christ is here!" for Christ only dwells in the true church. Only there, by His Spirit, is He engaged in the work of conversion, consolation, and sanctification. "For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:3).

Therefore one must search the Word of God to discern which congregation constitutes the church. I repeat, search the Word, for the veracity of God's Word is not determined by the church, even though she preserves, protects, and proclaims the Word entrusted to her (Romans 3:2), and thus is called "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). The true church, however, is identified by the Word of God, for she is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2:20). Scripture also teaches that one must first be instructed before one can be admitted to the sacraments, that is, be admitted into the church community. This is confirmed in the following texts: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them" (Matthew 28:19); "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41); "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus ... and the eunuch said ... what doth hinder me to be baptized" (Acts 8:35-36).

Since there are so many churches which call themselves the Christian church, we are at present all the more obligated to search the Word of God in order to ascertain which is the true church, and which congregation holds to the truth. He who therefore earnestly searches God's Word by either reading it, hearing it read, or hearing it preached, and who perseveringly, humbly, and heartily prays to be led into the truth, may expect that the Lord will bring him to the true church. If he is already in the true church, he may also expect that the Lord, to his joy, will assure him of this.

Secondly, the word "church" occurs seventy-seven times in the King James Version of the Bible. [Note: à Brakel states that "kerk," which we translate as "church" is not found in Scripture. This is true in the Statenvertaling, but not in the KJV; hence we revised the paragraph. Whenever the KJV uses "church," the Statenvertaling uses "gemeente," which is the equivalent of "congregation."] It is a transliteration of the Greek word kuriake, of which "church" is the abbreviated, anglicized form. It means, "that which belongs to the Lord." One will thus find the word kuriako in the phrase "the

Lord's Supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20), and the word *kuriake* in the phrase "the day of the Lord." This is likewise true for the church of the Lord, that is, the congregation. The word congregation is generally used in the Old Testament and church in the New Testament, both of which are expressed by various words in the original languages, such as *qahal*. "Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints *èdah*" (Psalms 89:5); "... their congregation *ekklesia* shall be established before Me" (Jeremiah 30:20); "... when ye come together in the church" (1 Corinthians 11:18). The word *synagogé* is not translated as "congregation," but as "gathering." It sometimes refers to the building in which the congregation gathers, and at other times to the congregation itself which gathers there, be they Jews or Christians. "For if there come unto your assembly (*synagogé*)," etc. (James 2:2). These words in their original meaning refer to an orderly gathering of people which has been summoned together, in contrast to a disorderly multitude of people. In our language "congregation" or "church" refers to the mutual fellowship of those who have been summoned together and gather with Christ as their Head. In our treatment of this subject, we neither understand the word "church" to refer to a house or building in which the congregation gathers to hear the Word of God and use the sacraments, nor to the elders of the church, or consistory as representatives of the church, such as in Matthew 18:17, where we read, "... tell it unto the church." Rather, we understand by "church" the congregation of the people.

We wish to establish at the outset that there are not two or more churches, but only one Christian church. This one church we now wish to consider together. This one church is made up of all the elect who have been called from the beginning of the world and are yet to be called until the end of the world. They are Christ's peculiar people (Titus 2:14). "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23); "... Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). This one congregation is partially in heaven, and is called the church triumphant, to which reference is made in Revelation 7:9-16. This, however, is not the subject of discussion here. This congregation exists also partially upon earth and is called the church militant. It is the church militant which is the subject of this chapter. One can view this church either in its entirety, dispersed throughout the entire world, or as individual congregations in a nation, city, or village. As such one can refer to the church of England, of the Netherlands, or of Rotterdam.

Clarification of the Invisible/Visible Church Distinction This one church in its militant state upon earth manifests itself at times more openly in her public assemblies, confession, and holiness. She is then called the visible church. At other times she is more hidden from the eyes of the world by prevailing errors, ungodliness, or persecutions. Then she is referred to as the invisible church (Revelation 12:14). This militant church can be viewed either in her internal, spiritual frame, or in her public gatherings. Her internal, spiritual frame, which consists of faith, a mystical union with Christ, and the spiritual life of the soul, is invisible and cannot be observed with the physical eye. The gatherings where God's Word is heard and the sacraments are used, as well as her public profession in times of prosperity, are public and visible. Thus, in some respects the church is visible, and in some respects invisible. However, one may not divide the church into a visible and invisible church. One and the same person is invisible as far as the soul, will, intellect, and affections are concerned, and he is visible as far as his body and motions are concerned. As one person cannot be divided into an invisible and a visible person, one may not divide the church into a visible and invisible church, for then it would seem as if there were two churches, each being a

different church.

One may also not divide the church into a visible and invisible church as far as the members themselves are concerned, as if the one had different members from the other. Then all the elect, that is, those who truly have been called and converted, would mentally be separated from all others in the church and constitute the invisible church, whereas converted and unconverted together, gathering in one church, and having only in common the external call, historical faith, confession of the truth, and the external use of the sacraments, would constitute the visible church. This is, in our opinion, an erroneous view, generating many confusing thoughts and expressions concerning the church. When a speaker or writer refers to the church, one will then be in doubt as to whether he is speaking of the so-called invisible or visible church.

We maintain that one may not separate the visible and invisible church in such a manner, for, first, I do not find that the terms visible and invisible church are used in God's Word with that connotation, nor do I find the description of such a distinction.

Secondly, this distinction is founded upon a false supposition -- as if the unconverted are truly members of the church with equal right, that is, in its external and visible gathering, and therefore have a right to use the sacraments, something which we deny expressly below. If the unconverted are not members of the church, even when she is visible, the aforementioned distinction is of necessity irrelevant.

Thirdly, such a distinction infers the existence of two churches which are essentially different from each other. From a spiritual perspective true believers constitute the church by reason of a true, spiritual, and believing union with Christ and with each other. If the unconverted, together with the converted would constitute a church on the basis of equal rights, this would have to be of an essentially different nature, whereby members of distinctly different natures would constitute one body and one church, even though the unconverted are not spiritually united to Christ and believers. If there are two essential manifestations, there must also be two essentially different bodies and churches, whereas we confess that there is but one church.

Fourthly, if in this respect there were a visible and an invisible church, one consisting only of true believers (due to a spiritual union) and one consisting of converted and unconverted together by way of an external union, then believers would simultaneously belong to two churches, one being invisible and the other visible. They would thus be in one church to which salvation is not promised, and in another to which salvation is promised. To hold such a view is as absurd as to propose the existence of two churches.

Objection #1: There is a twofold calling, the one being internal and the other external. There is also a twofold faith: a saving, and a historical or temporal faith. There is a twofold holiness, the one being external and the other in truth, and there is a twofold participation of benefits, the one being external and the other an internal participation in the real benefits. Consequently, there is also an external and internal church.

Answer: (1) From this proposition it must be concluded that there are two churches, which is contrary to the Bible. (2) The external call, historical or temporal faith, external holiness, and external participation in external privileges, do not constitute true membership of the church, which is spiritual in nature. Consequently, such a church cannot be the true church of Christ.

Objection #2: We do not think of two churches when we speak of an external or visible church, and of an internal or invisible church. Rather, we understand this to refer to a twofold perspective of the same church.

Answer: (1) If one maintains that the one church consists of different members from the other, there being a different manner of being united to her, one is not proposing that there are two aspects of the same church. Rather, it is only being indicated that there are two essentially different churches, with two types of members essentially different in nature which make up the church, and two ways whereby one can be united to her.

(2) The external relationship neither makes one a true member of the church, nor constitutes an external church, just as an external relationship with a corporation or business does not make one a true member and partner of it. It also does not cause the corporation or business to be viewed in a different perspective.

(3) No external relationship to the church gives the unconverted the right to use the sacraments, and thus unconverted and converted together cannot constitute an external church. There is no true church of Christ unless all who are members of it have a right to partake of the sacraments.

(4) If one understands the differentiation between the external and internal church to be but a twofold view and perspective of one and the same church, and does not hold to a twofold membership relationship, all is well and our proposition is confirmed: The differentiation between an external and internal church on the basis of membership and relationship is not good. One and the same church, consisting of true believers only, can either be viewed in reference to her internal spiritual condition, or in reference to her external manifestation in the world. This is what we have stated. From that which has been said it is now evident in what manner we view the church in this treatise: We speak of a church consisting of true believers only, which on earth wars against her enemies and for the faith, being at times more and at times less visible to the human eye. As far as her internal, spiritual frame is concerned, she is invisible; but she is visible in reference to her public assemblies and members. As we shall now consider the matter itself, we shall first give a description of the church, and subsequently give an explanation of all her elements. The Church Defined The church is a holy, catholic, Christian congregation, consisting of true believers only, who by the Holy Spirit have been called through the Word of God, are separate from the world, and are united to their Head and each other with a spiritual bond, and thus are united in one spiritual body. All of this is manifested by a true confession of Christ and of His truth, and in striving against their and Christ's enemies, doing battle with spiritual weapons under the command of their Head Jesus Christ to the glory of God and their salvation. Let us now consider the individual elements of this description. The church is first of all a congregation. One individual person does not constitute a church or a congregation. The church is referred to as a house, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:9); as a flock, "... and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd" (John 10:16); as a body, "... and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22-23); as a nation, "But ye are ... an holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9); and as a kingdom, "... who hath called you unto His kingdom" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). However, one stone does not constitute a house, one sheep does not constitute a flock, one member is not a body, one person is not a nation, one person is not a kingdom -- and thus also one pope does not constitute a church, which papists claim to be the case. The True Church: A

Congregation of True Believers The church is a congregation of true believers. The unconverted, even though they have made confession of faith, have been accepted into the fellowship of the church, live without offense, and have been admitted to the use of the sacraments, the unconverted, I repeat, are not true members of the church. This is so whether the church is viewed in her internal, spiritual condition or in her public gatherings whereby she manifests herself externally to the world. The unconverted are not members of the external, visible church. Believers only constitute the true church. They alone are members of the church, regardless of how one views them. This is clearly stated in articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession of Faith, which read as follows:

Article 27

We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost. This Church hath been from the beginning of the world and will be to the end thereof; which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal King, which, without subjects He cannot be. And this holy Church is preserved or supported by God against the rage of the whole world; though she sometimes (for a while) appears very small, and in the eyes of men, to be reduced to nothing, as during the perilous reign of Ahab when nevertheless the Lord reserved unto him seven thousand men, who had not bowed their knees to Baal. Furthermore, this holy Church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed over the whole world; and yet is joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and the same spirit.

Article 28

We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved and out of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it, maintaining the unity of the Church, submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ; and as mutual members of the same body, serving to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them. And that this may be the more effectually observed, it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate themselves from those who do not belong to the Church, and to join themselves to this congregation, wheresoever God hath established it, even though the magistrates and edicts of princes be against it; yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporal punishment.

Therefore all those, who separate themselves from the same, or do not join themselves to it, act contrary to the ordinance of God.

Article 29

We believe, that we ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true Church, since all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of the Church. But we speak not here of hypocrites, who are mixed in the Church with the good, yet are not of the Church, though externally in it; but we say that the body and communion of the true Church must be distinguished from all sects who call themselves the Church.

It is first of all evident that the Belgic Confession of Faith makes no mention of an invisible church which would consist, by way of mental deduction, of none but believers only, in distinction from a visible church which would consist of both converted and unconverted. This we have rejected earlier. Rather, it speaks of a church, existing and gathered upon earth, which is more or less visible. Anyone who attentively examines the words of the confession will readily discern this, for it makes mention of that church 1) in which hypocrites are to be found (Article 29), 2) to which one ought to join himself, "wheresoever God hath established it," subjecting oneself to its instruction and discipline (Article 28), 3) against which are magistrates and the edicts of princes, and the joining of which could result in death or any other corporal punishment during times of persecution (Article 28), and 4) which one can distinguish from other sects. All of this can only be applicable to the visible church as she gathers to hear God's Word and use the sacraments.

Secondly, the confession states that this church, which is more or less visible, consists only of true believers, when 1) it describes the church as "a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost" (Article 27), 2) it declares that "hypocrites, who are mixed in the church with the good, yet are not of the church, though externally in it" (Article 29). This confirms the conviction of the Reformed church that only believers are members of the church, while the unconverted are not members of the church, though they be externally in it.

Objection: The confession speaks of that church outside of which there is no salvation. Salvation can, however, be obtained outside of the visible and external church. Many are saved, even though they are neither baptized nor partake of the Lord's Supper -- yes, who are as yet in the Roman Catholic Church. The confession therefore speaks of the invisible church, which consists of believers only, and thus not of the visible church.

Answer: (1) At the time of the Reformation, when there was fierce persecution, many did not dare join themselves to the congregations of believers, thus pretending (as many still do) that salvation can be obtained in every religion. This the confession here refutes.

(2) It is an obvious truth that there is no salvation outside of the church; he who does not have the church as his mother, does not have God as His Father, for the church alone has the truth and preaches the truth, without which no one can be converted and saved.

(3) The confession does not state that no one can be saved unless they have been accepted as a member, are baptized, and attend the Lord's Supper, but rather that apart from the church there is no salvation, and that outside of her neither the way of salvation is taught nor the means unto salvation are to be found.

(4) Unbaptized converted persons are saved by means of the church, which puts God's Word at their disposal and proclaims that Word to them. If someone from the realm of popery is converted, this does not occur by way of papal doctrine, but by the Word of truth which the papacy has still allowed to remain in the church.

We have thus demonstrated that the Belgic Confession of Faith declares that only true believers are members of the church, and that the unconverted within the church are not members. The truth of the aforesaid is established by the following arguments: First, an external covenant between God and man, of which the unconverted would be partakers, has not been established

either in the Old or New Testament. Consequently, there is also no external church of which unconverted persons are members. The first proposition has been proven exhaustively in chapter 16; the second proposition is then certain, since the church is founded upon the covenant. As the covenant is, so is the church.

Secondly, all true members of the church are entitled to the use of the sacraments, whereby the benefits of the covenant are sealed to them. The bread and wine are the communion of the body and blood of Christ, which is broken and shed for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Romans 4:11; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Matthew 26:26-28). The unconverted, however, have no right to use the sacraments, since they have neither part nor lot in the sealed benefits, and they thus eat and drink judgment to themselves. The Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper states: "All these, while they continue in such sins, shall abstain from this meat (which Christ hath ordained only for the faithful), lest their judgment and condemnation be made the heavier." Thus, the unconverted are not members of the church.

Thirdly, the very essence of the church, which gathers in an external form, is union with Christ and each other by the Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper speaks of this when it quotes 1 Corinthians 10:17, "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." It further states, "that we by the same Spirit (which dwelleth in Christ as in the head, and in us as His members), might have true communion with Him; ... besides, that we by this same Spirit may also be united as members of one body in true brotherly love." The unconverted, however, do not have this Spirit. "These be they ... sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 1:19). Since the unconverted do not have the Spirit, they are none of Christ (Romans 8:9). Thus, they are no members of the church, for her members are mutually united by the Spirit and are Christ's.

Fourthly, the name "church" is not applicable to the unconverted. The church is called, "... the house of God" (1 Timothy 3:15); a spiritual house, built up of lively stones (1 Peter 2:5); the fold of Christ (John 10:16); "... the kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13); "the congregation of the saints" (Psalms 89:5); "... the assembly of the upright" (Psalms 111:1). The apostle, when writing to the congregation, denominates them as those "that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2); "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1). All of this, however, cannot be stated concerning the unconverted. Thus, they do not belong to the church, and consequently are not members of her.

Fifthly, this is also evident in 1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." Those who went out were the unconverted, who prior to their departure were in the church but nevertheless did not belong to the church. Thus, the unconverted, even though they are in the church, are not of the church, and therefore are no members of her.

Objections Answered Concerning Membership in the True Church

Objection #1: It is evident that a large multitude of unconverted persons associate with the church, are accepted as her members, remain members there, and partake of the sacraments. Therefore they are members of the church indeed.

Answer: (1) It is one thing to associate with the church and to be accepted as members, and another thing to be true members. The latter does not proceed from the first, for the acceptance of men as members is performed by men, who see only what is before their eyes and cannot judge according to the heart, leaving this to Him who knows the hearts. Regeneration or the probability of regeneration has not been established as a rule by which the elders of the church accept members. Rather, they are judged by their confession of the truth and their response to this truth, and by the manifestation of a life which does not contradict their confession. The rest is left to them and to the Lord.

(2) It is one thing to join the church externally, and it is another thing to speak of an external church. Even though they are externally in the church, this does not mean that there is an external church of which they are bona fide members. Membership in an external church to which the promise of salvation is not annexed is not their objective, but rather a church as being a fellowship within which they may be saved. To this church they apply themselves, but only externally, and not in truth with a converted and believing heart. Therefore they are no members, even though men view them as such externally. They are thus within the church as a poisonous fruit which is attached to a good tree with good fruits. They are therefore within the church as strangers, who for some time dwell in a house, but whom no one deems to be family members. Because of this external association with the church there is also an external relationship to the Lord Jesus as King of His church, as well as her true members, and they enjoy the external privileges of the church. Their entrance into the church, and the church's acceptance of them does not make them true members of the church. Such can only come about by faith and repentance.

Objection #2: On a threshing floor both wheat and chaff are to be found. The church is the threshing floor, and both chaff and wheat are in an identical relationship to the threshing floor. In like manner the unconverted and the converted belong to the same church.

Answer: There is no argument over the fact that both good and evil men are to be found in the church. We are not proposing, however, the chaff to be a "member" of the threshing floor, that is, the church. Chaff is present on the threshing floor as chaff and not as wheat. All who are in the church are not therefore of the church.

Objection #3: Consider Matthew 13:24-25; Matthew 13:47. On the same field good fruit and tares were to be found, and the same net contained good and bad fishes. Thus, in the church both the good and the evil are equally members of the church.

Answer: The field does not represent the church, but the world (vs. 38), upon which both good and evil men reside. The fish net which gathers all fish, is examined by the fishermen, and only the good fish are placed in the barrels. One must keep the objective of the parable in view, which is not to show who are true members of the church, but what the end will be of the good and the evil. This passage is therefore not applicable here.

Objection #4: One could object by referring to 2 Timothy 2:20 : "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." The house is the church, and the vessels are the members of the church. Among these members are also the unconverted, who are referred to as vessels of dishonor.

Answer: (1) The vessels in a house are not household members. Likewise the vessels of dishonor -- the unconverted -- are not members; they do not truly belong to the household.

(2) Again, one should not become entangled in details, but take note of the objective, which is to demonstrate who are the good and the evil within the church, a fact we readily admit. Not one word is mentioned here, however, whether or not they are true members of the church. Even if they are in the church, they are not therefore of the church.

Objection #5: If one maintains that only the converted are members of the church, one proposes that there is a pure church upon earth, which is contrary to the Bible and experience.

Answer: (1) True believers themselves are still subject to many impurities, and are far from being perfect. (2) By maintaining that only true believers are members of the church, we do not claim that there are no unconverted in the congregation, but that they are not present as true members there. There neither has been nor will ever be a church upon earth in which there are no unconverted, that is, those who merely travel along; yes, the latter are generally in the majority. There is a significant difference between being in the church, and being of the church.

Objection #6: If only the truly converted are true members of the church, the true church which we need to identify is not recognizable, since one cannot be certain of the conversion of others.

Answer: One ought not to identify the church by regeneration, but by the true doctrine, and the sanctification of the confessing members conjoined with this true doctrine. These two are identifiable, and wherever these two are present, the true church is to be found. Whether someone possesses these two in truth or in pretense is a personal matter, however, and is not to be a distinguishing mark for the church for others.

It thus remains certain that only true believers who congregate upon earth are members of the church, it being more or less visible. The unconverted are therefore not members of the church, though they be externally in her. The Characteristics of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Christian

We have thus observed that the church is a congregation -- a congregation consisting of true believers. We shall now proceed with further analysis of the description previously given, and present the characteristics of the church; she is one, holy, catholic, and Christian.

First of all the church is one. This does not refer to locality, she being dispersed to many places upon earth, consisting of many individual churches -- and thus not limited or bound to one particular place, be it Jerusalem, Rome, or any other locality. Her oneness does not relate to her external manifestation in the world, for she is like the moon which increases and decreases. Sometimes she manifests herself with more luster than at other times; sometimes she is more dispersed, and at other times occupies much less territory. The church is one, however, in nature and essence, being identical at all times and in all places, wherever that may be. She is one in reference to the same doctrine of immutable truth, and to the same faith, Spirit, and holiness. This is confirmed in Holy Writ. "My dove, My undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother" (Song of Solomon 6:9); "... and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd" (John 10:16); "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). This unity is manifested when she

assemblies to hear the Word of God, in her use of the holy sacraments, in her separating from all other assemblies which do not have pure doctrine, and in barring entrance to and expelling all with whom she differs in doctrine. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed!" (2 John 1:10).

Secondly, the church is a holy gathering. She is denominated as such. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9); "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1). In the salutations to the congregations unto whom the apostle Paul wrote his letters, he calls them saints (cf. Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:2). As the church, from Adam to the day of judgment, has at all times been one, she will likewise be holy at all times.

One ought not to be of the opinion that the holiness of the Old Testament church was but a typical holiness, a depiction of the true holiness of the New Testament, consisting only in separation from other nations, in washings, in abstinence from unclean and the use of clean food, etc. Rather, true regeneration and sanctification were a reality in the Old as well as in the New Testament church.

(1) Peter calls the prophets holy men of God (2 Peter 1:21). (2) In the Old Testament they had true faith in the Messiah (cf. Psalms 16:10; 2 Corinthians 4:13). Paul gives an account of an entire listing of believers from the Old Testament in Hebrews 11:1-40. Where there is true faith, however, there will also be true holiness, for faith worketh by love (Galatians 5:6), which is the fulfillment of the law.

(3) Believers in the Old Testament were exercised as far as true sanctification is concerned; they prayed for strength and were engaged in spiritual warfare and in ordering their life according to the Lord's commandments (cf. Psalms 51:12; Psalms 43:3-4; Psalms 119:1-176 in its entirety).

(4) The uncircumcised in heart (as far as they themselves were concerned) were no less permitted to come into God's house than were the uncircumcised in the flesh. "No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into My sanctuary" (Ezekiel 44:9).

(5) Those ceremonial cleansings were meant for them, and not merely given to typify the true holiness which people would have in the New Testament. We may still profit from these ceremonial cleansings, and by them be stirred up to internal and external holiness. They were, however, primarily intended for the believers of the Old Testament, pointing them to their pollution and directing them to the Messiah, in order to be cleansed in His blood. These ceremonial cleansings obligated and exhorted them to true purity, both internally and externally, to cleanse them "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Objection #1: This contradicts what Paul states in Hebrews 9:9-10; Hebrews 9:13-14 "Which was a figure for the time then present ... that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Answer: This text does not contradict what has been said. (1) It does not state that they had but ceremonial holiness. (2) The text states that all these things in and of themselves did not constitute true holiness, which we readily admit. Just as at present external church attendance, the water of baptism, the bread of the Lord's Supper, and the external use of the sacraments do not constitute true holiness; both then and now these external matters must by faith be united to Christ Himself.

(3) This text does state that these things pointed and led them to Christ, but not that these things were examples, typifying the true holiness which the church of the New Testament would have. In calling the church holy we do not refer merely to her separation from all assemblies other than the church, but to her belonging to God. It also does not only refer to the imputed holiness which the church has in Christ; rather, the reference is primarily to inherent holiness and godliness. As such the church is holy 1) because she consists of truly converted and believing members only, 2) because only there they are instructed concerning and exhorted to true holiness, 3) and because there true holiness is to be found, manifesting itself before the eyes of all who are able to distinguish true holiness from the counterfeit holiness which may manifest itself in other assemblies. This is not to suggest that the church is pure and perfect, for all her members have but a small beginning of this holiness and still have much corruption within themselves. Furthermore, there are many in the church who are unconverted and thus are not true members of the church. There are always ungodly individuals in the church -- chaff together with the kernels, and tares among the wheat. Consider the church from Adam to Christ and you will discover that God was not pleased with most of our fathers (1 Corinthians 10:5). During the time of Christ the Jewish church was very corrupt. Even baptized disciples turned away from Christ in multitudes (John 6:66). Paul declared that the congregation in Corinth was carnal (1 Corinthians 3:3), fornication being practiced among her (1 Corinthians 5:1). Some attended the Lord's Supper while drunk (1 Corinthians 11:21), and some did not have knowledge of God (1 Corinthians 15:34). In the congregation of Galatia there were such who should have been excommunicated but remained in the congregation (Galatians 5:12). The apostle Paul declared of many in the church, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Php 2:21). Jude said concerning the church, "For there are certain men crept in unawares ... ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ ... for they have gone in the way of Cain. ... These are spots in your feasts of charity ... clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead ... raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars" (Jude 1:4; Jude 1:11-13). The Lord Jesus said concerning the congregation of Ephesus in Revelation 2:4, that she had left her first love. Of the congregation of Pergamos He said, "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam. ... So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" (Revelation 2:14-15). In the congregation of Thyatira they permitted that woman Jezebel to teach, who seduced the servants of Christ to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols (Revelation 2:20). The congregation of Sardis had the name that she lived, but she was dead, there being but few who walked with Christ (Revelation 3:1-4). The congregation of Laodicea imagined that she was rich and increased with goods, but meanwhile she was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). These matters serve us as warnings to keep ourselves from partaking of these sins. They also teach us that impurity ought not to motivate us to defect from the church and attempt to establish another, purer church. At all times and even in our days, such have not fared well and have given cause for offense, there being a

manifest token of God's wrath, as we can observe with the Labadists, etc. The third characteristic of the church is her catholicity. There are many who are very fond of the word "catholic," as if the word were synonymous with the true church. "Catholic" is a derivative of a Greek word which, however, is not found in the Bible. It neither means "orthodox," nor "true," but "universal." In Hebrews 12:23 we find the word *paneguris*, which is translated as "general assembly." Thus, the church is universal. This is first of all true relative to the number of the elect to be gathered from the beginning to the end of the world, consisting of both the triumphant and militant church. Scripture speaks of the church in this manner. "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:22-23); "... and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22-23); "... Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it" (Ephesians 5:25-26).

Secondly, the congregation of the New Testament is called universal in distinction from the church of the Old Testament. The church was then limited to one nation: the seed of Abraham. If someone from another nation became a true believer, he would be incorporated into the nation of Israel and be called a Jewish proselyte. That church was limited to Canaan and the seat of its religion was in Jerusalem. In the New Testament, however, the church is catholic, that is, universal as far as locality, nationality, and time is concerned. She is now dispersed over the entire world, and is found now here and then there. She consists of various nations, and it is immaterial whether one is a Jew or a Gentile. She will never cease to exist, but will endure until the coming of Christ on the day of judgment.

Thirdly, the church is universal as far as doctrine is concerned, which always has been and will be the same. The external practice of religion was once and for all changed by Christ, for prior to the advent of Christ, it was practiced by way of shadows which gave instruction concerning Christ. After Christ the external practice of religion was without shadows, consisting only in Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, along with water, bread, and wine, as signs and seals of the covenant of grace -- all ratified by the blood of Christ. The fourth characteristic of the church is that she is Christian, being thus called: (1) after Christ, who is the singular and only Head of the church. "Christ is the Head of the church: and He is the Saviour of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). Christ is King of His church. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Psalms 2:6). (Having extensively demonstrated in the foregoing that Christ is the King of His Church, we shall not discuss His headship over the church any further here.) Christ is the Bridegroom of the church, she being continually presented as the bride in the entire Song of Songs. Consider also John 3:29, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." As Eve was called Manninne after the man -- and every woman is named after the man -- the church likewise is called "Christian" after Christ, and thus each believer is called a Christian (Acts 11:26). "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28); "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian" (1 Peter 4:16).

(2) She is named "Christian" because she alone embraces the doctrine of Christ, and the life of Christ manifests itself to some degree in her life. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection" (Hebrews 6:1); "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 1:9); "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). As the church has the doctrine of Christ, she likewise gives expression to His life to some

degree. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1); "... leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

Many assemblies conceal their errors by the use of the name "Christian." To distinguish these from each other, it has been determined by divine providence that each assembly would be called by a specific name, be it that they call themselves by this name, or that others call them such as an expression of rebuke, which generally was the case with those who initially propagated error. Thus, Papists are called after their head, the pope, or Roman Catholics after the city of Rome where his residence is and from where he propagates his errors. Mennonites[Note: Hereafter referred to as Anabaptists.] (Anabaptists) are named after Menno Simons, an expelled monk from Witmarsum in Friesland, the Netherlands. Arminians are named after Arminius, the deposed professor of the university of Leiden, Socinians after Socinus, and Lutherans after Luther. The True Church Refers to Herself as Reformed To distinguish the true church from all erroneous assemblies, we call ourselves Reformed -- not, however, in reference to doctrine, as if we had changed or improved the same. No, according to God's Word the truth remains impeccably preserved. We do so, however, in reference to errors which permeated the church. These the church has cast out, departing from Roman Catholic heresy by which she had been so long oppressed, and reforming the church according to the precepts of God's Word. Certain parties reproachfully call members of the true Reformed Church Calvinists after Calvin, minister in Geneva, who was one of the first to oppose Roman Catholic error. We say, "among the first," for neither he nor Luther, but Zwingli, was the first. We acknowledge Calvin as a member of the true church. He has done much to promote the truth, but he is neither the head of the church nor the one who prescribed the rule for life and doctrine. We neither magnify nor lean upon man. We do not follow human inventions nor call ourselves after men. If someone desires to name us after a man, he does so at his own peril. If in doing so he wishes to distinguish us as the true church from the false church, the matter itself is good, but not the manner. The True Church Is Separated from the World and United Internally This church, whose true characteristics we have presented, we previously described as an assembly separated from the world.

Every kingdom has its borders and border markings within which its subjects reside and by which they are separated from others. The kingdom of heaven is likewise separated from all nations, and functions independently without intertwining itself with other spheres of sovereignty. This separation does not pertain to locality, region, or city, as was true in the Old Testament, but she is separated from others by fellowship and confession. Thus, the church does not wish to have those within its community who still belong to the world or embrace a false religion. The church wishes to be separate in order that the kingdom of Christ may be all the more evident. This separation is expressed (1) in the following Old Testament texts: "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23:9); "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6). This is likewise true in the New Testament: "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them" (Acts 5:13); "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

(2) The church is therefore presented to us as being fenced in and enclosed by walls. "And He fenced it" (i.e., His vineyard) (Isaiah 5:2); "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem"

(Isaiah 62:6).

(3) For this reason the church has elders who preserve her separation, and keep her from intermingling with the world. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (Acts 20:28); "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls" (Hebrews 13:17). This is also confirmed by her orderly structure: "beholding your order" (Colossians 2:5).

(4) The church has keys to shut and to open (Matthew 16:19). "... if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:17); "But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:13). As the church is separated from the rest of the world, she is likewise united internally, which is evident from the word congregation itself, it being expressive of her internal fellowship. This is evident by virtue of her separation, and by way of comparison she is called a house which is built by the uniting of individual stones. She is called a body, consisting of many united members; a flock, consisting not of sheep who are dispersed but who are gathered together; and a kingdom in which the subjects are united for mutual protection. This union is realized first of all by the embracing of the same truth. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41).

Secondly, this union is realized by uniting with all those who embrace and confess the same truth. If someone confesses this truth only with his mouth, he himself is accountable. Those who desire a true unity have as their objective and heartfelt desire the uniting themselves with them who confess and experience the truth. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32); "... and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God ... they clave to their brethren" (Nehemiah 10:28-29); "That they all may be one" (John 17:21); "... that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Thirdly, this union comes about by the same Spirit. "We having the same Spirit of faith" (2 Corinthians 4:13); "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). They are all indwelt by one Spirit, who inspires, illuminates, regenerates, and sanctifies them all. They consequently have the same nature. As birds of a feather flock together [Note: The Dutch reads, "gelijk nu zoekt gelijk," which in our opinion is best translated with this well-known English proverb.] , they will of necessity unite together.

Fourthly, they are united by mutual love and peace. "... forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3); "Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:14).

Fifthly, they are united by having the identical objective: to promote the honor of Christ their Head. "... they are ... the glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians 8:23).

Sixthly, this engenders a mutual willingness to assist each other, to endure everything with each other -- yes, to die for each other. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (1 Corinthians 10:24); "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). The church does not spontaneously unite. It is not the result of human wisdom, but it is God, and God alone, who unites His own and gathers them together as a people, as a church. "The Lord added to the

church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47); "Who ... hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). "Them also I must bring" (John 10:16). The means by which the Lord gathers His church is the Word. "They shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd" (John 10:16); "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1:18); "... holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1). Whenever the Lord sends a servant or specific individual to a locality with the gospel, He holds Christ before such a nation by means of His Word. If someone is illuminated, believes, and is converted, he will immediately cleave to the one who preached Christ to him. These two will become the means of the conversion of a third person, and likewise of others. Such converted individuals will immediately join themselves to the others and become as one soul with them. Thus this congregation will grow and will manifest itself as a light in the darkness and as a city upon a hill. Everyone will hear her powerful testimony and observe her holy walk. This will engender esteem for this congregation in both hearers and observers. They will become internally convicted that they are not thus, and they will be convinced; or it will motivate them to oppose and eradicate her, not being able to endure this light which rebukes them, and consequently they will hate this congregation. Due to the luster of the church, the esteem which she enjoys among the population, and the mutual love observed within her, many will be attracted whose hearts are not true within, and they, though unconverted, will join themselves to this congregation, doing so in such large numbers that they become the majority. Such individuals are friends in public but enemies at heart. For when they, being within the congregation, perceive that the godly begin to know and rebuke them with words and deeds, they will manifest their nature and oppress the godly in the church more than the wicked will do from without. This oppression will unite the godly and engender strife without and within.

God, the Keeper of His Church As God gathers the church, He likewise also keeps her, so that the church is not eradicated. There has always been and will be a church upon earth as long as the world exists. Certain denominations in various localities can either become fully apostate concerning the faith and become heretical or be eradicated by persecution, but the church itself cannot be eradicated. If she is eradicated in one locality, she will grow again in a different locality. This is abundantly confirmed by experience. We do not merely maintain that there will always be believers and elect, who are dispersed in various places and living in isolation, but that there will always be a congregation -- this not being due to the steadfastness and strength of the church itself, but by the will and preserving power of God -- a church in which both visibility and corruption will fluctuate.

Question: Will there always be a church upon earth?

Answer: Yes. This is evident, first of all, from the promises of God. "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). If ever the church would be eradicated, the gates of hell, that is, the might of the devil, would have prevailed against her. This, however, will never occur, and thus the church will always remain. This is also evident in Matthew 28:20, where we read, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The apostles would not live that long, but their spiritual seed (that is, their children, the one generation after the other), and the Holy Scriptures recorded by them, would remain. Christ promises His assistance to these all the days until the end of the world, and in these children and by their writings they still live and speak. Thus the church continues to exist and will always remain in existence.

Secondly, this is also confirmed by the offices of the Lord Jesus. As Prophet, Priest, and King, He will endure forever. There can, however, be no body without a head, no king without subjects, no teaching prophets without pupils, no priest without a people for whom he prays, and no bridegroom without a bride. "Thou art a priest for ever" (Psalms 110:4); "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44); "For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

Thirdly, add to this experience that the Bible reveals to us the church from Adam to Christ, and after Christ, during the time of the apostles. Both church and secular history bear witness to the fact that the church has existed from the time of the apostles until now. Since she still exists, we therefore conclude that she will continue to exist in spite of all those who wish the contrary.

Objection #1: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth" (Luke 18:8). Is this not as much as saying, "I shall find no faith, and thus there will be no church"?

Answer: It is not inferred here that there will be no believers: this will most certainly be the case according to the words of the apostle in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. Rather, it means that there will be so few that it will be amazing indeed.

Objection #2: "That day shall not come except there come a falling away first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Total apostasy implies of necessity total eradication of the church. "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [the beast]" (Revelation 13:8). Where then will the godly be?

Answer: These and similar texts express the generality and magnitude of this apostasy, but do not include all without exception, for even at the time the church will be in the wilderness (Revelation 12:17); a seed will remain (Revelation 12:17). It is thus confirmed that the church will always remain, and will never be entirely eradicated. The Marks Whereby the Church Is Distinguished

Having considered the essential nature of the church, it is necessary to define some of the distinguishing marks whereby one may discern which is or is not the true church. I repeat, may discern; for all men are not acquainted with these marks, as there would not be so many who exclaim, "The church is here!" Not everyone has eyes to discern these marks of distinction. Many have no concern regarding them, and without due consideration follow their parents. Others simply have no desire to either know or examine them, even though it is of such crucial importance, for only in the true church is Christ present with His blessings. There the pure Word of salvation is to be found; there are the faithful pastors and teachers unto the perfection of the saints; there souls are converted, comforted, and grow in sanctification; there the Lord Jesus is confessed; there one will go to heaven. In one word, only there the Lord commands His blessing, even life forever more (Psalms 133:3). Therefore all who know the joyful sound will turn to her; the Lord gives His own a heart and a desire to join themselves to her. This is the duty of all who wish to be saved.

Since there are so many assemblies claiming to be the church, who nevertheless promote doctrines which deceive and damn the soul, it is necessary to know whereby true and false churches may be identified, thus enabling a person to join the true church and rejoice in belonging to her.

Distinguishing Marks not Applicable to the Church

We shall first present those matters which the false church proposes as being distinguishing marks so that, due to conformity to these false marks, she would appear to be the true church. The Roman Catholic Church would prefer that we put God's Word aside, and only rely on her pronouncements or the pronouncements of her head, the pope. They know that then they will prevail. Since there are, however, other assemblies which call themselves churches who are also false, and yet who with the true church declare the pope to be the antichrist, we neither can nor may be satisfied with such a declaration. There are so many assemblies which bear the name "church," the one being opposed to the other; thus we cannot accept anyone's declaration -- including that of the true church -- as authoritative, without there being another criterion by which a determination is made between all these parties. Since such a requirement is fair, even in the judgment of those who are impartial, one will embellish some things which are clearly consistent with their assemblies. These they wish to have considered as distinguishing marks, which they are not. We shall present the most significant of these false distinguishing marks and expose them as having no foundation.

First, the false church proposes the word catholic as one of the distinguishing marks of the church.

(1) This word, however, is not found in the Bible. Would one then boast of a word which has been contrived apart from Scripture?

(2) The Novatians, Donatists, Arians, and other heretics have formerly also been referred to as "catholic." That to which many false churches lay claim cannot be one of the distinguishing marks of the true church.

(3) If the word "catholic" were one of the marks of the true church, no one would be able to boast of this title except those who not only have the name but also the matter itself. One can have a good name, but nevertheless be evil. What benefit was there for the congregation of Sardis to have the name that they lived and yet to be dead (Revelation 3:1)? Those who boast of the name "catholic" are not catholic in deed or doctrine, since her doctrine is not consistent with the Word of God, with which the doctrine of the true church always has been and must be in agreement. Neither is this true chronologically, for they are new; that is, they primarily came into existence after 606 A.D. This is also not true as far as location is concerned, for her church is not everywhere. The Mohammedans and the heathen occupy much more territory. Likewise, all Protestants combined during some periods have been as great in number as they. They also rob the word "catholic" of its meaning when they define their church in reference to the pope and restrict the church to the city of Rome. By using the term "Roman Catholic" it is as if one would say that white is black; that which is catholic is not Roman, for the word "Roman" limits the church to a city, and that which is Roman is not catholic.

(4) The church of the Old and New Testament is one church. The church of the Old Testament was not catholic, however, for she was limited to Canaan and Jerusalem; yet she was the true church. From all of this it is evident that the word "catholic" is not one of the distinguishing marks of the true church. Therefore, even though the Reformed church is the true church and she calls herself "catholic," she will not boast of a word which is not a distinguishing mark.

Secondly, the false church proposes age to be a second mark of distinction. However, this is not one of the distinguishing marks whereby everyone may know the church, for:

(1) the kingdom of the devil commenced at the fall of Adam, and therefore it is not the church alone which is old. Thus age is not one of these marks.

(2) Age was not a factor when the church began. How could age be a factor in reference to the true Christian church at the time of the apostles? She was nevertheless the true church; thus the Jews, after this era, could not boast to be the true church simply on the basis of age. Age has nothing to do with truth, for a lie is not transformed into truth by age.

(3) Those who claim to have age on their side and thus establish age as one of the distinguishing marks of the true church, contradict themselves; they are relatively new, not having their origin until AD 606. Only the church which dates from the time of the apostles and has remained true to their doctrine can truly lay claim to age. True age must be determined by way of doctrine and not by the locality where the church originated. If age were to be determined by locality, the Mohammedan religion would be the true religion. Those localities did not preserve the true Christian doctrine, and the church has thus been eradicated there. Rome likewise did not preserve true Christian doctrine, having gradually embraced a new and idolatrous doctrine. Therefore, the fact that the true church has formerly been in Rome is not a matter to be boasted of. Rather, she is to be blamed that she has not preserved the truth and thus also did not remain the true church. If the true church is established in a locality where it had previously not existed, this congregation would not constitute a new church, as it would have, confess, and experience the old truth. From all of this it is evident that even though the church dates back to Adam or to the time of the apostles, age cannot be one of the distinguishing marks of the true church. This is even more true for a location where the true church has formerly been, since individual churches in various localities degenerated through error, and can change or have been changed into heretical or heathen religions.

Thirdly, durability is proposed as a distinguishing mark. To this we reply that the church is indeed durable, never entirely ceases to exist, and with uninterrupted durability will continue from the time of Christ to end of the world. This truth we have confirmed earlier. Durability can, however, not be one of the distinguishing marks of the true church, since the kingdom of the devil has also endured since Adam, and many heresies have endured. The Jews are still a separate people, and are thus durable. That which the church has in common with other groups of people is not one of the distinguishing marks of the church. Moreover, one ought not to relate durability to locality: in places where the church has previously been, she now no longer is, and in places she has previously not been, she now exists. Rather, durability must be judged in terms of the truth of the doctrine to which the church has steadfastly adhered, no matter where she exists.

Fourthly, the number of professing members is also proposed as a distinguishing mark. This, however, has not so much as a semblance of validity. The Mohammedan religion has incomparably more professors. At the time of Arius, everyone was amazed that the world had so soon turned Arian. In Revelation 13:3 we read that the entire earth will follow the beast. The church, on the contrary, is most often a little flock (Luke 12:32), and the way to heaven is traversed by only a few (Matthew 7:14).

Fifthly, the succession of bishops and other members of the clergy is deemed to be as such a distinguishing mark. This is unfounded, for:

(1) whatever is a mark of the true church must always and uniquely be true. This succession is, however, not a unique distinction of the church for there was no succession of the apostles. Such succession is not unique to the church, for Mohammedan and heretical teachers also have their successors. Thus, doctrine is once more the real issue, for what is the value of succession without truth?

(2) Individual churches, in which there has been a good succession since the times of the apostles, can degenerate. A "wolf," that is, a heretic, can take the place of an orthodox minister, so that subsequent succession is tainted by heresy. To what avail then is succession? The papists who deem succession as one of the distinguishing marks of the church, condemn themselves, being unable to prove infallibly their succession. Particularly in the first two centuries, the succession which they did have has degenerated and become heretical.

Sixthly, miracles are proposed as one of the distinguishing marks of the church. To this we reply:

(1) Miracles do not belong to the distinguishing marks of the true church. This is nowhere to be found in the Word of God.

(2) Miracles are not intended for believers, but for unbelievers; thus the church has no need of them. If one were desirous of bringing an unbeliever into the true church, one would have to perform a wonder time and again, which, however, the proponents of this mark do not do.

(3) The performance of and boasting in miracles in the post-apostolic era, as a means of the confirmation of doctrine, is a distinguishing mark of the anti-Christian church. "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). This certainly confirms that the performance of miracles does not belong to the distinguishing marks of the church.

Seventhly, one proposes external luster and prosperity as being a distinguishing mark of the true church. The basis for this has no more validity than the previous arguments. Not one text supports this, and it is entirely contradicted by experience. The church, like the moon, is subject to successive changes in appearance. Consider for a moment the condition of the church in both Old and New Testaments. Where was the luster of the church at the end of the first world -- when the entire world had corrupted its way, was filled with violence, and only Noah and his family were preserved in the ark? Where was the luster of the church in Israel when Elijah was of the opinion that he alone had been left (1 Kings 19:14)? How often did not the ungodly kings of Judah rob her of her luster in closing the temple and instituting nationwide idolatry? Where was the luster of the church when the Lord Jesus came into the world, finding the church to be thoroughly corrupted?

Such was also the case with the church of the New Testament which, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested itself so gloriously over the entire earth. During the first three hundred years she was frequently so ravaged that a visible church could hardly be distinguished, the name "Christian" was regarded with utmost contempt, and the church had to hide in forests and valleys. It has also been clearly prophesied that the church would flee into the desert during the reign of the antichrist and for a period of twelve hundred sixty years would be in hiding there (Revelation 12:14). We have thus observed various proposals which are not distinguishing marks of the true church. Some add even more marks to this; however, they are insignificant and not worthy of notice.

True Distinguishing Marks of the Church

Having refuted the false distinguishing marks, we shall now proceed to present the true distinguishing marks which will manifest themselves always and only in the church, regardless of what her external condition may be. The primary and most eminent distinguishing mark is purity of doctrine -- doctrine consistent with the Word of God. We are not now dealing with those who deny fundamental principles, but with those denominated as Christians who acknowledge God's Word to be the infallible truth. We must therefore consider how God's Word defines the distinguishing marks of the true church. Let him depart who does not wish to conduct himself according to God's Word. However, he who wishes to esteem the Word of God as the only rule of life and doctrine will be able to perceive from this Word that only that church is the true church which has the true doctrine, consistent with the Word. This is first of all confirmed by such texts where the Word of God is stated 1) to be the means whereby the church is gathered, preserved, and built up; 2) to be a treasure entrusted to her protection; and 3) to be a matter for which she must do battle.

(1) Concerning the first, we read: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:19-21); "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word" (Ephesians 5:26); "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth" (James 1:18); "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth" (1 Peter 1:22).

(2) Concerning the fact that the church must protect the Word as a treasure entrusted to her, we read: "... because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2); "... which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

(3) Finally the church must do battle to maintain purity of doctrine: "It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). That which we have stated concerning the Word is irrefutably confirmed by the texts mentioned. From these texts it is also evident that these matters are distinguishing marks of the true church, since they are regarded as being characteristic of the church. Inasmuch as a matter is identified by its distinguishing marks, the pure doctrine of God's Word is therefore a distinguishing mark of the church.

Secondly, add to this that the Word of God is the means whereby false churches are exposed. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house" (2 John 1:9-10). If the Word is the means whereby false churches are exposed, the Word by the law of opposites is a distinguishing mark of the true church.

Thirdly, that assembly in which God and Christ make their abode is the true church. "For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20); "God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Corinthians 6:16); "These things saith He ... who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Revelation 2:1). The Father and Christ, however, dwell wherever their Word

is received and preserved. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. ... If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:21; John 14:23). Thus, the possession and preservation of the Word are thus distinguishing marks of the true church.

Fourthly, this is confirmed by such texts in which the church is described as submitting itself to this Word only. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42); "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice" (John 10:26-27). The Lord Jesus shows here that those who do and do not belong to His stable are only distinguished by the fact that they hear His voice; that is, they either do hear and receive His Word, or do not hear and receive it. Inasmuch as sheep are distinguished by this, however, this is true for the entire church. The church is identical in nature, since it consists of sheep.

Objection: Hearing or not hearing pertains to believing and receiving. This is a work of the heart and thus not obvious to others; therefore it cannot be a distinguishing mark of the church.

Answer (1) Christ speaks here of that which is very obvious. It was evident who did hear and receive Him, and who did not.

(2) There can be no true receiving unless this be wrought by the hearing of the Word (Romans 10:17), and wherever there is a believing reception of the heart, there will be a confession of the mouth (Romans 10:10). This is also confirmed by John 8:31-32, "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Here it is clearly shown whereby a disciple may be known and what his nature is. This is nothing else but a knowing of and continuing in the Word. It is thus very evident that the church is identified by her reception, preservation, and experience of the Word, and therefore the Word is the distinguishing mark of the true church.

Objection #1: Everyone boasts that his doctrine is in accordance with God's Word. Doctrine can therefore not be a distinguishing mark, for it remains a matter of debate who has the support of the Word of God.

Answer: (1) This obviously confirms that everyone is convinced that adherence to true doctrine is characteristic of the true church, since everyone wishes their doctrine to be in harmony with this Word.

(2) To boast of something or to be something is essentially different. Everyone's doctrine must therefore be examined by way of this touchstone.

Additional Objection: Would it not be safer to subject oneself to the declaration of the church or of her visible head, the pope, since there remains so much difference of opinion concerning the exposition of God's Word? The question as to which is the true church is neither answered nor eliminated in this way.

Answer: (1) The pope and his followers are one of the parties who boast of being the true church. A party, however, cannot make an objective declaration concerning itself, even if they were the true church -- which they are not. In doing so, they would consequently make a false pronouncement in the matter.

(2) The Word itself makes this pronouncement and resolves this point of contention with sufficient clarity. He who does not wish to subject himself to God's own pronouncement in His Word, but opposes it instead, will do so at his own peril and will bear his judgment.

(3) The apostle states, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Corinthians 11:19). Thus, one ought not to expect that there will come an end to all controversy, but one needs to hold to the law and the prophets, and proceed according to that rule (Luke 16:29; Luke 16:31; Isaiah 8:20; Galatians 6:16).

Objection #2: An unlearned person cannot search the Bible, and can also not know the foundational doctrine of each church. Thus, consistency between doctrine and the Word of God cannot be a distinguishing mark of the church.

Answer: Since either a blind or ignorant person cannot examine gold by means of a proper touchstone, is such a touchstone therefore not a touchstone? Does this mean that gold cannot be identified? Such is also true here. If someone with a darkened understanding cannot comprehend the things of God's Spirit, this does not negate the fact that God's Word is a touchstone. He who is illuminated knows it to be such, being assured of this.

Additional Objection: How will such poor people determine to whom they ought to join themselves? They can only proceed blindly. If they have joined themselves to a congregation, how will they know whether they are in the true church?

Answer: (1) This question will always remain, no matter what distinguishing mark one proposes regarding the church.

(2) Their duty is to pray and to search the Word, examining all things by means of this Word. It is pure grace if it pleases God to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven to someone (Matthew 13:11).

(3) Even if someone joins himself to the true church and remains blind and unconverted, he will not benefit thereby. When God converts and illuminates His elect, however, they know which is the true church, and rejoice in the fact that they are members of her, exclaiming, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem" (Psalms 122:1-2). If someone blindly joins himself to the popish church, he will certainly join himself to the false church.

Objection #3: In the church there can be many errors so that the true doctrine is not always there, nor to be known. Consequently true doctrine cannot be the infallible distinguishing mark of the true church.

Answer (1) Even though there sometimes are many errors in the church, and even if she is inundated with errors (as will be true at the time of the antichrist), the Word and true doctrine can still be found there. And there will always be those who will defend the truth and oppose error.

(2) All errors do not pertain to the foundation of truth, and thus the truth by which one can be saved can remain there in its essence. If an assembly is inundated by foundational errors, however, and but a few truths remain which are not saving in nature (as is true for all heretical assemblies where some truth is to be found), that particular church ceases to be a church, and all true believers are

then obligated to separate themselves from that assembly. God will then also draw His own out of such a church.

Objection #4: The church can be much more readily distinguished than the Word, and thus not the Word, but the church itself ought to be a distinguishing mark.

Answer: The external assemblies themselves can be distinguished much more readily than the Word. However, which of these assemblies constitutes the true church is not more readily distinguished than the Word itself. Rather, the Word is more readily distinguished than such assemblies, since they can only be identified by the Word as has been shown above.

Additional Objection: One ought to consider the age and the luster of the church. Wherever this is most evident, one must conclude that the true church is to be found there.

Answer: That this is not characteristic of the church has been shown earlier. The church which in one locality is the oldest church, is the newest church in another locality. The church which in one locality is the most public and illustrious is most obscure in another locality. An old lie is never the truth. External and worldly luster in churches is not characteristic of spirituality, but generally characteristic of the world and the false church.

Objection #5: In identifying the church by means of the Word, one can be in error. Thus the Word cannot be the distinguishing mark for the true church.

Answer: The Word, being eternal truth, can neither be in error nor cause anyone to err, but man's understanding can err. Even though it can err, it does not always err, nor does man always remain in uncertainty whether he is in error or not. He is capable of both understanding and perceiving things so that he knows that he is not in error concerning a certain matter. "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ" (John 6:69); "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12); "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6).

Secondly, one would be in much greater danger of error if one were to depend on the mere testimony of an assembly, since false churches also claim to be the true church. Consequently one must have an infallible and dependable distinguishing mark which is free of error and cannot cause one to err. This is only true of the Word of God. If one therefore hears a church claim to be the true church, and examines doctrine and life by this Word and finds them to be in harmony with it, he can say with the believing Samaritans, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42). It thus remains certain that the Word is the true distinguishing mark by which it is ascertained which church is true. The second distinguishing mark of the true church is the holiness of her members. The doctrine which is in harmony with God's Word is the preeminent distinguishing mark and sufficient in and of itself. All other distinguishing marks must likewise be tested by God's Word. In order to expand this subject further, however, and to identify the church more clearly, we shall consider three other distinguishing marks, establishing the holiness of her members as the second distinguishing mark of the church. Above we have shown that only the truly converted are members of the church, and that holiness is a distinction of the true church according to the apostolic confession, We believe an holy church. If holiness is a distinguishing mark of the church, we shall be able to identify the church by it, and thus a church where true

holiness is absent is not the true church. Other churches also boast of holiness, but all that is called holiness is not holiness. Therefore we must first determine from God's Word what true holiness is.

(1) True holiness springs forth from true faith. Where true faith is absent, true holiness will likewise be absent. Faith receives Christ as Surety unto justification and sanctification (John 1:12). By faith the soul is truly united with Christ (1 Corinthians 6:17). By faith Christ, who is her life, dwells in her heart (Ephesians 3:17). Faith purifies the heart (Acts 15:9). Faith works by love (Galatians 5:6), and faith causes her to bring forth good works (James 2:18).

(2) True holiness consists of our will being in harmony with God's will (Ephesians 6:6) and God's law (Matthew 22:37), and in the restoration of God's image (Ephesians 4:24).

(3) Holiness in all its activity does not seek its own honor, but the glorification of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). This holiness is only taught and practiced in the true church. Other assemblies, whether they claim or pretend to have such holiness, practice nothing but a natural virtuousness in which even some pagans have excelled. This is neither the true holiness which the Word of God requires nor that which we have just briefly described. In maintaining that true holiness is a distinguishing mark of the true church, we do not suggest that all who are in the church are partakers of this holiness. What we are saying is that it is to be found there for those who are acquainted with true holiness and seek for it, and that true members are partakers of it. The church can be filled with so many unconverted members that they constitute the majority and dominate, thus oppressing the godly. Also here it is true: Many are called, but few are chosen. In stating that holiness is a distinguishing mark of the true church, we do not understand this to have reference to this or that specific church in a given city or village, but rather to the church in general as she is dispersed throughout the world, being the total sum of all individual churches. I do not dare to claim that true godly members are to be found in every individual church, for individual churches can degenerate in doctrine and life and die out.

We hold the third distinguishing mark of the true church to be the proper administration of the sacraments. Again this must be determined from the Word of God, and thus not be viewed independently but in conjunction with the other distinguishing marks. Wherever the first distinguishing mark is to be found, the others will be found likewise. The sacraments have been instituted in the church by Christ, and are presented in the Word as to the manner in which they are to be administered. The nature and administration of the sacraments will be discussed later in chapter 37. (Cf. Genesis 17:14; Numbers 9:12; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30.) The sacraments are seals of the covenant of grace and are intended for partakers of the covenant alone. As each family is distinguished by its own coat of arms or seal, the church is likewise distinguished by the sacraments. Even though each assembly claims to have the sacraments, the correct administration of them is not necessarily to be found there. One church uses them either as a symbol of unity or as a mere external commemoration of the suffering of Christ, while another church assumes the external signs to be Christ Himself, attributing Christ's efficacy to them, thereby negating the nature of the sacraments.

We consider the fourth distinguishing mark to be the use of the keys of God's kingdom. The Lord Jesus has given keys to the church in order to include and exclude those whom He has commanded to include or exclude. These keys are the proclamation of the Word of God and

Christian discipline, of which we will speak in chapter 29. The church is an assembly which is separated from the world and mutually united as one body under her Head, Jesus Christ, all of which we have discussed previously. For this purpose the Lord Christ has given keys, commanding to keep out and to cast out those who neither hold to true doctrine nor live in accordance with it (cf. Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14). As the lock is known by the key which fits it, the church can likewise be identified by her keys. These keys must not be used independently, however, but in conjunction with all the other distinguishing marks; their correct use must be determined by the Word of God. If those who err in doctrine and lead offensive lives are excluded, while those who are orthodox in doctrine and godly in their walk are included, the keys are used correctly; and by this one will be able to identify the true church. If anyone is included, however, regardless of what his doctrine and life may be, or if those are excommunicated who are orthodox in doctrine, while including in the fellowship of the church those who err, such a practice is very evidently a mark of the false church. As imperfection is to be observed everywhere, and since this accompanying imperfection does not nullify the matter itself, there is also imperfection in the use of these keys. Although in one particular church these keys are used more consistently than in another, the proper use of the keys will be found in the true church. In considering all these distinguishing marks together, one will clearly observe which church is the true church, and will publicly have to declare that only the Reformed Church is the true church, in contradistinction to all so-called churches, whatever name they may bear. The world is filled with books in which writers demonstrate irrefutably that these distinguishing marks are only applicable to the Reformed Church, and we are able to demonstrate this to all who would like to contradict this. We therefore rejoice in the grace of God: His holy Name be therefore praised and glorified for this to all eternity! The Reformed Church Vindicated as the Continuation of the True Church

There are parties, not being able to refute this by means of the Word of God, who have contrived two objections in their own minds by which they wish to show that the Reformed Church is not the true church.

Objection #1: The Reformed Church is new, having only come into existence in the previous century, [Note: One must again bear in mind that this work was published in AD 1700.] whereas the true church is of unchangeable durability. Where was the Reformed church prior to Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin?

Answer: First of all, the true church remains steadfast by reason of her durability -- a durability which does not fluctuate. True doctrine is an infallible distinguishing mark of the church, which always remains true for her, as has also been shown above. Wherever true doctrine resides which the prophets and apostles by God's Spirit have presented in His Word, there is also the church. Inasmuch as she holds to this enduring true doctrine, the Reformed Church is therefore the true church. Prior to Luther this church existed wherever this true doctrine, which never ceased to be, was to be found.

Secondly, the Reformed Church, having the apostolic doctrine, is therefore also the apostolic church.

(1) During the time of the apostles this church was dispersed throughout the entire world.

(2) After this she existed within the territory of pagan emperors, who, until Constantine the Great, that is, until AD 300, have cruelly persecuted her with fire and with sword -- not being able, however, to destroy her.

(3) Subsequent to this she existed in the territory which was infiltrated by the antichrist of whom the apostle speaks when he states, "So that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). This is to say that the church was in Rome and primarily in Europe. It was this church which was infiltrated by popery, and thus gradually and increasingly permeated the church with errors. Popish religion has not always been what it now is, for her errors have gradually developed over time. At first there were but few, so that one could endure being in her midst, albeit with much sorrow and grief. Subsequently the errors were multiplied so that one could no longer bear to stay in it. For this reason the church, upon God's command, separated herself from it, and departed out of her midst. Popish religion and its adherents were in the church and oppressed the church. We maintain that the church existed where popish errors were gradually introduced and corrupted the church. She existed wherever the popish church existed. She was not in the popish church, but the popish church was in her.

(4) She existed wherever the two witnesses were (Revelation 11:3), that is, wherever there were few, but yet a sufficient number. Since Constantine there have always been some who, both orally and in writing, have opposed the errors which were surfacing. One particular church remained pure in doctrine longer than another and those who were pure in doctrine bore witness against the errors.

(5) The church existed in several independent churches which maintained separation from popery, against which former popes have initiated persecutions and have periodically eradicated some. Such churches existed since early times in the southern parts of France, as well as in some parts of England, Scotland, Bohemia, and also in Piedmont. Against these churches popes have initiated many persecutions, but they continue to exist until this day. History books bear abundant witness to all this. Several popish authors, such as Thumanus, Aeneas Sylvius, Eckius, and Tochlaeus, have particularly written about the residents of Piedmont, referring to them as heretics. They declare that prior to the time of Zwingli and Luther there had been very many who adhered to the same doctrine -- which they refer to as heresy -- and that Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin had by renewal brought this doctrine to light.

Particularly, there are two popish writers who in a noteworthy manner have written concerning the Waldenses. I shall trouble myself to translate something from each writer into our language, since their witness is of such importance.

Reynerius, one of the leaders of the Inquisition, who did some writing prior to the year 1400, writes concerning the Waldenses:

Among all sects that either are or have been, there is none more detrimental to the Roman Catholic Church than that of the Leonists (that is, the poor men of Lyons -- the Waldenses), and that for three reasons. The first is, because it is the sect that is of the longest standing of any; for some say it has existed continually since Pope Sylvester, whereas others since the time of the apostles. The second is, because it is the most general of all sects; for scarcely is there any country to be found where this sect has not been embraced. The third is, because, while all other

sects frighten their hearers by the abominable nature of their blasphemies against God, this sect has a great appearance of godliness, since they live righteously before all men, believe all that God has said, and maintain all the articles contained in the “sybolum” (the twelve Articles of Faith). They do, however, speak evil of the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy, that is, the pope, cardinals, bishops, and other so-called clergymen.

Archbishop Sessellius writes in his book against the Waldenses: The Waldenses originate from a religious man named Leo, who lived during the time of the first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great. This Leo despised the miserliness of Pope Sylvester and the excess of liberty enjoyed under Constantine. He would rather endure poverty in pursuance of the simplicity of faith than to remain loyal to Sylvester and be polluted by the lucrative benefices which were the portion of those who were sympathetic towards the faith.

Such is the witness of these parties. Do you yet ask whether the Reformed Church existed prior to Luther? To this

I reply that she was to be found among those whom we have just mentioned; that is, those residing in Piedmont among the Waldenses. Our doctrine is identical with theirs, being in all aspects in agreement with the Word of God.

Objection #2: This objection relates to the sending forth of ministers. There is no true church unless the clergy is commissioned by the pope or other members of the clergy. Since the ministers of the Word in the Reformed Church are not sent forth in such a manner, their church cannot be the true church.

Answer: First, we deny that being commissioned by the pope is an essential element of the true church. Indeed, we maintain that after the true church departed from the popish church, this commission is of no value, since the antichrist has no power to ordain ministers. Their commission prior to the exit of the true church may be recognized, since they were in the church, and thus their commission originated with the church.

Secondly, the succession of ministers is no distinguishing mark of the true church as we have previously proven. The commission of ministers is also not a sacrament, so that for a season the true church could exist entirely without the service of ministers.

Thirdly, in case of necessity the church is authorized to call those to the ministry of the Word whom she deems fit for this, even though the circumstances and ceremonies which are normally observed in an organized church are set aside at such a time. The commission is of God and derives its authority from Him. Men are but the means by which such a commission is executed. This is true for ministers in an established congregation or for the congregation itself during unsettled times when the corrupted church is being restored. The congregation of one hundred twenty persons (Acts 1:15) appointed two candidates for the apostleship, choosing one by means of the lot (vs. 23). From city to city elders were appointed by a show of hands by the congregation (Acts 14:23). In like manner the church may also in case of necessity appoint ministers.

Additional Objection: This would constitute an extraordinary commission and they would then be required to perform miracles.

Answer: This is not a new, but the old administration. It is not a new doctrine or religious practice, but only the circumstances are extraordinary. All prophets did not perform miracles, and the miracles of the apostles have validity for us as well, for it is the same doctrine and the same administration.

Fourthly, the Reformed Church at the outset of the Reformation and upon her departure from [popery], had many priests in her midst who left popery, transferred to the true church, went in and out with her, and preached the truth. They in turn were able to commission others in the ordinary manner. If you insist on commission, here it is.

Objection #1: They were commissioned to teach popish doctrine and to administer the ceremonies. Answer: They were commissioned by the true church (which at that time was overrun by popery), to preach true doctrine. This was the purpose of the divine commission, and thus the commission of the church. Papists will not dare to contradict this. They would not dare to maintain that they were sent forth to preach idolatry. Thus, the commission of the priests who departed was both lawful and with the proper objective, as they were not commissioned to promote idolatry.

Objection #2: Their commission was taken away from them.

Answer (1) After the church departed out of the midst of popery, only anti-Christianity remained. It was no longer a church, and it thus had no power over those who had departed.

(2) It was unjust to depose faithful ministers, and thus because of the common commission they lawfully remained pastors and teachers.

Objection #3: The commission of popery is no longer considered lawful, for a priest who now comes over to us, desiring to be a minister, must by renewal be commissioned. Therefore the commission of those who initially departed from the church is not lawful.

Answer: There is a significant difference between the two. At that time the church was still subject to popery and the commission derived its validity from the church. After the true church departed, however, her commission was no longer that of the true church, but rather of a false church. Therefore her commission which previously was lawful is now invalid. The True Church Confesses Christ and His Truth

We now return to our description of the church as previously proposed, where we stated that the Church manifests itself by a true confession of Christ and His truth. When considering the church, a distinction is generally made between the visible and invisible church. This distinction does not pertain to her nature, as if there existed two essentially different churches, the one having different members from the other, for there is but one church. This distinction, however, relates to her external condition which sometimes is more and at other times less visible due to errors, ungodly practices, and persecutions. We have considered all this above. There is nothing the church fears more than that these matters will obscure and conceal her existence, and yet this is at times her lot. Nevertheless, she is like light and fire which always strive to manifest themselves, and to be publicly observed. She fears neither sword, nor fire, nor the gallows, and she boasts of the martyrs who, by their death, seal the truth. She views such occasions as so many victories. Her sole desire is that she may be visible: For this reason she continually strives to manifest herself, not with a sword in hand but by a faithful confession of Christ and His truth. She confesses that Christ is the

only and all-sufficient Savior who as Surety, by His suffering and death, has satisfied the justice of God for the sins of His people and has reconciled them with God. He also by His active obedience and fulfillment of the law -- doing so as Surety on their behalf -- declares them righteous in Him and heirs of eternal life. She confesses that only those can be saved who receive Him as such by a true faith, are spiritually united to Him, live in Him, manifest His nature by way of a holy life, and walk as He has walked (1 John 2:6).

It is for this purpose that they gather together to hear the Word of God and to use the sacraments; they keep themselves separate and distinct from the world and as a city upon a hill (Matthew 5:14). They are always ready to give an answer to every man that asks them the reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15). They do so not as unto men but as unto God, in all humility and reverence and without undue boldness. For this purpose they have been called and gathered together. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise" (Isaiah 43:21); "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). The True Church Engaged in Spiritual Warfare

We also stated that, under her Head Christ Jesus the church battles with spiritual weapons against her and Christ's enemies. In this respect a distinction is made between the church triumphant and the church militant. The church triumphant is in heaven, consisting of such who in the way of faith, sanctification, and spiritual warfare have gained the victory and subsequently received the crown. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number ... stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; ... These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (Revelation 7:9; Revelation 7:14-15). The church militant is upon earth having the devil and the world as her external enemies, and her flesh as her internal enemy. The devil is a murderer from the beginning, who from the moment that the promise concerning the Seed of the woman was given, has with evil hatred opposed it and all those who believe in it. He does all in his power to torment them, and if it were possible, to prevent them from coming to Christ. And if they have come, he strives to draw them away from Him, thereby obscuring the glory of the church. Against this the church puts itself in array, battling these enemies with spiritual weapons as described in Ephesians 6:11-18. The church and the world bear mutual contempt for each other for several reasons: the members of the church are of a more excellent spirit than those who belong to the world; they convince and condemn the world by the truth, and with their holy lives; they desire to dwell alone, separating themselves from the world, unwilling to intermingle with the world. In fact, in all aspects the church and the world are a contrast to one another as far as nature, objectives, and manner of life are concerned. All of this results in activity whereby both parties seek to mutually protect themselves from the other and to prevent being adversely affected by each other. The world uses physical weapons, inflicts damage to property, scorns and taunts the reputation of the godly and uses fire and sword against them, doing all this to draw them away from the faith and the practice of godliness. The world seeks to bind the church in every respect to itself, and thus make the church conformed to itself. The church seeks the salvation of the world, and by way of faith and repentance to draw it to herself. To this end the church does not use physical weapons, which as

the church she does not possess. Rather, she uses spiritual weapons: the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, the totality of her confession, a sanctified life, a vigorous protection of the truth, and a steadfast patience to endure everything for Christ's sake. God's Word makes very frequent mention of this warfare: "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12); "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3); "After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions" (Hebrews 10:32). The flesh within is the enemy which does most harm. Without its cooperation the others would not gain a foothold. While holiness is the ornament of the church, sin disgraces the church. Every true member of the church, due to having Spirit and life, hates sin, and sets himself in array against it so as to conquer rather than be conquered by sin. Paul speaks of this when he writes, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). Peter exhorts to engage in this battle, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). The Antichrist: The Foremost and Most Formidable Foe of the Church

Among the enemies which the church has here upon earth, the antichrist is the most significant and primary cause of all the persecutions of the church. The word "antichrist" consists of two words: anti, which, depending on the context, can mean either against or for, and Christos. Thus the word "antichrist" pertains to someone who is against Christ but who nevertheless creates the impression as if he were for Christ. Sometimes this word is used as pertaining to every heretic, who opposes the Person and the doctrine of Christ.

"As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18). Generally, however, it pertains to the great antichrist, the head of the multitude who oppose the doctrine and professors of Christ. That such a person will come is confirmed by many texts in the Holy Scriptures and is a fact which is not denied by anyone.

Question: Who is the antichrist?

Answer: With all Protestants we reply: The pope of Rome. The papists deny this strongly.

Scriptural Proofs that the Pope of Rome Is the Antichrist

We shall first confirm our opinion, and then answer the objections of the papists. In order to perceive the force of our argumentation all the more clearly, one must view all our arguments comprehensively, that is, as one argument. Our proof will consist of several parts, each of which, when considered independently, is convincing in and of itself. Our first proof is derived from the name itself, which means darkness. "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six" (Revelation 13:18). In Revelation 15:2 this is referred to as the number of his name. The Lord did not want to call him expressly by name; possibly that he be not hindered in his pursuit, or because the Lord did not wish to reveal His mysteries to everyone (cf. Matthew 13:13). It is irrefutable that the reference here is to the antichrist. How to prove this, however, is not equally clear to everyone. To identify him here as such, one must note: 1) John wrote in the Greek language, and the Greek language uses its letters also as Numbers 2:1-34) the letters of this number would convey the name of a man. We also read of "... the mark of his name" (Revelation

14:11); "... the number of his name" (Revelation 15:2); 3) his name would be written with such letters which together would constitute the number six hundred sixty-six.

First of all, Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp who himself was a disciple of John, arrived at the spelling of lateino" (lateinos), and concluded thereby that the antichrist would come forth from Italy and from the Latin church. Italy, or at least a portion of it, had a king prior to the birth of Christ. His name was Latinus, who was a son of Faunus, the son of Picus, the son of Saturnus, the son of Janus, the first king of Italy. Italy, or that portion of Italy which surrounds Rome, is called Latinum after this Latinus, and the language spoken there was called Latin, which is true until this very day. Latinus is written in Greek as Lateinos and these letters irrefutably represent the number 666. Therefore, in pursuit of the antichrist one is as it were led by the hand to Rome, to the Latin church and to her bishop, who later was called papa or pope, that is, father. The pope was the proprietor of Latinum, where Latinus was king before Rome was built. He established himself in the Latin Church, for the Western church was long known by the name of Latin Church. Whenever a general ecclesiastical gathering convened, the Western bishops were referred to as Latin bishops, and the Eastern bishops as Greek bishops. Until this very day the pope still uses the Latin language in his directives and decrees. Throughout the entire world the church service, the mass, etc, are conducted in the Latin language, which must be viewed as an extraordinary providence of God, whereby it is clearly proven that he is the antichrist.

Secondly, it becomes even more clear if one compares the pope with the person whose name is expressed by 666. (1) The seat of his residence would be in Rome, which is built upon seven hills. In Revelation 17:1 it is confirmed that this refers to the antichrist, and in verse 9 his seat is identified: "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth" (Revelation 17:9).

(2) According to Revelation 17:10-11 he would succeed the emperor in this territory, for the seven heads refer to the sevenfold manner of government in Rome. Five forms of government had already run their course during the time of John. The sixth, consisting of the rule of the emperors, was in place at that time, after which the seventh would follow. However, none but the pope has succeeded the emperors in governing Rome.

(3) He whose name would constitute the number six hundred sixty-six would ascend the throne upon the destruction of the empire, and ten kings would simultaneously receive power to govern with him. "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings" (Revelation 17:12). All of this transpired between 500 and 600 A.D.

(4) This person would again introduce pagan idolatry and the worship of images (cf. Revelation 13:3; Revelation 13:12-15). The pagan empire received a mortal wound from Constantine the Great who eliminated idolatry. This, however, was restored by the seventh head, the pope, by reintroducing idolatry and the worship of images.

(5) He whose name would be expressed by 666 would be worshipped, and receive superhuman honor (Revelation 13:4).

(6) This person would blaspheme God and His church (Revelation 13:5-6).

(7) He would engage and prevail in "holy" warfare (Revelation 13:7-8).

(8) The time of His reign would be forty-two months.

(9) The entire world would be loyal to him and follow him (Revelation 13:8).

(10) He would cloak everything with an appearance of piety; he would have the horns of a lamb, but speak as a dragon (Revelation 13:11).

(11) He would deceive by means of lying wonders (Revelation 13:13-14).

(12) He whose name is six hundred sixty-six would make idolatry compulsory, and put to death whoever would not comply (Revelation 13:15).

(13) He would compel everyone to acknowledge him and to name themselves after him, or to declare their allegiance to him. They would be required to bear a mark; whoever would refuse to do so would not be able to buy or sell, and a social relationship with such would be forbidden (Revelation 13:16-17). When we apply all this to the pope, they resemble each other as two drops of water, as we shall subsequently demonstrate. We have thus considered the name 666 and all the circumstances related to it, as well as who would bear this name. He who cannot conclude from all this that the pope is the antichrist must be blind, since the pope's name and activity are entirely consistent with all this. That popery itself cannot perceive this should come as no surprise. Of necessity it cannot perceive this, for this would signal the end of popery, which still must endure for some time.

Objection: "Latinus" must be written without an "e" and thus will not be equivalent to the number 666.

Answer (1) John did not write in Latin, but in Greek. That which is "Latinus" in Latin, is "Lateinos" in Greek. Irenaeus, being a Greek, certainly knew how one ought to write this word in Greek.

(2) Latins would also use "ei" instead of "i," as for instance in "Sabeinos," "Antoneinos," "Lateinos," as well as in this phrase, *quam primum Cascei, Populei tenuere Lateinei*. This argument is therefore futile. The second proof is that the antichrist must have his seat and territory in Rome. "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." (Revelation 17:18; "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (Revelation 17:18). The antichrist is here presented as a woman, as a great harlot (vs. 1), because of the idolatry -- which is referred to as "adultery" in the Word of God -- and also due to the shameful physical adultery and lewdness which is particularly in vogue among the so-called clergy of Rome and Italy. This harlot would have possession of the great city, which at that time would hold sway over the kings of the earth. That city is Rome, the seat of emperors. There were seven hills within the confines of Rome's walls, a fact which obviously needs no further proof. Writers prior to and during this time refer to her as the city upon seven hills. Virgil, who died approximately fourteen years prior to the birth of Christ, writes:

Georgicon, Lib. II, 534-535.

Scilicet, et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma, Septum quae una sibi muro circumdedit arces.

Translation: Thus, Rome has become the most glorious city of all, which alone has surrounded seven strongholds with a wall.

Ovidius, who was born approximately thirty-eight years prior to Christ, writes:

Tristium, Lib. I, 5, 69-70.

Sed quae de septem totum circumspicit orbem Montibus, imperii Roma Deut. mque locus.

Translation: Rome, the territory of the gods, which overlooks the entire earth from seven hills.

Tristium, Lib. III, 7, 51-52.

Dumque suis septem victrix de montibus orbem Prospiciet domitum Martia Roma, legar.

Translation: I shall nevertheless be read as long as warring and victorious Rome overlooks a conquered world from her seven hills. The pope, however, has his chair in this Rome built upon seven hills. His territory extends to the kingdoms of this earth, and there he rules over many nations (Revelation 17:15). He is drunk with the blood of saints and has poured out the blood of professors of the truth as water (vs. 6). The kings of the earth surrender their power to him to this end (vss. 13-14). The pope is thus the antichrist.

Evasive Argument: Popery, in order not to apply this dreadful indictment to itself, agrees that this harlot and this great city refer to Rome, but then to pagan Rome during the time of the emperors, which became drunk with the blood of saints.

Answer: This chapter in Revelation indicates clearly that this refers to Rome after the emperors, and not while they reigned. It is a known fact that the pope of Rome has reigned after the emperors and reigns there as yet. This will be evident from the third proof. The third proof we derive from the practice of persecution and the time of its public manifestation. The beast had to succeed the emperors in the territory of Rome and the entire earth: "I ... saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns" (Revelation 13:1); "And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven" (Revelation 17:10-11).

"Seven heads" does not merely pertain to seven hills, comprehended within the walls of Rome, but also pertains to seven kings, that is, sovereign governments rather than specific individuals. Five forms of government had already run their course: kings, mayors, councils, governors, and dictators. The sixth form of government was in place when John wrote, for it is irrefutable that the emperors reigned at that time. During their reign this would not transpire, however, but rather under the seventh head of Rome. The beast was the seventh head which would come after the emperors as far as worldly rule is concerned, and be simultaneously also the eighth king as far as the supreme spiritual rulership which he claims for himself relative to the souls of men. This proves that the reference here is not to pagan Rome, but to Rome under the dominion of the pope.

Additionally, this seventh head would not step aside as quickly as the other heads, since the previous forms of Rome's government were each time but for a short duration. However, this form of government would endure for some time -- 42 months or 1260 days. Since this refers to years this can only be applicable to the pope. Add to this what is written in verses 12-13 [Revelation 17:12-13], "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." This did not occur, however, during the time of the emperors, for they were monarchs, sovereign heads and rulers. Instead, this occurred when the

empire was destroyed by the Goths, Lombards, and other pagan nations which divided the empire into ten kingdoms.

Approximately around the same time, the beast also arose, and gained possession of Rome, which none other but the pope accomplished. Even when these nations for some time ruled Italy, they did not have their seat of government in Rome. Ten kings, however, yielded their power to the beast who had his seat of government in Rome, the city of seven hills, desiring to be confirmed and sanctioned by him. They executed his will in doing battle against Christ and His church. Observe, that this is the antichrist who, after the emperors, had his seat of government and territory in Rome and thus in the world -- at the time when ten kings gained power after the destruction of the empire. They who are now referred to as emperors did not come to power until 325 years later. They neither exercise any power over Rome, nor have their seat of government there, and thus rule but in name. However, none but the pope has succeeded the emperors in this territory. Ten kings came to power simultaneously with the pope and ten kings have yielded their power to none other than the pope to shed the blood of the church and to persecute her. The pope is thus the antichrist. This has even further strengthened our second proof and has answered the exception by demonstrating that the reference is not to pagan Rome but to Rome under the dominion of the pope, who would perform all that is stated in Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 17:1-18. He must be blind who cannot see that this does not refer to the emperors, but to the pope who succeeded them. Therefore it is obvious that the pope is the antichrist.

We derive the fourth proof from the behavior of the antichrist. He would first of all place himself in the temple of God. "So that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The church is God's house (1 Timothy 3:15) and God's temple. "For ye are the temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16). He would sit in the church as if he were God, viewing himself as the head and officer of the church; he would not approach the church as an external enemy and do battle against the church as such, but would rather proceed from within her and occupy the position of headship in the church. To whom but the pope does this apply, who is openly recognized as head by popery, and to whom they have given the title, "Our Lord God the pope"?

Secondly, the apostasy would be initiated with him. "Except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The church has always done battle, even in its initial period, against many heresies. The church of Rome maintained its purity the longest, and this gave opportunity to other churches in whom heresies arose to take refuge to the church of Rome. The bishop of Rome in turn used this opportunity to gradually exalt himself above all churches. He wanted his declarations relative to points of contention to be accepted as divine revelation without anyone contradicting him. Since heresies arose in her as well, however, the apostasy from the purity of the faith affected the entire church that much more easily and quickly. This apostasy increased rapidly, and one error led to the next. The fact that Rome has become entirely apostate is demonstrated everywhere in this book. Rome places its declarations and traditions next to, and in opposition to, the Word of God. Rome forbids the reading of the Bible, commands that a piece of bread be worshipped as God, has introduced the worship of angels and deceased saints, has erected images and altars, claims authority for itself to forgive sin, promotes the apostasy of the saints, teaches that man is not only able to be perfect but can also perform superfluous works which the pope then keeps in his treasure chest and

distributes according to his pleasure. Rome denies that the merits of Christ atone for all sin, original and actual. It teaches that one can and must earn heaven himself. It has fabricated the existence of purgatory, and on behalf of the living and the dead, sacrifices Christ anew in the mass. All Romish errors are too numerous to be mentioned here. These sufficiently demonstrate that Rome and its followers have become apostate concerning the faith.

Thirdly, the antichrist would exalt himself above the kings of the earth. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ... shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Kings and governments are referred to as kings and princes in Psalms 82:1; Psalms 82:6. The pope exalts himself above all kings and princes. He is well aware of this and also exercises this power as he appoints and deposes kings, releases subjects from their oath and fidelity, and distributes countries to whomever he wills, for instance giving America to the king of Spain. The kings, however, are becoming somewhat wiser, and are not very concerned about his power of deposition. The time is near that they will despise their foolishness for having esteemed him so highly, and will hate and reject him (Revelation 17:16-17).

Yes, the Pope allows himself to be carried about as if he were God, and everyone bows the knee before him. He opposes the God of heaven, establishing religious practices which are contrary to what God has instituted. He has the audacity to maintain that even though Christ has instituted the Lord's Supper with two signs, bread and wine, that it will be administered with one sign -- bread only.

Fourthly, the antichrist would perform wonders. "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9); "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do" (Revelation 13:13-14). Those who belong to popery are the only ones who boast of miracles, wishing to prove thereby that they are the true church. What blind ignorance this is! They thereby convey clearly that the pope is the antichrist. Their miracles, however, no longer have the credibility they once had when thick darkness prevailed. Men now laugh at their lying wonders.

Fifthly, the antichrist would live in great luster and pomp. "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls" (Revelation 17:4). There is an extensive description of this pomp and luster in Revelation 18:12; Revelation 18:16. If one examines this text and then considers the pope and his followers, having purple as the color for himself and his cardinals, he will have to say that the pope is most certainly the antichrist described in this passage. He does not resemble Peter in the least -- in doctrine or in life.

Sixthly, the antichrist would war against the saints. "And it was given unto him (the beast) to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all ... to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:7; Revelation 13:15-17). Compare the pope's activity to this, and you will observe therein as precise a fulfillment of prophecy as one could wish for. Who but the pope opposes the true church? Who but the pope murders true professors for their witness concerning the truth? How many hundreds of thousands have already lost their lives by order and direction of the pope? Who but he has become drunk with the blood of the saints? All

who confess not to be Roman Catholic, who do not wish to acknowledge him as the head of the church, who do not go to mass to worship the god of bread, who do not carry a chaplet or cross or manifest in any other way that they are of popish persuasion, must be expelled and are not able to practice their business, profession, or trade. They are all subject to opposition, tortures, violence, monasteries, prisons, galleys, the gallows, theft of property, and deprivation of children. Does this not bear witness to the entire world that the pope is the antichrist?

Seventhly, add to this what is written in 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Timothy 4:3, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats." Examine the entire world and ask who has become apostate concerning the faith and who forbids to eat. Would not everyone have to admit that this pertains to the pope who forbids male as well as female members of the clergy to marry, and who forbids the eating of meat, eggs, etc. on Fridays and during their seven weekly fasts? We thus conclude, having the approbation of everyone's conscience, that the pope is the antichrist.

Objection: It is not written that the antichrist would do all these things; the pope is thus not the antichrist.

Answer: One thing is sure, however: he teaches the doctrines of devils. Furthermore, Scripture states clearly that the devil rules the antichrist, helps him and empowers him. "And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Revelation 13:2); "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). If we consider these texts, we shall observe that the forbidding of marriage and the command to abstain from meat is the work of the antichrist, and thus we conclude that the pope is the antichrist.

Since little can be said in opposition to the aforementioned truths, they will resort to several other evasive arguments.

Evasive Argument #1: The antichrist will be only one person.

Answer (1) He is one in the same manner as the previous six heads were one. These were one, not as far as the person was concerned, but as far as the form of government. This is likewise true for the seventh head.

(2) He already began with his activity during the time of the apostles, and would continue to stir until he would have free rein and ascend the throne. This did not occur until several hundred years later, and thus it does not pertain to one person.

Evasive Argument #2: He would come after the destruction of the empire, but the empire still exists.

Answer: The empire has already been destroyed, and was terminated with Augustulus who was the last emperor in the fifth century. He who now bears the title "emperor" was not denominated as such by the pope until the year 800. He has no authority in Rome nor in Roman territory. The kings of Spain, France, England, Scotland, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Poland -- who formerly all belonged to the empire -- refuse to acknowledge him as such.

Evasive Argument #3: The antichrist will only appear at the end of the world and will be destroyed by Christ's coming unto judgment (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Answer: It is not true that he will appear near the end of the world's existence. This is nowhere written in Scripture. "The last days" refers to the entire New Testament dispensation (cf. Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:1-2). The time of his fall will come, and Christ will come with His judgments to destroy him even prior to His coming in judgment. If this text is understood as referring to the final judgment, one ought to know that even after the destruction of the antichrist, which will occur prior to the millennium [Note: à Brakel adhered to what today is referred to as "post millennialism," a view which he clearly expresses in his commentary on the book of Revelation.] (Revelation 19:20; Revelation 20:4), his spirit will nevertheless prevail in many. He will only be destroyed when Christ comes in judgment.

Evasive Argument #4: He will only reign forty-two months, or 1260 days, which is three and one half years.

Answer: Those days are representative of years. Thus, Jacob's service of one week consisted of seven years (Genesis 29:27), and the seventy weeks of Daniel represented seventy year-weeks (Daniel 9:24). Such is also the case here, for it is impossible that the antichrist would perform and accomplish all that in such a short period of time.

Evasive Argument #5: He must be a Jew, will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, and reintroduce circumcision. Enoch and Elijah must first come from Paradise to oppose the antichrist and ascend to heaven again.

Answer: These are fabrications which are contrary to the Word of God.

Evasive Argument #6: The antichrist will deny Christ.

Answer: The pope has always done this, and still does so by way of his doctrines and institutions, just as the Jews made the commandment of God of none effect with their traditions (Matthew 15:6). It thus remains certain that the pope is the antichrist.

How correctly our forefathers have acted when they, upon God's command, departed from Babylon! It is everyone's duty never to have fellowship with the antichrist, and to die as martyrs for the cause of Christ rather than to be in the least manner polluted by him and his activities. The True Church Glorifies God

We have previously stated that the primary purpose of the church's existence is the glorification of God. Since the church is the kingdom of heaven, and the people of God have God as their Father and the Lord Jesus as their King, so the glory of God can be observed when these people live in the love and fear of God. This is true when they are obedient to Him as their Lord, trust in Him as the almighty and faithful One, and live pure and holy lives personally among each other and towards others. The Lord's Name is desecrated, however, when this people who are called after His Name do not conduct themselves accordingly. It is the Lord's will that His Name be hallowed by the coming of His kingdom (Matthew 6:9-10). He has formed that people to show forth His praise (Isaiah 43:21); to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them (1 Peter 2:9); to be to the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 8:23); and to "be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isaiah 62:3). Therefore "let your light so shine before men,

that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). The secondary objective is the salvation of the elect. The church functions as a mother (Galatians 4:26), and has within her the Word of God as an incorruptible seed (1 Peter 1:23). As such she is fruitful unto the conversion of many souls, "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her" (Psalms 87:5). By means of the preaching of the Word, the Lord will add to "the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

029. Chapter 25: The Duty to Join the Church and to Remain with Her

----- CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE ----- The Duty to Join the Church and to Remain with Her In the previous chapter we have defined the nature of the church. It is, however, not sufficient to be acquainted with her as such, but everyone with a desire to be saved is obligated to join the church, to remain with her, and not to separate himself from her in order to establish a more orthodox church. Furthermore, he who wishes to remain with her must also persevere in having fellowship with her by the use of the holy sacraments. We shall now discuss each of these matters in detail.

It is the duty of everyone who desires to be saved to turn to the church, making diligent effort to be accepted as a member of the church community.

First, this is God's way whereby He leads the elect unto salvation. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47); "Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from His people" (Isaiah 56:3).

Secondly, this has been the task of the apostles in accordance with their commission (Matthew 28:19), as is to be observed in the entire Acts of the Apostles.

Thirdly, this is consistent with the nature of God's children. As soon as they are converted, they cannot rest until they have been received into the bosom of their spiritual mother (Galatians 4:26).

Fourthly, this is the consistent confession of the church of all ages, and particularly of churches of the Netherlands. In article 28 of the Belgic Confession we read: "We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it." We have elaborated on this in chapter 24.

Fifthly, the church is the glory of Christ. It is there that Christ is confessed and proclaimed throughout the world, being held forth as a banner upon a hill around which one must gather himself. This is the city upon a hill, and a light shining in the darkness. She is the means whereby the truth is made known and preserved, and the means unto the conversion of souls. Everyone is therefore obligated to facilitate this by joining himself to the church.

Motives for Joining the Church In order that you may be stirred up and be active concerning this, calmly consider first of all that there are but two kings in this world, each having a kingdom: the kingdoms of Christ and of the devil, which are mortal enemies to each other. A third kingdom does not exist. Every person upon earth is either a subject of King Jesus or of the devil, the prince of darkness. No matter who you are individually, you are truly a subject of one of these two kingdoms. You are neither neutral nor a subject of both kingdoms simultaneously. Therefore, to

which kingdom do you presently belong? What do you have to say for yourself? If you neither know nor have ever given this any thought, come and sit next to me for a moment; let us consider this matter, and then make a heartfelt and eternal choice. Whose subject do you wish to be? Whom do you choose to be your king?

If you choose the devil to be your king and to be subject to him -- to do his will, to indulge in your lusts, to wallow in your sins as a swine in the mire, to seek those things which are upon earth, to satisfy your lusts, as well as for leisure and entertainment -- o let it be. Enjoy it to the fullest as long as you have the opportunity. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes" (Ecclesiastes 11:9); "... love the world ... all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ... " (1 John 2:15-16). If therefore by your very deeds you reveal yourself to be a subject of the devil, be also not ashamed to bear the name of such a subject. Own, acknowledge, and confess the devil to be your lord and master. Trust in him, and delight yourself in the fact that you will eternally be with him in the lake that burns with brimstone, where the smoke of torment will ascend forever and ever.

Someone may think, "This is stated too blatantly. Christ must be our King. Even if we seek our own pleasure, conform to the will of Satan, and live a distinctly worldly life, the devil is not therefore our king." To this we respond, "He most certainly is!" If you in turn respond, "Christ is nevertheless our King," we reply, "He most certainly is not!" Listen to what Paul says: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Romans 6:16).

Therefore, if in truth you neither wish the devil to be your king nor to have your portion with him in outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30), then resolutely, without reservation, and without recantation resign from his service, and with all your heart bid the devil's kingdom farewell, forsake all sin and the lusts of the flesh, and enter into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Receive Him as your sole and sovereign King. Do this not only verbally, externally, by way of approximation or by way of sudden impulse, but consciously and in truth.

Sit down and take time to count the cost. Consider whether, for the sake of the Lord Jesus, you are willing to part with all your fleshly thoughts and lusts, all your worldly pleasure, your friends, and your life. Consider whether you would be willing to follow Him in hunger, nakedness, and shame, being steadfast unto death -- and be obedient to Him in all things. If your heart has been illuminated, and in the presence of God you can truthfully answer in the affirmative, come to a full resolution and turn to this King. Bow before Him, offer yourself to Him, enter into covenant with Him, and thus become His subject. In order that you may be exercised in this in a more clear and heartfelt manner, give further consideration to the following matters.

Love itself towards the Lord Jesus ought to motivate you to do so, since He is so precious, glorious, and full of salvation for all who come to Him. It has pleased God that all fullness should dwell in Him; He is a complete ransom. He is mighty to reconcile enemies with God, to make peace, to purify the conscience, to deliver the soul from all guilt and punishment as well as from the devil and hell, to unite her with God, to give her the Holy Spirit, and to sanctify, preserve, and lead her to eternal felicity.

If all this does not motivate you, and you cannot think of one reason which would make you active in this regard -- if only then you would reflect for a moment! Would that it were your heartfelt inclination and joy that all men would bow down before Jesus, acknowledge Him as King, and surrender to His rule! This would be suitable to exercise a desire in you that He who is worthy to rule would also rule in your heart, that you would also belong to those who exclaim, "Jesus is King!" and that with you the number of His subjects would be increased. The Glory and Elegance of the Church In this church there is both glory and elegance. For a moment give attentive consideration to the glorious state of that kingdom and its true subjects. The earth and the nations are enveloped in darkness; however, wondrous light is to be found in the church. The glory of the Lord illuminates this city of God and the Sun of Righteousness enlightens it with His light. Outside of her is nothing but pollution, abominations, and ungodliness; however, within her there is holiness, purity, and glory. The church is called, "The perfection of beauty" (Psalms 50:1-2); "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations" (Isaiah 60:15); "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isaiah 62:12; "The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord" (Isaiah 62:12); "the Lord ... will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zechariah 2:5); "And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel 16:14). Consider attentively how delightful and desirable each true subject is to God. "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee" (Isaiah 43:4); "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee" (Isaiah 62:4); "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child" (Jeremiah 31:20). Therefore we must exclaim with Moses, "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!" (Deuteronomy 33:29). There is reason to exhort one another, "Walk about Zion, and go around about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces" (Psalms 48:12-13). Ought not everyone therefore to delight himself in Zion, and be desirous to be a member of this church, a fellow citizen of the saints, and a member of the household of God? Should not everyone be desirous to submit himself to the protection and government of this King? For not only are all of these things said concerning this kingdom and this King, but all are most certainly true.

There is safety in this kingdom. Consider the faithful protection which this King affords to all His subjects in general, and to each subject in particular. The Lord speaks thus: "I have laid help upon One that is mighty" (Psalms 89:19); "He is just and having salvation" (Zechariah 9:9); "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain" (Isaiah 4:5-6); "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about" (Zechariah 2:5); "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isaiah 27:3). Here we may behold these truthful promises and the actual protection afforded. Is not he then entirely secure who enjoys the protection of such a King, and who may belong to a people upon whom the eye of the Lord is continually? "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalms 91:1). You therefore, whoever you may be, flee to this strong tower and join yourself to Zion, for "the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it" (Isaiah 14:32). Seek refuge under the wings of this King who will redeem the souls of His subjects "from

deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight" (Psalms 72:14). In this kingdom there is truth, light, life, joy, and whatever else may rejoice a soul and make it happy. Furthermore, the blessings with which this King favors His subjects are inexpressibly glorious. He fully forgives all their iniquities. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isaiah 33:24). He is the "fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). He gives them peace and joy. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Psalms 72:6-7) His name is "the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6); "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John 14:27); "For the kingdom of God ... is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). God Himself is their portion and complete joy. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him" (Lamentations 3:24). He gives them His Holy Spirit who quickens, teaches, guides, and sanctifies them. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father" (John 15:26); "But if I depart, I will send Him (the Comforter) unto you" (John 16:7).

Yes, if I had to relate to you all blessings, I would have to enumerate all the benefits of the covenant of grace. In a word, the Lord blesses them "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). The Lord says, "All My springs are in thee" (Psalms 87:7); "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High" (Psalms 46:4); "For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:3); "Oh how great is thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!" (Psalms 31:19).

He who may be acquainted with these benefits, and who may have tasted or anticipated their sweetness, cannot but with utmost urgency make haste to become a subject of this King, and to rejoice if he may be a subject of this King. Apply these matters to your heart, and act wisely and in uprightness. Enter into the covenant, or rather, by faith embrace this covenant of grace which is offered to you, and join yourself to the church.

Degeneracy Within the Church: Not a Reason to Separate from the Church

It is not sufficient merely to join the church, to remain with her for some time, and thereafter to separate from her. One ought never to break away from and leave her under the pretense that the church is degenerate, in order to establish a pure church, for: First, the Lord has never blessed such endeavors. There have always been those (in the first church, both prior to her oppression by the antichrist as well as since the time of the Reformation) who under this pretense have broken away from the church. The Lord, however, has always overturned such endeavors, and such undertakings have collapsed of themselves when the initial instigators died. Due to a just judgment of God, however, such individuals have rarely perceived their errors and made confession of them, and have rarely rejoined the church. Rather, having been given over to their own stubbornness, they have remained independent as people without any religion, or they have succumbed to heresy and have joined themselves to such assemblies which most fully agreed with their errors. Such was the case with the Brethren in Hungary, and in our days the Labadists have arisen who have boasted of great things.

De Labadie called himself the shepherd of the church which was truly separated from the world, and initiated assemblies in order to create truly Reformed Churches. His successor Yvon further enlarged upon this title by sending some followers to America in order to engage in the plantation business, under the pretense of converting the heathen. However, they did not engage in this at all. They did not even make an effort to teach their slaves the Christian religion, but instead abused them cruelly. Their slave trade made them abominable in everyone's eyes. Then, in the literature which he published, he called himself, Shepherd of such and such a flock, partially gathered in Wiewert. He thus established himself as bishop whose territory included Wiewert in Friesland, and extended itself to America.

There came division among them, however, due to envy, discord, and the promotion of personal opinions. When the supply of money was depleted by which their church was supported and by which some had been enticed to join this church in order to enjoy carefree provision of daily needs, their church was likewise destroyed. This did not occur without some manifestation of divine wrath towards them, and the few who as yet remain loyal to Yvon, will soon cease to assemble after his departure, which has already occurred. Yvon taught many errors, was always unstable in doctrine and inconsistent in speech, frequently making ambiguous statements, and using the Jesuit trick of clever word manipulation. He accommodated himself to the occasion, having the proverb in his mouth: dies diem docet, that is, one day provides instruction for the next. We have written more extensively concerning these matters in our publications, A Faithful Warning, Doctrine and Government of the Labadists, and Yvon Accused of Many Errors.

Someone by the name of De Herder also left his congregation in Bleiswijk to establish a pure church in Rotterdam, doing so, however, without espousing the errors of the Labadists. In the beginning he also had a large following, which, however, came to nothing and completely disappeared. Such was also the case with Bardowitz in Amsterdam, who had similar leanings, but was neither in full accord with de Labadie nor De Herder. I have recited these cases to warn everyone against departing from the church for the purpose of establishing a pure church. If someone were nevertheless to proceed with such an endeavor, he would, likewise experience what they have experienced. If it pleases the Lord to purify His church, He will do so Himself by pouring out a richer measure of His Holy Spirit upon His church.

Secondly, it is a dreadful sin to depart from the church for the purpose of establishing one which is better, for the church is one, being the body of Christ. To separate ourselves from the church is to separate from the people of Christ and thus from His body, thereby withdrawing from the confession of Christ and departing from the fellowship of the saints. If we indeed deem the church to be what she really is, we shall then cause schism in the body of Christ, grieve the godly, offend others, give cause for the blaspheming of God's Name, and cause the common church member to err. By maintaining that the church is no church, we thereby deny the church of Christ, and therefore are also guilty of the sins just mentioned. We thereby displease God, who will not leave this unavenged, regardless of how much we please and flatter ourselves. Such activity the apostle opposes when he refers to such individuals as being carnal in 1 Corinthians 3:1; 1 Corinthians 3:3. He warns against this when he writes, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you" (1 Corinthians 1:10); "I hear that there be divisions among you" (1 Corinthians 11:18).

Thirdly, the Reformed Church is the only true church, albeit that her purity varies with locality. The truth is still preached purely there, sins are rebuked and resisted, and there is both the teaching of and exhortation to godliness. Thousands of godly persons are to be found there who practice holiness in a much purer fashion than those who have separated themselves. Christ dwells and walks among them. The Holy Spirit is still active by means of the Word, still converts souls daily, comforts the converted, and causes them to grow. Discipline is still exercised towards those who err in doctrine and life. In some localities this is practiced more consistently than people may perceive and be aware of. What foolishness it is, therefore, to leave the church and to enter into a barren wilderness!

Fourthly, to depart from the church is to retract and break the solemn promise which was made before God in the presence of the congregation upon being accepted as a member. If one esteems this to be but a light matter, seeking refuge in the excuse that he did not know any better at the time, the Lord will nevertheless search it out. Who will break the covenant and be held guiltless?

Objection: The church is corrupt, and God commands us to depart from a degenerate church. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 6:17).

Answer: This text neither speaks of the church, nor of the church in a very degenerate condition. There have at all times been many unconverted in the church and this engenders degeneracy in her, be it at one time more and at another time less. The text, however, refers to paganism with which one may not have communion, but from which one ought to depart and be separate.

There are some in our day who do not entirely separate themselves from the church, and maintain that they remain with her. They come to hear the Word of God and to have fellowship with the godly of the church, but abstain from partaking of the Lord's Supper. They do so due to the fact that so many who are unconverted and lead offensive lives partake of this sacrament, and they are of the opinion that to partake of the sacrament with them means that they would have fellowship with such individuals. In order to instruct such, most of whom we deem to be doing so due to tenderheartedness and an erring conscience, we shall present and answer the following question.

Degeneracy Within the Church: Not a Reason to Abstain from the Lord's Supper

Question: Is a Christian permitted, yes, is it his duty to abstain from partaking of the Lord's Supper so long as the church is corrupt -- however, without separating himself from the church?

Answer: Definitely not, and we shall prove this as follows:

Proof #1: It is God's express command to use the sacraments, regardless of how degenerate the church is. This is true for holy baptism: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing ..." (Matthew 28:19); "Repent, and be baptized every one of you" (Acts 2:38); "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16); "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). If a believer refuses to be baptized, he resists the ordinance of God, refuses to be a member of the church and to confess Jesus in union with His people and congregation. Those who are pessimistic by nature must be convinced of this. If an adult, truly converted and

unbaptized, he may not keep himself apart because of offense within the church, but must allow himself to be baptized. In partaking of the sacrament of holy baptism, however, he does not have fellowship with the unconverted who are in the church. Therefore, having been baptized he has no reason to abstain from partaking of the Lord's Supper due to offenses, since partaking of both sacraments constitutes communion with one and the same church. Yes, such pessimistic individuals will even have their children baptized, thus having fellowship with the church; they thus pass sentence upon themselves by abstaining from partaking of the Lord's Supper. Or would they also be inclined in the future to abstain from using the sacrament of baptism?

God's command concerning the Lord's Supper can be observed in the following passages: "Take, eat ... Drink ye all of it" (Matthew 26:26-27); "This do in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). Who dares to ignore such express commands of Christ? Who dares to suggest that to partake or not to partake is a matter of indifference? What mention is made here of any limitation -- a limitation contingent upon the condition of the church?

Add to this that the use of the sacraments was commanded in the Old Testament, with the punishment of excommunication imposed upon those who would neglect them. Observe this in the following passages: "And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant" (Genesis 17:14); "But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people" (Numbers 9:13). This meant that his name would be erased from the genealogy of his tribe; that is, he would be eliminated as a member of the church. He would thus no longer be considered as a member, but as a heathen and a publican (Matthew 18:17).

Evasive Argument: In the Old Testament the covenant was external, national, and typical. Circumcision and the Passover then also served other purposes: as an acknowledgment that they were Abraham's seed and as a commemoration of their exodus from Egypt. Therefore one cannot by way of the Old Testament sacraments draw conclusions about the New Testament sacraments.

Answer: The covenant of the Old Testament was not an external covenant, but was none other than the covenant of grace, having the promise of both this present and future life, that is, of both spiritual and temporal benefits, such as is presently the case. If one wishes to refer to this as a national covenant, one is merely saying that the covenant of grace was established with that nation. That it is called a typical covenant is in consequence of it typifying the entire ministry of the coming Messiah. If one wishes, however, to refer to this covenant as typical in reference to the church of the New Testament, our proof is further confirmed by their own argument. If the use of the sacraments was so essential in the typical context, this is much more so in the anti-typical setting. Allow that circumcision and the Passover also served other purposes. However, they were never used, nor were they permitted to be used, for such purposes only; that is, distinct from their function relative to the covenant of grace, which irrefutably was the most significant objective in the administration of the sacraments. Other matters were but subordinate and were comprehended in it. We are of the opinion that the other aspects were in a certain respect elements of the covenant of grace. To belong to Abraham's seed was to be a partaker of God's covenant with Abraham -- "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:7).

If the unconverted were but externally included in this, then this was true as far as individual persons were concerned, as is likewise true in the New Testament church. The exodus from Egypt belonged to the spiritual deliverance wrought by the Messiah (1 Corinthians 10:1-11). For this reason the Lord Jesus is called the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). It can therefore be observed that this objection is unfounded, and thus our proof derived from the sacraments of the Old Testament stands, as well as our proof derived from the New Testament.

Second Proof: The sacraments are seals of the righteousness of faith (Romans 4:11), and the communion with the body and blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). It is the duty of each Christian to give diligence to make his calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). To this end all means, and the way which the Lord has ordained unto that end, must be utilized. Since the sacraments are seals engendering communion with Christ, each believer is obligated to make use of them. At this point I wish to remind believers of the precious, spiritual frames which the Lord at times grants during, before, and after the use of the Lord's Supper. Even those of a pessimistic disposition may have enjoyed them: They are the deep humiliation of self, an intimate view of the Lord Jesus in His suffering and death, the mysteries of the covenant, an earnest renewal of the covenant, the strength of faith, the assurance of salvation, peace and joy in God, the resolution, yes, the lofty frame of mind to be more pure and steadfast in the way of sanctification, etc. For he who may possess spiritual life even in the least degree, will be enamored with these blessings when he perceives that the Lord grants these blessings by way of partaking of the Lord's Supper. Who would not long for this? Having demonstrated one's obligation to use all means to promote his spiritual growth, who would then not deem himself obligated to partake of the Lord's Supper?

Third Proof: To confess the Lord Jesus Christ, His doctrine, and His church belongs to the most significant objectives of the Lord's Supper. Observe this in the following passages: "This do ye ... in remembrance of Me ... ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:25-26); "For we being many are one bread, and one body" (1 Corinthians 10:17). It is an absolutely necessary, appropriate, and Christ-glorifying duty to confess Christ, for this duty builds up the congregation and refreshes the soul. "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny" (Matthew 10:32-33). As it is the objective of the Lord's Supper to confess Christ, He is confessed in a most public and powerful manner by all who partake of the Lord's Supper. To enter the church with the multitude which will partake of the Lord's Supper, to join them in going to the table, to sit at the table with them, and to receive the bread and the wine as signs and seals of the covenant (which are ratified by the death of the Lord Jesus) is a loud declaration in everyone's ears, "I esteem and confess the Lord Jesus to be the only true Savior. In Him I seek my salvation, with Him I enter into covenant, on Him I depend, for Him I wish to live and die; the Reformed doctrine is the only true and saving doctrine of Christ, and the Reformed church is the only true church of Jesus Christ upon earth. These truths I confess when I partake of the Lord's Supper."

If someone therefore withdraws himself from the use of the Lord's Supper, he abstains from confessing Christ, His doctrine, and His church. Thus, we agree with our Belgic Confession, article 28 [Bel Con 28]:

We believe ... that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself to live in a separate state from it; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite

themselves with it; maintaining the unity of the Church. ... And that this may be the more effectually observed, it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate themselves from all those who do not belong to the Church, and to join themselves to this congregation, wheresoever God hath established it, even though magistrates and edicts of princes be against it; yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporal punishment. Therefore all those, who separate themselves from the same or do not join themselves to it, act contrary to the ordinance of God.

Evasive Argument: One who has left the church may say, "I confess to be a member of the Reformed church," demonstrating this and declaring such to be the case by attending the services there. Answer: Mere church attendance is not a mark of church membership. When a large congregation comes to hear the Word of God, it is frequently true that a significant number -- often the largest portion -- are not members; and how often are there not among the audience those who adhere to other religions? Therefore, during these peaceful times church attendance is not a mark of church membership, and thus not a public confession of Christ, His doctrine, and His church. The personal confession of a specific individual is not sufficient to that end. Furthermore, when absenteeism becomes evident, most people will deem such absentees as having separated themselves from the church, and as having retracted their confession. Moreover, it is the will of the Lord Jesus that He, His doctrine, and His church should be confessed by way of the Lord's Supper. This therefore eliminates all evasive arguments. A Warning not to Engage in Schism

Fourth Proof: To make one's absence so obvious, under the pretense of making a public statement, is to be guilty of schism. Even if it does not cause the church to be torn asunder, it is at the least a major step in that direction. The sentiments of the members become divided and collide. Every person has his own faction and clings closely to those who belong to his party, thereby opposing others. The bond of love is severed and the one becomes estranged from the other. The absentees are rendered suspect, are accepted by neither the godly nor by the ungodly, and thus become unprofitable as far as the proper use of their talents. Discussions relative to all this lead to division and discord. The common folk among the godly are offended and grieved, which is a great sin (Matthew 18:6; Matthew 18:10), and it grieves faithful ministers to the heart. Those who are without are hindered from entering in, and the enemies are given a cause to slander the church. Those who remain absent live but for themselves and do not seek so much the welfare of their neighbor, but rather exalt their own sensuality above the honor of Christ and the well-being of the church, even though they maintain that such is not their objective. From all this it is evident that absenteeism is schismatic or causes schism, which is a criminal offense. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Evasive Argument: He who has withdrawn himself from the church may say, "If one lives and teaches according to the command of God, then such a person cannot be accused of schism. Only he who does not wish to submit himself to the doctrine and life of Christ ought to be charged with this."

Answer: First, all the faults of the church are not of such a nature that one ought to initiate division in response to them, for otherwise one will be as the Anabaptists, and there will be an endless

repetition of schisms.

Secondly, if someone has some difficulty concerning the doctrine or life of the church, and he is of the opinion that therefore he ought to withdraw himself from the church and the partaking of the Lord's Supper, this ought to arouse suspicion as to whether this is not due to obstinacy, erroneous views, or being proudly opinionated. He must realize that he perhaps has but a small measure of light, and that therefore he only views the matter from afar and from one perspective, and not with an all-inclusive understanding of this. It is therefore a bold, if not a reckless undertaking to take such a step, knowing that it will engender great disturbances and nothing but confusion in the church of the Lord Jesus, while doing harm to souls as a result. Such a person ought to acknowledge that he is not the only one endowed with wisdom, but that the Lord has also given His Spirit to others. Yes, one generally has ulterior motives when he neither shares his difficulties with the ministers, nor wishes to be instructed, but immediately and without discussion, not only makes a decision, but translates this into action, stubbornly persevering in this and considering himself wiser in his own eyes than seven who answer with reason. Whoever gives heed to counsel is wise.

One ought to approach the offending party himself and thus seek to bring him to repentance. If he does not hear, the consistory ought to be informed concerning such a person, and observe what they will do in response. That would be a faithful witnessing. But no, this is too much trouble, would generate too much resentment towards his person, and would result in too much opposition. It will thus be ignored and no action is taken. Instead, the only way this is shown to the church is by withdrawing from her fellowship, as if true godliness consisted of such action. Such activity does not proceed from the Spirit of Christ. Such individuals will be held accountable for the offenses, disturbances, spiritual harm, and divisions either within or of the church itself, which would ensue from this. Do not ridicule what has been said, for it will weigh heavily upon you to be witness to that degeneracy of the church to which you also have contributed.

First Proof: God generally imposes secret judgments upon those who absent themselves. They become proud, opinionated, and despise the judgment of godly persons endowed with wisdom. They hold the congregation of God in contempt. They haughtily speak of great things, and come in a condition where they deem themselves beyond instruction, manifesting a pride against that which David prayed in Psalms 19:13. God will afflict such with a special cross which they will have to endure for the remainder of their lives. He pours contempt upon them, causes their physical condition to deteriorate, and permits them to fall into sin. He sends them a powerful delusion that they would believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11), since they did not embrace the truth in love, and espoused a love for error. Their departure is rarely limited to one error, and it generally goes from bad to worse. One will join either the Anabaptists or other proponents of error. Others, considering separation no longer to be advantageous, will return. In order to do this with more glamour, however, they will embrace a different theology affording them more liberty and freedom in their manner of living, and thus they become as excessive in their liberal bent as they previously were in their strictness. If they return due to being convicted of their duty, it will generally be observed that they have lost the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. They will have lost much of that inward spiritual frame which previously adorned the church, engaging themselves more with judgmental reflections than with heart reflections, or with concerning themselves with the soul of another person. What a tragic judgment this is!

I have stated all of this in order that those who, because of our arguments and our response to their arguments, have been convinced concerning their previous misconceptions and errors, would humble themselves concerning this before God, pray for forgiveness, and persevere in asking to be delivered from well-deserved spiritual judgments. May they abstain from the things mentioned above which I have enlarged upon as a warning, and make a new beginning with their original simplicity and sincerity.

These arguments ought to convince a Christian sufficiently that he is not permitted to abstain from partaking of the Lord's Supper due to the degeneracy of the church.

Objections Answered

We shall now consider this matter from a different perspective by examining the arguments which those who are of a pessimistic disposition advance for their sentiments and behavior, and ascertain whether these hold any substance.

Objection #1: The church ought to shine forth everywhere with holiness, for she is called "the holy church." [Note: It should be understood that all that follows belongs to this objection. à Brakel's answer to this lengthy objection begins on p. ###70.] [Link to p###70] First of all, the shepherds ought to excel in humility, meekness, denial of the things of this world, and in the fear and love of God. They ought to be dignified and thus solicit respect. They ought to be full of the Holy Spirit, wise and industrious, proclaiming the Word of God in the demonstration of Spirit and power. Thus by the revelation of the truth, they would make themselves manifest and pleasing to the consciences of their hearers, so that converted and unconverted alike could examine themselves due to their ministry, thus being discovered as to who they are. This would bring forth conviction and contrition in the unconverted, but also encourage and quicken the hearts of those who possess grace, so that their hearts, as a result of the ministry, would burn within them. The clarity of their presentation of the gospel of Christ ought to be such that everyone would either be allured or compelled to come to Christ, or they would withdraw themselves, rebelling against this, not being able to endure the power of such a ministry. They ought to be men who visit and minister to each member individually, dealing with them according to their condition, without respect of persons and without regard to social rank.

Secondly, there ought to be true holiness in the members. They ought to manifest themselves as denying all the things of time and sense, being separated and clearly distinct from the world in their walk, filled with love towards God and each other, and with one heart and one soul living together in sweet peace. During the worship service complete silence ought to prevail, so that respect will arise in the hearts of those who enter as they observe the orderliness, the reverence, the attentiveness, as well as the piety manifested by those who enter, sit, sing, pray, listen, and exit God's house. The ungodly would then neither dare to join them nor be able to endure this. Outside of the worship service everyone ought to be a shining light amidst darkness, and everyone according to his ability and consistent with his state ought to be engaged in the upbuilding of the church. Government officials, if they are members of the church, ought likewise to use their authority to further establish the church, and to see that the privileges which the Lord Jesus has given her -- privileges He wishes her to have continually -- would be preserved. Everyone ought to stir up, rebuke, and comfort his relatives and acquaintances with much love and warmth, and be instrumental in the conversion of the unconverted. Families ought to function as small

congregations. Both in the morning and evening people ought to sing psalms together, read God's Word and discuss it, pray, and instruct both children and servants. Everyone ought thus to consider it a privilege to be abundantly engaged towards the edification of the congregation.

Thirdly, the keys of the kingdom of heaven ought to be used earnestly and with freedom against all who lead offensive lives, are worldly and conformed to the world in their clothing, homes, belongings, speech, and daily conversation. The sacraments ought to be withheld from the ignorant, and all who either do not manifest the image of the Lord Jesus, or manifest it to some degree (the church cannot judge concerning their inner condition). Those who will not repent, as well as sinners who live in public and heinous sin and prove themselves to be incorrigible, ought to be excommunicated in order that they would repent, thereby instilling fear in others, and being a cause of joy to the godly. The church would then shine forth as the morning, be as fair as the moon, as clear as the sun, and as terrible as an army with banners.

Thus the church ought to be; however, one will find her dreadfully corrupted from the crown of her head to her very feet.

First of all, the ministers, the good ones being the exception, manifest themselves conformed to the world, and seek the things which are upon earth, such as wealth, honor, and respect among men, while at the same time soliciting their praise and love. Their speech is vain, and one hears from them nothing but worldly conversation. They pride themselves in their homes and the clothing of their families. They associate much with those of social status, delighting in a good glass of wine and a delectable meal. At the same time they hold in contempt those of lower social rank, hate the righteous, and even oppose them. They are ignorant of the spiritual state of souls, and many of them are in need of learning the most fundamental principles of theology. They are lazy, sleep late, and waste their time with trifles. They are not committed to the care of their flocks, but allow to perish whatever may perish. When they preach they engage in intellectual speculation -- which frequently ought rather to be referred to as a darkening of counsel -- under pretense of expositing the Holy Scriptures. They manifest that they aspire after the reputation of a scholar, and solicit the praise and attendance of the masses. They grieve the hearts of the righteous with their insincerity and harden the hearts of the ungodly. Yes, some are even drunkards, living in such sin that their behavior cannot even match that of the common citizen. They are consequently despised by great and small both within and outside of the church. In one word, profaneness is gone forth from the prophets of Jerusalem. In consistories, Classes, and Synods, there is nothing resembling holiness.

Secondly, the members of the church neither distinguish themselves by their behavior nor live any better than others outside of the church. The sins which are committed by those who are estranged from the truth are found in abundance within the church, such as fancy hairdos, exposed breasts, and extravagant clothing. The world is evident in the church to the extreme. Sabbath desecration, new doctrines, ignorance, hatred, envy, and bitterness are rampant within the church. In the event that a godly person is to be found here and there -- or if there are some who gather to engage in godly conversation or to pray together -- they will be the object of hatred, ridicule, and oppression. They are referred to as Labadists, Quakers, pious ones, etc. This godliness, however, adorns them and convicts those who live in open sin and mock with all this. More energy is exerted in oppressing the church than in supporting her. Many government

officials, the good ones being the exception, do not use their authority on behalf of the church, but rather work against her. Family worship and the instruction of one's children and servants are unknown practices, so that what is recorded in Isaiah 59:14-15 is very applicable to our times: "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey."

Thirdly, the exercise of church discipline is almost entirely neglected. There is no longer a model of what the church ought to be. Men are therefore satisfied if many people come to church, and if many members are accepted. Such churches are then referred to as flourishing churches. In many, if not most localities, those who can recite the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, or have memorized a few questions are accepted as members. A sufficient knowledge of fundamental truths is no longer required, and they also do not require actual separation from the world and a life which to some degree conforms to the image of Christ. If their lives are not entirely ungodly, all is well. Drunkards, gamblers, dancers, vain men, proud and immoral men, misers, and men who are entirely ignorant and worldly, are permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper. If anyone is placed under censure, it will be someone of low social status and in response to a sin which will bring him into ill-repute among men. They shut their eyes to offenses, however, and do not want to know about them. If anyone comes to expose them, he will have to expect that he will possibly encounter wrath and also opposition. They will seek to corner such a person. If there is a minister who seeks to initiate some reformation, he has good reason to fear that he will be in danger of being expelled. In one word, the church is incorrigible and cannot be brought to repentance. Simply stated, it is a hopeless situation. A godly person, having a view of what the condition of the church ought to be, will be enamored by this, and longs to see the church in such a condition. His heart bleeds, however, when he observes the church in so degenerate a condition as she now is. He cannot refrain from being sorrowful, filled with contempt, and angry, saying, "Is this the holy church of the Lord Jesus Christ? What purpose does the Bible then still have?" This will cause him to contemplate whether it would not be better to abstain from partaking of the Lord's Supper, and thus have no fellowship with such a people.

Answer: [Note: The objection here answered begins on p. ###67.] [Link to p.###67] Who would not delight himself in a church which would be in such a holy condition as defined above? My soul longs for this, and I yearn for the day that the church will be in such a condition after the Lord will have poured out His Spirit upon her. But who will live to see this? With the aforesaid, I confess that the church is indeed degenerate, a matter which grieves me in the deepest recess of my soul. I have often borne public witness to this, and by way of this medium I still lift up my voice like a trumpet, crying aloud without sparing, showing the people of the Lord their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. Oh, that all who read or hear this read would take this to heart! Oh, that men would repent and be amazed at the longsuffering of God by still leaving His church in our land, enjoying a peaceful existence; that one would justify the Lord if He were to punish us and cause us, one day, to come to nought! With sorrow and shame I acknowledge my own failure, and consider myself guilty. May the Lord graciously forgive me, and make me more faithful and holier both personally and in my ministry. Those who are concerned about the condition of the church ought to know that they also are not guiltless. I nevertheless acknowledge that the Lord, among all ranks of society -- be it among government officials, teachers, families, as well as individual

members -- has those that are His, and who in all faithfulness seek to serve the Lord. Also, the keys of the kingdom of heaven are still used, and in some localities this occurs to a greater extent than one would be inclined to think. The Duty to Partake of the Lord's Supper When Members who Give Offense also Partake

We shall now investigate more particularly whether this degeneracy is a sufficient reason to abstain from partaking of the Lord's Supper.

First, apprehensive souls, in examining themselves closely, will perhaps discover that the degeneracy of the church, rather than a text of Scripture, has made them fearful of partaking of the Lord's Supper, and that they have therefore withdrawn themselves from partaking, having stirred each other up to do so by focusing upon the degeneracy of the church. If you were to ask such an apprehensive person why he does not partake of the Lord's Supper, he will respond -- if he speaks according to his heart -- that this is due to the degeneracy of the church. I furthermore wish to ask, "Ought not Scripture to be the only rule for faith and practice?" to which one will reply in the affirmative. Such an apprehensive person ought then to be convinced that he has not proceeded properly in having and maintaining this concern, as this concern does not originate in God's Word, but rather in his own mind. He may respond by pointing to Scripture references, saying that they teach us that one ought not to partake of the holy sacraments with such a degenerate church. I want such an apprehensive person to consider, however, whether these Scripture references initially generated concern, or whether his judgment and action were first of all determined by the degeneracy of the church, and he subsequently resorted to Scripture references to support his judgment and action. Consequently, such an apprehensive person ought to be convinced within himself that his initial impulse relates to nothing more than his own ideas which are outside of God's Word. He therefore has reason to suspect himself of error.

Secondly, it may even be asked if partaking of the Lord's Supper in an apostate church is permissible, and therefore the degeneracy of the church cannot be used as a proof that one ought not to partake of the Lord's Supper. That would be a case of circular reasoning [Note: The Dutch reads: "Dat is hetzelfde door hetzelfde te bewijzen." Literally, "This is to prove something by itself."] . The question is whether one may partake of the Lord's Supper together with an apostate church. Upon this we answer, "No," the proof being the apostasy of the church. Thus, such an apprehensive person will see that he proceeded without wisdom and in a childish manner, and that henceforth he neither can nor may use the degeneracy of the church as a basis for his action and as a confirmation for his sentiments. He ought rather to consider what the Holy Scriptures have to say regarding whether or not he ought to partake of the Lord's Supper in an apostate church. If the answer is "yes," he sins by abstaining from partaking, and if "no," his action will be right.

Thirdly, it has at all times been God's intent to leave the church subject to such degeneracy while in the world. Consider the church from Adam to Christ, and you will observe that the Lord was not pleased with the majority of those belonging to it. At the time of Christ's sojourn the Jewish church was terribly corrupted, with multitudes of baptized disciples forsaking Him, thereby manifesting that they had not been truly converted (John 6:66). Paul declared that the congregation of Corinth was carnal (1 Corinthians 3:3), that fornication was in vogue among them (1 Corinthians 5:1), that some partook of the Lord's Supper while being drunken (1 Corinthians 11:21), and that some were void of the knowledge of God (1 Corinthians 15:34). In the congregation of Galatia there were

those who should have been excommunicated, but who nevertheless remained within the congregation (Galatians 5:12). In Php 2:21 Paul states the following concerning many in the church, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Read the letter of Jude, and Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, and you will observe how degenerate those churches were. Indeed, one will find exhortations and directives relative to the church's obligation to excommunicate those who lead offensive lives. However, in none of the texts referring to degeneracy within the church are the upright forbidden to partake of the Lord's Supper in those churches. We here wish to refer you to our Letters Against the Labadists, our Warning, and our Doctrine and Government (addressed to the Labadists), there being many matters which would shed light upon this for such apprehensive individuals. If they refuse to make the effort, however, they must know that they willingly adhere to error.

He who wishes to hide behind the word church, understanding it to refer to those who are truly godly in the world and not to the congregation in its external manifestation, thereby declaring himself to remain a member of the church, is a person of Labadistic persuasion. For his instruction, he ought to read what we have written concerning the Labadists in Doctrine and Government. Such a person deceives himself and others.

Objection #2: He who partakes of the Lord's Supper thereby confesses to have communion with all who also partake. "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). The exhortation pertaining to this, and a more extensive explanation concerning this matter, can be found in the Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper. It is certain that a Christian may not have fellowship with the ungodly. Therefore, since the church is filled with ungodly individuals, the Christian is consequently obligated to abstain from partaking of the Lord's Supper until the church has been purified.

Answer: First, those who are apprehensive will admit that this proposition is not absolute in all respects, and is not true for all partakers of the Lord's Supper. For if the church were purified of all who give offense, they would partake without objection, even though many unconverted would be partaking as well, since their concern relates not to the unconverted but to those who give offense. They will also admit that one neither ought to be assured that all partakers are converted, nor that one can absolutely be assured of this. Furthermore if by partaking one would declare to have inward, spiritual communion with all participants, one would declare to have such communion also with the unconverted who either might be or are among them. Far be it from them and us to hold to such a position. This proves that such texts ought not to be understood as referring to inward, spiritual communion with all who partake of the Lord's Supper. They will also have to admit that they do not wish to understand these texts in this manner, since there are undoubtedly unconverted members in the congregation. We can thus conclude (which they must do on the basis of their own argument), that this text, according to their view, would prove more than they themselves wish to admit, giving them no license to partake of the Lord's Supper except with those of whose regeneration they were absolutely certain. However, such a view they reject. It is thus evident that this text is no basis for abstaining from partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Secondly, in this particular chapter the apostle speaks of the church as being separated from all other religions, and declares that this separated people constitute one body, being partakers of these sacraments; for this reason they ought not to intermingle with other religions (vss. 18,

20-21). He demonstrates that among this people, within this body, there are those who truly possess grace, who truly have communion with Christ, and who have true spiritual communion with each other. Among those who partake there are also those who are unconverted. Even though they have declared that they had received Christ by faith, sought their salvation in Him, and were desirous to live according to His laws, in truth they did not do so. This he illustrates by referring to Israel's exodus from Egypt, their baptism in the cloud and in the sea, their eating of the manna, and their drinking from the rock. With many of them the Lord was not well-pleased, since they lived ungodly and idolatrous lives. These sins and the resultant punishments he holds before the Corinthians, so that thereby they might be deterred from involving themselves in similar sins, such as idolatry, eating and drinking with idolaters at their feasts, and partaking of their idolatrous sacrifices. From this it is evident that all members of the church constitute one people as far as confession and separation from other religions and nations are concerned -- however, not as far as having communion with Christ, and in Him, with each other. The sins of some members in whom God has no pleasure will not be imputed to the account of the godly with whom God is pleased. Thus, this fellowship which one confesses to have with the body of the congregation when partaking of the Lord's Supper is external and neither inward nor spiritual. At the same time this fellowship is also of an inward nature as far as all true believers are concerned, whether one is acquainted with them or not. Therefore, those who are apprehensive cannot use this text in support of their concerns. Consider here also what we have initially stated concerning the nature of the church.

Objection #3: The apostle expressly forbids us to partake of the Lord's Supper together with those who give offense. "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (1 Corinthians 5:11). The entire context indicates that the apostle here makes reference to the Lord's Supper, for he mentions that the incestuous person ought to be excommunicated from the congregation, urging her to do so by making reference to the Passover and the removal of the leaven. Even if the apostle were to refer to "love" meals, the same argument is valid, for at such meals one also partook of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Even if he referred to common meals, it is equally true, for that which one ought not to do at a lesser meal ought much less to be done at a meal of superior importance. This is consistent with 2 Thessalonians 3:14, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." Consider also verse 6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly." Add to this 2 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 6:17, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness. ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate." Since there are such clear commands to be separate, it is therefore our duty not to partake of the Lord's Supper together with those who give offense.

Answer: Let us first consider 1 Corinthians 5:11. Here a clear distinction is made between various persons in reference to the same matter, which one may practice with some and not with others. These various persons are on the one side sinners outside of the church, and on the other side those who give offense within the church. The matter in question pertains to intermingling with them, particularly as far as eating is concerned. This pertains to intermingling which includes walk

and talk, business trade and social interaction, the practice of modesty and friendliness, and if required, the mutual partaking of a meal. Even though the practice of eating a meal is not mentioned in reference to sinners outside of the church, the permission granted to intermingle with them and the existing contrast indicates that it must be understood as being included. The apostle permits such intermingling and mutual partaking of meals with sinners of this world; that is, if the aforementioned circumstances require this from us, while at all times being on guard against their unfruitful works of darkness and always being among them as a shining light in this world -- as Christ has eaten with publicans and sinners. He does forbid, however, such intermingling and partaking of meals (which is permitted with sinners outside of the church) with those who are called brothers, but who give offense within the church. This makes it evident that the apostle in verse 11 does not refer to partaking of the Lord's Supper, since there is never any ecclesiastical interaction with sinners outside of the church, and thus never any mutual partaking of the Lord's Supper. This is conveyed by the word "without." Interaction with them is solely of a social nature. The apostle, however, forbids social fellowship with brothers who give offense. The Duty of the Church and her Members Regarding Individuals who Lead Offensive Lives

Question: Why is fellowship with members who give offense not permitted, whereas it is permitted with sinners outside the church?

Answer: Interaction and partaking of meals with the worldly, that is, those without the church, will not render us suspect, as if one associated and were in agreement with them. However, interaction and partaking of meals with members who have been identified as giving offense, would undoubtedly create the impression that we are pleased with their walk, since there is agreement in all other areas: in confession and being united to a church and her membership. Thus the members who give offense would be confirmed all the more in their sinful ways rather than becoming ashamed, which would be the case if they were shunned. This we deem to be the meaning of this text.

Evasive Argument: Concerned individuals may conclude from this that since we may not intermingle with those who give offense by way of social interaction and social meals, then such is much less permissible in the spiritual realm and in the partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Answer: I do not object to such a conclusion, but do not draw your conclusion from this text, for it does not pertain to this. But what then? Must a Christian abstain from partaking of the Lord's Supper if those who give offense partake likewise? Such is clearly not the case. The invalidity of such an argument will become evident upon noting that abstaining from the Lord's Supper with those who give offense can be practiced in a twofold manner: by keeping such individuals from the table by way of church discipline or by withdrawing oneself and abstaining from participation. The first option is the duty of the church, and everyone is obligated to do his utmost in this respect by approaching such a person in order to convict, rebuke, and warn in such a fashion, so as not merely to satisfy himself in having done his duty, but to bring the person who gives offense to repentance and to cause him to forsake his offensive behavior. If he gives heed to you, the church has been purified in that respect, and you have saved a soul from death. If he will not give heed, it is everyone's duty to bring such an individual to the attention of the elders with proof of his misdeed, in order that the church, which must act *ex actis et probatis*, that is, in response to actual and proven facts, may keep such a person from the table. If the church keeps such a person from

the table, his offense has been removed. You are obligated not to interact with him, and not even to have a meal with him, so that he, due to your withdrawal from and the severance of all fellowship with him, would become ashamed of himself and come to repentance. If the church does not keep him from the table, either because she considers the misdeed not to be of such magnitude or because she lacks sufficient evidence, then apprehensive individuals must be in subjection and not act according to their own judgment -- as if this would nullify all fellowship with the church and the church could then not exist. If there is clear evidence of the offense and the church does not keep such a person from the table, she is remiss in her duty and grievously sins against God. You, however, will have done your duty, having expressed your objection concerning such an offensive person. You have declared that you do not desire to keep company with such a person and that he comes to the table contrary to your wishes. In this way you have neither part nor fellowship with such an offensive person.

Evasive Argument: One may say that there are so many who give offense, that it is an impossible task to speak to all of them and to bring them to the attention of the consistory. Many consistories are of such a disposition that such action would bear no fruit, but would rather bring attention to oneself as a "know-it-all" and one who minds the business of others. Yes, they would twist and turn the situation in such a manner, and deal with the witnesses in such fashion, that one would come in a precarious situation himself, and possibly be accused of bringing false accusation. In a word, this cannot be accomplished.

Answer (1) You probably do not know very many who give offense, and those whom you do not know, cannot harm you. This, however, is not the issue, but rather that none wish to make the effort. It is an easy task to let everyone run towards his destruction, and thus avoid conflict with anyone and to walk away from this duty. Consider, however, the servant who buried his talent in the earth.

(2) All consistories are not of such a disposition. In all the localities where I have served as minister, we always censured those individuals who gave offense, who were either brought to our attention or were pointed out by a member of the consistory itself. One may, however, not take action on the basis of one's own views, and be of the opinion that they must immediately take action in response to your testimony. Such testimony must be well-founded and given in such a manner that love rather than an air of superiority is evident. However, one will probably opt for the easiest way out. One will readily complain about the neglect of others while failing to do his duty himself, in the meantime professing to be desirous of such reformation. There may be some who, by making such complaints and staying away from the table, have an ulterior motive to be viewed as holy. I urge such individuals to examine themselves in the presence of the Lord. However, if someone acts thus in sincerity and humility of heart, his error which is accompanied by desire for ease and by apprehensiveness, proceeds from a wrong understanding of the church as far as her external manifestation is concerned. The church must be governed by regulations which are according to God's Word.

We have thus shown how the partaking of the Lord's Supper with those who give offense can be prevented by keeping them from the table, which the church is commanded and obligated to do. Participation with those who give offense can also be prevented by withdrawing oneself and abstaining from coming to the holy table. There is no such command, however, but it is forbidden

as we have proven by way of our previous arguments. Those who stay away from the table are thus guilty of sin, and they are doing their utmost to dissolve the unity of the church and to cause her to fall apart.

Even if this text (in the absence of a conclusion reached by reasoning from the inferior to the superior) were first of all to be understood as referring to not partaking of the Lord's Supper with those who give offense, the meaning would not be: You will not eat with them by walking away yourself and abstain from coming to the table to which you are called, which is so profitable for your soul, and which brings so much glory to the Lord Jesus. However, the meaning would then be: Eat not with such by removing the wicked from your midst (vs. 13), by removing the old leaven from the house (vs. 7), but not by walking away from the house and the passover itself. Thus, these apprehensive individuals ought to be convinced that this text, which is their chief support, affords them no basis for staying away from the table. Having dealt with this text, we do not need many words to deal with the other texts.

Secondly, let us consider 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:14. These texts yield no argument whatsoever for such apprehensive individuals. They make no mention of withdrawing oneself from the church or from the Lord's Supper, as if this would be for one's own benefit in order not to be polluted. They rather deal with the duty of the church concerning those who give offense; that is, to identify them, keep them from the table, excommunicate them out of her community, separate from them, and to shun such as are under censure, in order that they may become ashamed and be brought to repentance. Take notice of the distinction which is made between either intermingling with them or excommunicating them (which is the duty of the church), or staying away from the table, which is not permitted.

Objection: If the church does not do her duty, and those who give offense come to the table, one then nevertheless has communion with them, and does not withdraw oneself from them by partaking of the Lord's Supper with them.

Answer: One has nothing more in common with them than the confession, which we have shown above, and you have expressed your objections against them as you have been directed to do. That such a situation cannot be corrected ought to be lamented.

Thirdly, let us consider 2 Corinthians 6:14-17. It will at once be clear that this text is an exhortation to the church and to each member, whether converted or unconverted. It applies to one's obligation to be separated from the unbelieving heathen; it is not applicable to those who give offense within the church. The church must unite itself as one body, people, and church, and manifest herself clearly as distinguished from the heathen population out of whom they have come forth but among whom they still reside. Others would be able to see that her members are an entirely different people from the heathen, having separated themselves from them and having united under one Head, Jesus Christ. What argument is there here for such apprehensive individuals?

Objection #4: The congregation will provoke God to wrath if members partake of the Lord's Supper with those who give offense. This is evident in 1 Corinthians 11:30, where we read, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The Reformed church acknowledges in Question 82 of the Heidelberg Catechism [HC 82]: "By this, the covenant of God would be

profaned, and His wrath kindled against the whole congregation.”

Every Christian is, however, obligated not to provoke God to wrath, yes, even to flee this wrath. It is therefore one's duty to abstain from partaking of the Lord's Supper as long as so many who give offense attend as well.

Answer: First, it is not stated in this chapter that God's wrath is kindled against the godly due to the correct manner in which they partake of the Lord's Supper. To maintain this is to state an untruth. Rather, God's wrath is kindled against the church if she becomes guilty of disorderly and offensive practices which are very sinful in nature, as was the case in Corinth, and she becomes guilty of neglect in not keeping those who give offense from attending. If all are guilty of this, and no one performs his duty, all would justly be punishable in this matter. And if the apprehensive individuals are also guilty of such neglect, why then do they hate the chastisement instead of saying, “I shall bear the Lord's indignation, for I have sinned against Him?”

Secondly, it is simply not credible (I make an appeal to the conscience of every one of these apprehensive individuals) that God would pour out His wrath upon an upright soul who in all sincerity partakes of the Lord's Supper in a godly manner, mourns over the corruption of the church, and has done his duty in this respect.

Thirdly, if God's wrath is kindled against the entire congregation due to partaking of the Lord's Supper together with those who give offense, this is also applicable to such apprehensive individuals, even though they abstain from attending, for they declare themselves to be members of the church. They therefore, according to their own definition, cannot avoid the wrath of God as long as they declare themselves to be members of this corrupt church.

Evasive Argument: The Lord will spare us, since we have not sinned in partaking of the Lord's Supper. Answer (1) This sin is not the issue here. (2) Where is it written that those who profess to be members of the church will go free when the entire congregation is punished -- go free by reason of not having partaken of the Lord's Supper? (3) If they were to go free, why then not the sincere and godly partakers of the Lord's Supper, who have done more than they as far as offensive individuals are concerned? They thus ought to be convinced that this pretense neither has any validity for their own heart nor does it appear to be valid for others. A Rebuke Toward Persons who Leave the Church to Establish a Purer Church

Objection #5: A person must bear witness against the degeneracy of the church and there is no better way to do this, considering the sad condition of the church, than to separate oneself. In doing so one makes it evident that he considers the church to have degenerated and that discipline is not exercised. In doing so ministers and elders will be rebuked and convicted that they are remiss in their duty and are the cause that the church is and remains in such a degenerate condition. Such action would cause the ungodly to be ashamed because of their sins, and the godly would be inwardly convinced that they too must arise and come to Zion's rescue by also withdrawing themselves. The chaff would then be separated from the wheat. The chaff would be blown away and the wheat would be gathered together, be it either by removing the chaff or by meeting in different localities. They would call good ministers, thus establishing a purer church which would be as a city upon a hill, manifesting itself as a light upon a candlestick in the nation. If such a church would not be tolerated, and instead were to be persecuted, it could then move to a

different locality or nation where freedom could again be enjoyed. The entire earth is the Lord's and He can maintain His people elsewhere as well as here. Yes, the Lord would possibly grant more external blessings to such a purified church. Such a church would then function as a banner held up for all of Europe to see, and the godly would come to her from all directions. They would nevertheless remain a special congregation of the Reformed church, which would be deemed more degenerate, but yet acknowledged as the true church. Is it therefore not highly beneficial to abstain oneself from partaking of the Lord's Supper when so many individuals who give offense attend as well? Even if such action did not have the desired result, one would nevertheless have done his part, which in turn would be pleasing to the Lord.

Answer: This is nothing more than daydreaming. This was also the cry of the Labadists, a movement which is going from bad to worse! One must not do evil in order that good may come from it. This is not the way to bear witness against the degeneracy of the church, as such action is contrary to the ordinance of God. Rather, one bears witness to his own misunderstanding, imagination, pride, and inclination towards schism. In the above we have indicated how one ought to bear witness. Add to this the necessity of a holy walk in humility of heart, in faith, and in love. It is in this fashion that Noah bore witness to the first world, and godly women likewise bear witness to their unbelieving husbands. The thought that the church can thereby be restored is nothing but imagination, while in fact it scatters the church. "He that gathereth not with Me scattereth" (Luke 11:23). When the Lord determines the restoration of His church, He will pour out His Spirit more abundantly upon her; or He will give a general unction of His Spirit to all the godly, so that all who give offense are either driven out or will depart of themselves. This was true for the exodus from Babel and when the iconoclasm [Note: "Iconoclasm" refers to the violent removal of images from Roman Catholic churches during the time of the Reformation.] occurred. Until such is the case, let us do our duty within the church. The emotions and opinions, even among God's children, are presently so diverse that due to this diversity of sentiments no unity can be expected among them, even if the church were rid of all who give offense, or if there were a departure from the church. This proposition makes it evident that the work of such apprehensive members would result in schism if they were to acquire a following. Their protest that they nevertheless are and wish to remain members of the church would turn into viewing the church as Babel. The pretense of being concerned about offensive behavior could readily engender the notion that one can have a certain or probable knowledge of another's regeneration. They will then not be satisfied with the criteria for membership and the exercise of discipline proposed earlier. Such would then revert to either Labadism or Judaism, or it would result in a third error. Therefore refrain from such contemplations and subject your judgment and conversation to God's Word, and you will proceed safely.

Objection #6: God manifests His favor upon such who abstain from partaking of the Lord's Supper, for He gives such persons a sweet and quiet conscience, free access to the throne of grace, and more power against their inner corruptions, so that they may go their way with joy. This is an irrefutable fact, experience teaches it, and those who do not partake know it to be true. To deny and contradict this is to act contrary to truth and experience, and proceeds from ignorance concerning the true spiritual frame of the person who does not partake.

Answer: First, the comfort and holiness which one pretends to have is not all genuine, for the devil can transform himself into an angel of light. I have experienced with several individuals that such lofty claims were nothing more than a seeking for glory to justify their actions, and thereby to allure

others to join them in the battle. Shortly after that, however, their situation would change.

Secondly, if a person who does not partake truly experiences all that he claims, this is not to be attributed to abstaining from the Lord's Supper. The Lord also blessed the midwives in Egypt, not due to their lie, but rather because of the good which they performed. When there is grace in the heart and one is of the opinion that he does God a service, such grace is quickened because of the witness of his conscience, even if such witness itself be in error. The Lord then manifests Himself to such a living soul -- having stirred herself up and being exercised in both faith and sanctification -- and in His goodness overlooks the sinful occasion which has quickened the soul. The soul can also be revived because such separation and the manifestation of doing something extraordinary results in conviction and a stirring in her conscience, so that she strives to be extraordinary in her walk. By doing this all the more since all eyes are upon her, her missteps would give all the more offense and thus taint her witness. Thus, a good spiritual frame cannot be the basis for believing that abstinence from the Lord's Supper is pleasing to God.

Objection #7: Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. However, we cannot partake in faith, there being much danger in doing so. It is therefore better to abstain from coming to that holy table as long as the church is so degenerate, even though one has a great desire for the Lord's Supper, it being a bitter grief that one neither dares nor is permitted to partake of it.

Answer: First, it is true that a person ought not act contrary to his conscience, but it is also true that he may not follow an erring conscience, for he will then also err in his walk. The conscience follows the light he has, and therefore he must strive to understand the truth correctly, instructing his conscience by searching the Word of God without prejudice and with prayer for light, while consulting with men who are wise and godly, particularly with ministers whose lips keep knowledge; "they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:7).

Secondly, as a person may not partake with a fearful conscience, he may also not abstain with a fearful conscience. When the thought of abstinence initially occurred, he still was partaking of the Lord's Supper. One therefore must examine himself whether he had no concerns and was absolutely assured that his first abstinence was according to the will of God -- and thus necessitating compliance with this will; or whether he did so because he was concerned as to whether he did the right thing, and was of the opinion that this would be his best option. If you still fear to make a change, you must stay where you are until, by faith, you can make a change without fear. Therefore the apprehensive person will observe that he should have continued in partaking of the Lord's Supper, since he neither could nor has abstained without being troubled about it, and did not sufficiently investigate the matter. The subsequent reduction of his fear was the result of having hardened himself more in his prejudice as a result of his actions, thus diminishing his fears. This could possibly be accompanied by a judgment of God, who has left those over to themselves who were inclined towards error and have begun to act recklessly. In view of all this an apprehensive person can observe what confusion he has brought upon himself, and that his fear does not exempt him from the commission of sin, if it was his duty to partake of the Lord's Supper, which indeed it was.

We have thus considered this matter from all angles and clearly presented the truth. I end with this wish and exhortation, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto

Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles" (Psalms 43:3); "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee" (Song of Solomon 6:13).

Beloved, be obedient to the truth and allow neither the pride of your heart nor carnal shame to prevent you from giving honor to God and from repenting. May the Lord become too strong for you, persuade you, keep you from other errors, and cause you to walk in His truth. May He cause you to be a light and an ornament in His church to the honor and glory of His Name! Amen.

030. Chapter 26: The Communion of Believers with Christ and with Each Other

----- CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX ----- The Communion of Believers with Christ and with Each Other In the previous chapter we discussed the nature of the church, as well as the obligation to join and remain with her. We shall now speak of the communion true members of the church have with their Head Jesus Christ and each other, and also how they must exercise this. The Relationship Between Christ and His Church The Lord Jesus not only gives many and excellent benefits to His church, but He and His Church mutually belong to each other, are united with each other -- and exercise communion with each other, all of which is wondrous beyond comparison. These three elements comprehend all true felicity.

All true believers are the property of Christ, and Christ is the property of all true believers. This is indicated by the possessive pronouns "mine" and "his," which so frequently are employed in the Song of Solomon, as well as in many other texts. "My beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16); "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled" (Song of Solomon 5:2). This is first of all based and founded upon a gift. The Father has given them to the Son. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (John 17:6); "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psalms 2:8). The Father has likewise given the Son to believers. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given" (Isaiah 9:6); "And gave Him to be the head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22).

Secondly, this is based and founded upon purchase, for Jesus obtained them at great expense. He purchased them with His blood; He has paid the price and they are thus His property in full conformity to the law. "For Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood" (Revelation 5:9).

Thirdly, this is based and founded upon victory. Believers were once in the power of Satan, being in his snare and taken captive by him at his will. By His death, the Lord Jesus has conquered and bound the devil, delivering the elect from his power and translating them into His kingdom. "That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15); "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils" (Luke 11:21-22).

Fourthly, this is based and founded on marriage. In a marriage covenant both parties become the property of each other by way of mutual surrender. This is also true of this relationship. "Yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest Mine" (Ezekiel 16:8). In Hosea 2:19-20 reference is made to this marriage covenant. We read there, "And I shall betroth thee unto Me for ever." This covenant can therefore never be broken, nor can the partakers of this covenant ever be separated from Him. "Yea, I shall betroth thee unto

Me in righteousness.” It has the Father’s approbation and is His delight. As a consequence of Christ’s suffering and death they have been translated into a state wherein they can approach unto God, whose justice has truly been satisfied, and become His children in Christ. “And in judgment”; that is, to keep them as the apple of His eye and to take vengeance upon all who offend them. “And in lovingkindness, and in mercies.” This entire transaction is marked by love, friendliness, goodness, and beneficence. “I shall even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness”; that is, I shall do so in truth, faithfully, and with certainty, and thus never leave you nor forsake you. “And thou shalt know the Lord.” I shall enlighten the eyes of your understanding, I shall reveal Myself to you, and cause you to see and to taste all My beauty.

Fifthly, this is based and founded upon surrender. From the side of the believer there is likewise a heartfelt, total, and absolute surrender, doing so without any reservation. They yield themselves unto the Lord (2 Chronicles 30:8); “One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord” (Isaiah 44:5); “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance” (Psalms 33:12). The Nature of the Union Between Christ and His Church This belonging to each other also implies union. The nature of this union is inexpressible, and can better be experienced by the believer than expressed in words. This union is neither one of essence as the divine Persons are one, nor personal as the human nature has been assumed by Christ as divine Person. This union is also neither one of mixture as water and wine are mixed, nor does a transformation take place as if believers would become Christ Himself, and thus would become God or Christ. This union is neither a sacramental union such as the union between the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper with the body and blood of Christ, nor is it merely an external relationship. It also does not consist in the believer’s conformity to Christ in the way of sanctification.

Rather, this union is established:

(1) by the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in believers: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (1 Corinthians 3:16);

(2) by spiritual marriage (cf. Ezekiel 16:8; Hosea 2:19-20);

(3) by faith which, by its very nature, unites: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:17);

(4) by love which, due to its very nature, cannot tolerate separation, but seeks the most intimate of unions. “My Father shall love him, and We shall come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23); “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ” (Romans 8:35). This union is therefore real, essential, true, complete, without any reservation, eternally inseparable, spiritual, and without any corporal dimension.

Scripture refers to this union by means of several expressions and explains it by way of various comparisons. Scripture refers to this union as:

(1) “being one”: “But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17); “For if we have been planted together ...” [Note: The Statenvertaling reads: “Indien wij met Hem éne plante geworden zijn,” that is, “If we have become one plant with Him.”] (Romans 6:5);

(2) “putting on Christ”: “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14).

(3) "being rooted in Christ": "Rooted and built up in Him" (Colossians 2:7);

(4) being mutually in each other. a) Christ is and lives in believers.

"I in them" (John 17:23); "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you" (2 Corinthians 13:5); "Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). b) Believers in turn have been elected in Christ. "According as He hath chosen us in Him" (Ephesians 1:4). They are also baptized in Him. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death" (Romans 6:4). They live in Him. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Colossians 2:6); "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). The Lord Jesus gives expression to this mutual indwelling when He states, "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:5).

Scripture expresses the intimacy of this union by a variety of comparisons. First, it compares this union to a marriage. "They two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:31-32). Secondly, this union is compared to the union of the body with the Head. "... and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22-23); "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ" (1 Corinthians 6:15); "And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Colossians 2:19).

Thirdly, it is compared to the union between a tree and its branches. "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree" (Romans 11:17); "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:5).

Fourthly, it is also compared to a house, which is built up by uniting many stones together. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, ... ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:4-5); "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:20-21). The comparisons point to a most intimate union in the natural realm. However, the spiritual union between believers and Christ is of a more intimate nature than these.

Union with Christ Will Necessarily Result in Communion with Christ As a consequence of belonging to each other and the resulting union, there will of necessity be communion; that is, the exercise and utilization of this relationship. This communion is both with the Person of Jesus Christ and with His benefits.

First, believers have and exercise communion with His Person. A temporal believer concerns himself only with the benefits and has no interest in Christ Himself. Believers, however, have communion with the Person of Jesus Christ, but many neither meditate upon nor closely heed their exercises concerning Christ Himself. They err in this, which is detrimental to the strength of their faith and impedes its growth. Therefore we wish to exhort them to be more exercised concerning the truth of belonging to each other, and the union and communion with Jesus Himself. They will then better perceive the unsearchable grace and goodness of God that such wretched and sinful men may be so intimately united with the Son of God. Such reflection will most wondrously set the

heart aflame with love. It will strengthen their resolve to put their trust in Jesus without fear. It will give them strength and liberty to obtain everything from Him to fulfil the desires of their soul, causing them to grow in Him, which in turn will generate more light and joy. Therefore, faith, hope, and love are mentioned in reference to the Person of Christ. Scripture speaks of receiving Him, believing in Him, trusting in Him, living in Him, loving Him, and hoping in Him. This communion with the Person of Christ Himself is expressed in the following passages: "That ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3); "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9); "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Secondly, believers due to being united with Christ are also partakers of all His benefits. The Lord Jesus says concerning His relationship to the Father, "And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine" (John 17:10). How we must marvel that a believer may thus say to Christ, "All that is mine is Thine, and all that is Thine is mine." They are partakers of all that Christ is and has, and may use it as their own.

(1) They have the same human nature (Hebrews 2:11; Hebrews 2:14), and may have communion with Him in that capacity. (2) They have fellowship with His Sonship, for in Him they are children of God, having one Father (John 20:17). (3) His satisfaction of the justice of God is their satisfaction. With this they may come to God desiring that God would do justice to them according to this their righteousness. On the basis of the resurrection of Jesus Christ they may ask with a good conscience, "Has not Christ paid for all my sins? Art Thou not therefore satisfied and reconciled with me?" The apostle confirms this in Romans 5:10, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

(4) His perfect obedience and accomplishment of the law is their holiness, and this renders them perfect before God (Colossians 2:10), and the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Because of this they have a right to say, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10).

(5) His intercession and high-priestly appearance before the throne of grace is on their behalf. "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). They may appropriate the High-Priestly prayer of Christ which is always heard. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me" (John 17:24).

(6) Christ's glory is their glory, and His inheritance is their inheritance. When the head is crowned, the entire body of necessity is crowned. "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (John 17:22); "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17).

(7) The Spirit of Christ is their Spirit. "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you. ... Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:11; Romans 8:9).

(8) The power of Jesus is their power, and they may take hold thereof as their own and be active therewith. "Or let him take hold of My strength" (Isaiah 27:5); "Blessed is the man whose strength

is in Thee" (Psalms 84:5); "The Lord is the strength of my life" (Psalms 27:1).

(9) In one word, we may conclude that all the benefits of the covenant of grace are their benefits, and all the fullness of Christ is theirs. "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16).

(10) Finally, they also have fellowship with His suffering and become partakers of it, which is their great glory. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Peter 4:14).

Exhortation to Seek Communion with Christ

Since believers are partakers of Christ and all His benefits, how heartily and continually they ought to be exercised concerning this union!

First, this is their portion and they have a right to it. Jesus Himself is their Jesus and all His benefits are theirs. Secondly, since it grieves you, believers, to be so empty in yourself, and you desire neither not to be distracted by nor filled with anything but Jesus and His fullness, why do you remain so long in this empty frame? Arise, satisfy and fill yourself with Him; rejoice in Him and His benefits.

Thirdly, you are not ashamed of Him, are you? Is it not your greatest delight to be familiar with Jesus and to have communion with Him as with a family member?

Fourthly, Jesus Himself delights in having communion with you, extending such a friendly invitation so that you would also exercise communion with Him. "Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away ... let Me see Thy countenance, let Me hear Thy voice; for sweet is Thy voice, and Thy countenance is comely" (Song of Solomon 2:13-14); "Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse, with Me from Lebanon" (Song of Solomon 4:8); "Come, My beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages ... there shall I give thee My loves" (Song of Solomon 7:11-12).

Fifthly, in the exercise of this communion there is sweetness and overflowing delight. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine" (Song of Solomon 1:2); "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:34); "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures" (Psalms 36:8).

Sixthly, as the countenance of Moses shone forth after He had enjoyed communion with God on the mount, the exercise of communion will likewise cause believers to shine forth with holy luster. Thus, communion with Christ will cause the soul to shine forth with holiness. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Seventhly, in the exercise of this communion there is a strong and loving comfort in all the circumstances believers encounter.

(1) It enables them to endure all the contempt of the world. Jesus is their glory and delight, and they know that once, before the eyes of the entire world, they will be placed at the right hand of the

Lord Jesus in glory.

(2) The grievous poverty they must endure will not oppress them, for they may behold their riches in Jesus, who, though He was rich, yet for their sakes He became poor, that they through His poverty might be rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

(3) They will then not fear persecution, for they know that the Lord Jesus is as personally affected as if He Himself were being persecuted. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me" (Acts 9:4); "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalms 116:15).

(4) Here they find balm for their sick soul, light to clear up their darkness, life for their deadness, food and drink for their hunger and thirst, peace for their troubled heart, blood to atone for their sins, the Spirit for their sanctification, counsel when they are at their wit's end, strength for their weakness, and a fullness of all for their manifold deficiencies.

(5) Such communion yields comfort as a remedy for the fear of death. The exercise of this communion removes not only the fear of condemnation, but also the natural fear for natural death which at times causes considerable anxiety. For they then believe and taste the truth of Jesus' words, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

(6) The exercise of this communion causes them to rejoice that one day the day of general judgment will come. For this day they long and yearn. They love His appearance, for then the entire world will see their Bridegroom in His glory; then believers will see Him in close proximity, and He will usher them into the new Jerusalem.

All these glorious and delightful matters are suitable to cause a believing soul to be enamored with the exercise of communion with Christ, and there will be a desire to understand in what manner she may exercise this communion and by which means one may engage in this. The Manner in Which Believers Exercise Communion with Christ This communion is exercised in the following manner:

(1) In beholding the Lord Jesus in his beauty, desirability, and fullness. There will be thoughtful reflection about the Counsel of Peace, in which the Son of God out of love for His elect willingly offered Himself as their Surety. From there one descends to meditate upon His assumption of the human nature, the full scope of His bitter suffering, and then His cursed death. From there one proceeds to His resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God. In all of these one beholds His love, His willingness, the efficacy of the atonement, and all His fullness unto the salvation of the sinner. Here the soul pauses with longing eyes, desiring a further, clearer, and closer view of His perfections. She desires to find delight in such contemplation, to be ignited with love, to joyfully acknowledge and approve of Him as such, and to praise and to magnify Him. In this manner a believer beholds Jesus. Such beholding of Him stirs Jesus up to express His love towards the believer. "Thou hast ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck" (Song of Solomon 4:9).

(2) When the heart of the believer goes out in love to Jesus, viewing Him as his own and as being his Bridegroom. There will be a desire to focus the eyes on the one loved, and in beholding, love will be stirred up all the more, for the loved one will behold love in the face of the beholder. This

mutual beholding of each other in love is as an act of communication, whereby loving desires towards each other are maintained.

(3) By means of familiar discourse. The soul who thus beholds Jesus, the heart going out in love towards Him, will share with her Beloved the frame of her heart, her love, and her grief for not loving Him more. She will bring all her needs to Him, reveal her desires to Him, make supplication to Him, plead affectionately with Him, and beg of Him sweetly for the fulfillment of her desire. She listens to what Jesus has to say to her, turns herself to His Word, deeming it to be the voice of her Beloved. This is particularly true when with clarity, power, and sweetness He impresses a text of Scripture upon her heart, causing her to speak to Him in return, giving expression to all the questions generated by her love, which in turn causes Jesus to reply to her. In doing so the soul will lose and forget herself, and it will grieve her if this dialogue is broken off, or if her body is too weak to endure the intensity of her desires as well as the kisses and influences of His love.

(4) In dependence upon Him. In love she leans upon Him, entrusting to Him her soul, her body, and whatever she may encounter. She expresses and reveals all of this to her Bridegroom; she takes refuge under His shadow and rests in His safekeeping. Without fear she entrusts all this to her Jesus, taking refuge with Him, knowing that He will neither drive nor cast her away from Him, but that this is pleasing to Him and stirs up His desires toward her.

(5) By asking counsel. If something must be performed or refrained from, she will neither proceed blindly nor will she trust her own judgment. Much less will she follow her own will. Rather, she will ask counsel of her Lord, asking Him what is pleasing to Him, for His will is her will. And having received counsel from Him she will walk in the way of uprightness.

(6) By making use of His strength and all His benefits as her own. The believing soul knows that she may avail herself of Jesus' benefits, that this is pleasing to Him, and that He has given them to her for that very purpose. If a sin has been committed, she will flee to the blood of Jesus. If she has polluted herself, she will go to Him as a fountain to be washed. If she is weak, she will take hold of His strength, and in union with Jesus will overcome all resistance, doing whatever is according to Jesus' will. By His strength she is encouraged. She boasts of His benefits as being her own, and she presents herself as possessing light, life, strength, riches, glory, and all things in Him. This causes her to have contempt for the world. Her walk will be in heaven and she manifests herself as such to the world.

Exhortation to Remain Steadfast in Exercising Communion with Christ Anyone who wishes to be steadfast in the exercise of this communion is to consider the following:

(1) You must be very much on guard for unanticipated sins which overtake you by surprise, and even more for presumptuous sins. This is very detrimental to holy familiarity, for the holy Jesus will withdraw Himself, and the soul will lose her liberty and her suitable frame. And if one has fallen, he must hastily arise and seek atonement and satisfaction in Christ's ransom.

(2) Behave yourself appropriately towards Jesus. If this communion has diminished for other reasons, take heed that you do not reject grace. Be not fretful, for Jesus is not to be moved by this. Also, be not insensible concerning your want of communion, as if you could do without Him, as if restoration were no longer possible, and as if this former communion could never return.

(3) Those who may enjoy such communion, must see to it that the fear of man will neither prevent you from professing Him nor from manifesting His image and true holiness; that is, be not ashamed of Christ, for this dishonors Him.

Rather, acquaint yourself with Him. Let the exercise of this communion be your daily task when you are alone, when you are in company, and when you are engaged in your profession. May Jesus always have your ear, and may there always be a view upon Him. By faith, hold fast to the fact that you are reconciled to and are a partaker of Him and His benefits, even if you do not perceive and feel this. This belonging to Him is not based on feeling. If the soul may truly believe this and be exercised therewith, this will lead the soul toward communion with Him. Be patient and submissive if you cannot attain what others do attain. The Lord is free and is in no way obligated toward you. If He gives you less in this dispensation, this is neither a token of less love, nor of being His property to a lesser degree. It is rather wisdom, for God wishes to be glorified by you in a different manner than in others, and your future glory will therefore not be any less.

Plead urgently before the Lord upon His promise, and show Him your desires in this matter, holding before Him that He Himself has given these promises to you.

Let the Word guide you; believe it, follow it, and wait upon the fulfillment of the promise. Be reminded that bliss is reserved for heaven, and that this life is a time of battle in which the victory is an absolute certainty. In doing so you will not stray so far, and you will time and again will be restored -- until the Lord will immediately unite us to Himself in glory. The Communion of Saints As believers have communion with their Head Jesus Christ, they likewise have communion with each other. I repeat, with each other, and thus not with other gatherings which assemble for religious purposes. From all such gatherings they separate themselves, whatever their names may be. This applies to:

(1) The heathen in all their various manifestations, as well as to Mohammedans. This also applies to the Socinians, and among them the Socinian Anabaptists and Arminians who deny the holy Trinity, the hypostatic union of the natures of Christ (that is, Christ as the eternal Son of the eternal Father having assumed a holy human nature within the unity of His Person), the true satisfaction of Christ as Surety on behalf of the elect, justification on the basis of the merits of Christ only without the good works of man, and the sealing power of the sacraments to all believers.

(2) The Papists, who have the antichrist as their head, committing heinous and abominable idolatry with a piece of bread by worshiping it as their God. They religiously call upon angels and deceased saints for help according to body and soul. They render religious honor to images, make themselves guilty of the body and blood of Christ again by daily sacrificing Christ unto the forgiveness of sins, seeking to be justified by their own works and the works of others to merit salvation thereby. They deny the sealing power of the sacraments, attributing to them the power of the removal of sin. They are also bitter persecutors of the Lord Jesus and His church.

(3) Modern Lutherans. I am not referring to those who strictly adhere to the Augsburg Confession, but to such as they generally are today, who have the Augsburg Confession in their mouths, but depart from it and come very close to popery. These, if there arose but a small persecution against them, would perhaps soon return as a dog to his vomit, and unite themselves again with popery. To seek fellowship with such would thoroughly corrupt the church. May the Lord keep His church

from this. If they were to remain faithful to the doctrine of Luther, however, we would readily embrace them with our whole heart, and overlook their misconceptions.

(4) This lastly applies to the heretics within the church. The smoke from the bottomless pit permeates the church, causing numerous harmful and despicable sentiments to come in vogue, as well as the zealous promotion of such sentiments. If the church would have her old love and earnest concern for the truth and the purity of the church, such persons would have to be excommunicated.

Even though such persons may remain in the church, true believers will separate themselves from them as well as from the others mentioned who are outside of the church. They neither wish to have ecclesiastical fellowship with the one nor with the other. It grieves them that the church has not excommunicated such heretics. As long as they are not excommunicated, believers -- in addition to being unpretentious, compassionate, helpful, etc. -- may and must greet in a social manner such heretics and those who give offense. In our nation the practice of greeting is not an indication of familiarity and fellowship, for if that were the case, one would not be permitted to greet them. Rather, it is merely a social gesture which one makes even to those who are entirely unknown. However, in all social interaction and the manifestation of charity one must always demonstrate that there is a distance between them, and that one meets them only as human beings and not as believers or godly persons. In separating themselves from them, believers thus exercise communion with the church and her members. Part of the church is triumphant in heaven and part of it is militant upon earth. A believer exercises communion with both. The Saints' Communion and Fellowship with Angels

How wondrously has man, so contemptible and sinful in himself, been exalted that he may even have communion and fellowship with angels! Due to their dissimilarity -- the one being an angel and the other man, the one holy and the other sinful, the one loving God and the other hating Him -- there was incompatibility and enmity between the two. The Lord Jesus, however, has removed this and has reconciled them to each other. "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:20). This is also expressed in Zechariah 3:7, "I shall give thee places to walk among these that stand by." The saints are thus fellow citizens in heaven. "For our conversation is in heaven" (Php 3:20). The Greek word *politeuma* does not merely mean "to walk," but rather "to dwell in one's own city as a citizen," and thus is expressive of citizenship. They are therefore included in the general assembly. "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:22-23). For this reason they are called fellow citizens. "I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 19:10). Together with the godly they have one head, Jesus Christ, and one inheritance, eternal felicity in communion with God. From their side the angels express their love towards believers in preserving and serving them, being sent forth for this purpose by God (Hebrews 1:14). They find delight in their worship services and are present there. They pay close attention to God's dealings with them, and learn from this the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10).

Believers from their side acknowledge their glory, love them because they love God, are one with them and thus form as it were one assembly, and stand in awe of their presence (1 Corinthians 11:10). They refrain themselves, however, from rendering them religious honor and from worshipping them. The Relationship Between Believers and Glorified Saints

Believers also have and exercise communion with the spirits of just men made perfect, who also belong to the general assembly to which believers who are still on earth have come (Hebrews 12:23). The glorified saints know that there is still a militant church upon earth. What specific knowledge they have, be it due to divine revelation, or due to being informed by the holy angels, we cannot determine as God's Word is silent on the matter. This, however, we know: they cry out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth" (Revelation 6:10).

Believers on earth acknowledge the glorified saints as their brothers and sisters. They love them, highly esteem them, follow their conversation upon earth, join them, jointly bowing before the throne with them, giving honor and glory to the Lord, and longing to be with them in the state of perfection. They do know, however, that the saints in heaven have not been vested with the worthiness of being worshipped. Neither has God delegated to them the task to help others, nor has He appointed them to be intercessors. They therefore refrain from rendering any religious honor unto them or beseeching of them that they would pray for us. The Communion of Saints on Earth

How refreshing it is for God's children, being hated by the world, to have communion with each other, to make their needs known to each other, and in love and familiarity may enjoy each other's fellowship! They exercise communion with God's church in general (which is dispersed over the entire face of the earth), as being the sole people of God, as being the sole adherents to the truth and the way of salvation, and as confessing Christ alone to be their Head. Since they have the same Spirit in common, as well as the same interests, they rejoice when the church prospers, and likewise grieve when elsewhere the church does not fare well. Their prayers and thanksgiving are for the church in general. They exercise communion with the church within the kingdom or republic in which they are subjects, as well as with the specific congregation of the city or village in which they reside. Yes, their communion is most specifically with the godly; however, in exercising such communion, they remain in the church. They may have a special relationship with some, which, however, does not cause them to separate themselves from the church or to cause schism within the church, since they cherish the church above their chief joy upon earth.

Thus a believer unites himself to all believers who constitute the church, whether or not he knows them. Even though he knows but few, he believes that there are thousands of believers with whom he is not acquainted. He also knows that there are many unconverted within the church, but union with them does not extend beyond a common confession. He rejoices in the fact that Christ is confessed by many, and that the church therefore has much opportunity to beget souls for Christ. The latter is the focus of the prayer which the godly offer on behalf of the unconverted in the church.

Believers have this in common that they, whether great or small, are all equally partakers of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are equal partakers of the Mediator, Jesus Christ, and are equally partakers of the fullness of Jesus and all His benefits. The principal parts of all this

we have shown you previously. This communion manifests itself in many and various deeds. First, they will diligently join the assemblies of God's people in order to hear the Word and partake of the sacraments. They, with David, rejoice in this (Psalms 122:1). They unite themselves with the church, the congregation, and all the godly who are present there -- and as fellow professors join all who profess the Lord Jesus. In doing so they bear witness that this congregation is the church of Jesus Christ; they are members of and have communion with her, have the same interests, and wish to live and die with her. In doing so they publicly testify that they confess Jesus as the only Savior, and as the only Head of the church. In this manner they reveal themselves to the world and to the congregation. In one Spirit they join her in singing the psalms, in calling upon God's Name, in hearing God's Word out of the mouths of His servants, and they anticipate with longing the blessing which God has promised to bestow upon such gatherings. All this is comprehended in the exhortation, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25).

Secondly, with all their might they will endeavor to maintain peace. This is not accomplished by tolerating various errors, for truth and peace must go hand in hand. "Therefore love the truth and peace" (Zechariah 8:19). It also does not mean that they tolerate a variety of sins and offenses, for the Lord commands, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him" (Leviticus 19:17). The congregation of Ephesus was praised for this. "Thou canst not bear them which are evil" (Revelation 2:2). Rather, peace is maintained when:

(1) one adheres to the same truth. If one holds to a peculiar view, he ought to permit himself to be instructed by a wise person; doing so, however, by keeping this to himself so that no one will notice this. Differences of opinion result in the stirring of the emotions.

(2) one endures maltreatment by his neighbor without making it known that he is being maltreated, and without manifesting that he is enduring this. "With longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2); "Forbearing one another" (Colossians 3:13).

(3) one always esteems and behaves himself as being the least, rejoicing in the fact that we may behold God's children, be in their presence, and serve them. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Php 2:3).

(4) the evil of fellow members is concealed, is not spoken of behind their backs, and is not listened to in the gossip of others. Rather, attention will be focused upon someone's virtues, and how he is esteemed by us and others. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (Leviticus 19:16); "Charity ... beareth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7).

Thirdly, they will endeavor to have, manifest, and show love. "Charity ... is the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:14). Love binds together. "Being knit together in love" (Colossians 2:2). If we may have our spiritual origin in God, who is love, we will also have a loving heart, and if we love God we shall also love His children. "Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1). If a believer meets someone whom he perceives to be a person loved by God and loving God in return, it cannot be but that his heart will go out in love towards such a person. If this love is sufficiently strong, it will not be impeded if it perceives a weakness in such a person. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). One must not only have love in the heart, but also manifest

this by the expression of joy when meeting such persons -- in friendliness when speaking to them, in unity when interacting with them, in the rendering of service when the opportunity presents itself (albeit that others could assist likewise), and in familiarity when counseling each other.

Fourthly, communion is exercised by being good examples to each other, and by following each other's example in doing good. Exemplary behavior is marvelously effective in attracting others. Christ is the perfect example, "leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Believers, however, in whom Christ has been formed, must manifest the image of Christ, also with the objective of being a good example to others. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16); "In honour preferring one another" (Romans 12:10); "Shew me thy faith without thy works" (James 2:18); "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe" (1 Thessalonians 1:7); "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works" (Titus 2:7). As one must endeavor to be a good example to others, one must also endeavor to follow the good examples of others whom the Lord has given to us within His church. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1); "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:12); "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" (Php 3:17). There is the happy advantage that one can be an example in the congregation whereby others can be stirred up unto godliness, and that one may also himself be stirred up to follow the examples of others. When both of these aspects are practiced, there is communion of saints.

Fifthly, communion of saints is practiced by mutually promoting one another's spiritual growth. (1) This occurs by helping each other to arise again after having fallen, and to correct someone who is in error. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

(2) This also occurs by encouraging and exhorting one another. "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

(3) This occurs by comforting each other in times of discouragement. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18). The apostle joins several of these duties which necessarily must flow out of the communion of saints unto the upbuilding of the church. "And to esteem them [the ministers] very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:13-15).

Sixthly, communion of saints is exercised by faithfully assisting each other in times of perplexity. If someone is in need of counsel, counsel him according to your ability. Your counsel will either be right, or he will receive light in consequence of your counsel. If he is slandered, defend his good name; if he is ill, visit him; if he is poor, assist him with your means, or assist him in other ways, doing so while manifesting all love, compassion, and diligence.

(1) Job is here an example to us. "I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked,

and plucked the spoil out of his teeth" (Job 29:15-17).

(2) These virtues will publicly be extolled by the Lord Jesus on the day of judgment. He will show that His elect have exercised these virtues during their life. He who wishes to hear of them then, must practice them now. "For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me" (Matthew 25:35-36).

Communion of Saints and the Sharing of Possessions Question: Must believers have all temporal goods in common?

Answer: This thought was conceived and advanced by such people who were too lazy to work. In this way they tried either to get into the mainstream of or acquire the necessities of life. This was practiced in ages past by the Anabaptists under the leadership of Knipperdollink and Jan van Leiden, and currently the Boehmists desire this, especially those who are the least among them. The Labadists also pretended to practice this, but in reality those who did not contribute had to work hard, but received little food and sleep. However, upon separating from each other, everyone, as much as possible, took his own property again. Everyone was not able to retrieve all that he had contributed, so that several were reduced to beggary. We do maintain that believers, according to their means, must support believers who are subject to poverty. Everyone, however, must retain possession and control of his own assets, for:

First, even during the time of the apostles, there have been both rich and poor. "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit" (James 2:15-16). There were poor as well as rich believers. The rich possessed and controlled their own assets, and were obligated to share these in a generous manner with the poor. The women with means possessed and governed their belongings and served the Lord Jesus with their goods (Luke 8:3). This was likewise true of Dorcas (Acts 9:36), and Lydia the seller of purple (Acts 16:14-15). Philemon was a wealthy man who retained possession of his assets as is evident in Paul's letter to him. The believers in the congregation of Ephesus had gold and silver. Paul says concerning this in Acts 20:33, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel."

Secondly, if all assets were to be held in common, the giving of alms would cease and could not occur. It is, however, evident from the collections which were held, and from the exhortations towards liberality, that the giving of alms was not meant to cease. Concerning collections Scripture says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Consider also the exhortations to liberality. "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13); "And let us not be weary in well doing" (Galatians 6:9); "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

Objection #1: The original apostolic church had all things in common. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts 2:44); "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed

was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32); "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (Acts 4:34-35). Ananias and Sapphira were even punished with death because they had withheld something (Acts 5:1-10).

Answer: We have shown that in the first church everyone owned and controlled his own assets. This was an extraordinary situation due to the large multitude of strangers which were in Jerusalem at that time, who, upon having believed, remained with the church and did not return to their place of origin. An extraordinary persecution was also imminent, whereby everyone was in danger of being deprived of his possessions. These extraordinary circumstances are not normative for all times and localities. It is evident from the examples of Dorcas and Lydia that some also retained possession of their assets. Philip the evangelist also had a house and belongings where he welcomed Paul at that time and those who accompanied him. Ananias could also have kept his gifts for himself. He was not punished for this, but rather for his lie.

Objection #2: Believers may not possess gold and silver, but whatever they possess, they must sell and give the money to the poor. "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses" (Matthew 10:9); "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Matthew 19:21).

Answer (1) The Lord Jesus gave a special command to His disciples whom he had sent forth to preach. This command was in force only for the duration of their journey, in order to demonstrate to them that He would care for them. He also did this to prepare them for their labors after His ascension, in order that they would do this, trusting in the Lord. This text neither pertains to the entire congregation and all her members nor to all ministers in every age, for they are not forbidden to have possessions. Rather, they are forbidden to preach for the purpose of material gain and for filthy lucre.

(2) The command to the rich young man was given to him in order to convince him of the fact that he was miserly, and that material possessions were his idol. Special injunctions given in a particular situation are not normative for everyone under all circumstances. The Blessedness of the Church Where Communion of Saints Functions

We have discussed with you the communion of saints. Everyone will have to agree that the church that functions in such a manner is blessed indeed, while praising everyone who is thus engaged. A true believer, with shame, will be convinced of his neglect in this area. May everyone therefore be stirred up to exercise communion of saints in such a fashion.

(1) The entire congregation will thereby shine forth as a light upon a candlestick. She will be as a city upon a hill, render honor and glory to Christ, and be respected by all who are without.

(2) The congregation will be built up by this; the godly will be stirred up by the examples of others to walk likewise; and many will be converted as a result of this. One would observe a great influx of those who are without who would acknowledge that God dwells in her midst and she is truly the church.

(3) It will engender great mutual joy and union. Love and peace will so refresh believers that they would readily do without the love of those who are of the world. Yes, they will be able to courageously endure and ignore all contempt, slander, and persecution of the world.

(4) The Lord will richly pour out His blessing upon such a congregation. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ... for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:1-3).

(5) Such will hear the declaration of this delightful voice, saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I shall make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

031. Chapter 27: The Government of the Church, and Particularly the Commissioning of Ministers

----- CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN ----- The Government of the Church, and Particularly the Commissioning of Ministers No kingdom, republic, home, or society can exist without order. This is also true for the church. God is a God of order, and it is His will that all things be done honestly and orderly. The Lord Jesus is the only and all-sufficient Head of the church -- her only Lord, only Master, only Bridegroom, only Mediator, and only Foundation. Since the Lord Jesus is very God, He does not need the help of men to gather and govern His church. As it is the Lord's common way, however, to govern and direct all things mediately, thereby manifesting His wisdom and goodness, the Lord Jesus likewise does all His work in His church by the agency of men. For this purpose He has appointed shepherds, teachers, elders, governing bodies, ministers, etc., to serve in His church. The Pope: Neither the Head of the Church, nor the Successor of Peter

Popery insists that Christ governs His entire church by means of a vice-regent, that is, the pope, and that this viceregent governs all matters. Popery maintains that the Lord Jesus had appointed Peter to be the general head of the church upon earth; that Peter established his chair in Rome; and that he has been general bishop there for twenty-five years. They also maintain that the pope is his successor; that is, he has taken the place of Peter in the papal chair, and likewise as the general head of the church. They also consider him to have the authority to appoint vice-regents, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, abbots, prelates, priests, etc. These ranks have been arranged in a hierarchical order, all being inferior to the pope's rank. All of this is a subtle fabrication which is extra-biblical and contrary to the Word of God.

First, there is not one text in Scripture which states that the supreme authority in the church has been or would be vested in one person. The various offices are mentioned, but never as if the one were inferior to the other, nor that all offices would be subordinate to one person. We thus reject this entire construction.

Secondly, Scripture expressly forbids all lording of one office over the other. "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them. ... But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Luke 22:25-26). "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3). Even the high priest of the Old Testament had no dominion whatsoever over the other priests (even though one may not draw a parallel from this to the New Testament, since they were types of Christ). His rank was the highest, but this did not pertain to jurisdiction. Thus, there must be no head in the church other than Christ.

Thirdly, whatever has been said concerning Peter in the above is both outside of and contrary to Scripture. Where is it written that Peter was appointed to be the head of the church and all the other apostles, and that he gave them any commands and ordinances? Where do we read that the apostles acknowledged him as such and have subordinated themselves under him? This is

obviously nowhere to be found. Neither in the Bible nor in true accounts of the history of early times do we find any reference that Peter has ever been in Rome, has been bishop there, or that he functioned as general bishop over all the churches founded by the other apostles. We thus reject all this as belonging to the realm of fables.

Fourthly, it is evident from God's Word that all the apostles were of equal rank with Peter and vice versa.

(1) The Lord Jesus sent them forth with the very same words, giving them all the very same commission. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them" (Matthew 28:19); "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. ... Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:21-23).

(2) All apostles were equally and in like manner qualified for their office on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

(3) They all conducted themselves in identical fashion in their ministry, as for instance, in the election of another apostle (Acts 1:23). Paul was not sent to Peter, but to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, to inquire about a certain question (Acts 15:2). The apostles sent Peter to Samaria (Acts 8:14), and at the ecclesiastical assembly the opinion of James rather than of Peter was followed (Acts 15:7-29). Paul declared that he "was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:5), and James is mentioned ahead of Peter in Galatians 2:9. The apostles divided their tasks among each other, and Peter was entrusted with the ministry of the circumcision and Paul with the ministry of uncircumcision, that is, the Gentiles (Galatians 2:11). Paul rebuked Peter concerning his error (Galatians 2:11), and Peter did not esteem himself higher than the others, calling himself a fellow elder (1 Peter 5:1).

Fifthly, we deny that the pope is a successor to Peter. Let this be proven, for where is this written? Even if Peter had been the head of the church (which he was not), this would only have pertained to himself. Where is it written that he had authority to transfer this position to another person? Where is it written that he transferred this office to the bishop of Rome rather than to the bishop of Antioch, who was one of the primary bishops prior to the year 606 A.D. Peter did visit Antioch (Galatians 2:11), but we read nowhere that he had been in Rome. Furthermore, even if Peter had been in Rome and had been bishop there, the one who followed him was nevertheless not the head of the church, which is the point in question. It is known from history that every locality initially had its own bishop. Subsequent to this, however, ambition crept in whereby one locality brought other localities within its sphere of influence. There were nevertheless many bishops who neither had submitted nor were willing to submit to each other. Subsequently, the church was divided among four bishops, one not being superior to the other, even though envy prompted the one to accuse the other of being the antichrist. Finally, after the Western empire had been destroyed, and the power of the bishop of Rome increased, the Eastern emperors flattered the patriarch or bishop of Rome in order to include the Western empire again under their jurisdiction. This culminated in the Eastern emperor Phocas appointing the bishop of Rome as general bishop in the year 606, ordering the patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria to be subordinate to him. Where is the reference here to succession? These matters neither pertain to Peter nor to any other bishop of Rome prior to the year 606! Furthermore, even if the first bishops

of Rome succeeded Peter, such is not the case with the pope. A good ancestor can have a heretic as one of his descendants, and wherever truth ceases to be present, succession likewise terminates. The pope does not adhere to the doctrine of Peter, but opposes it, as we have demonstrated in nearly every chapter of this book. The pope's lifestyle is also not identical to Peter's. Where do we read of Peter having a triple crown beset with diamonds? He said, "Silver and gold have I none" (Acts 3:6). Where do we read of Peter having a purple robe, chariots and horses, a gestatorial chair for vain show, and purple-robed cardinals who carried him? When did he ever allow his feet to be kissed? Which kings did Peter either appoint or depose? To which kings did Peter grant the proprietorship of certain countries? There is therefore no resemblance with Peter at all, unless it would be pertaining to his confession, "I know not the man." Finally, since the pope is the antichrist, as we have demonstrated in chapter 24, it is evident that the pope is not Peter's successor.

Even though we have sufficiently exposed the entire system of popery for what it is in regard to its authority over the clergy and its hierarchal structure, all being subject to one pope, we nevertheless shall respond to three objections by which popery seeks to prove the headship of Peter. However, these will be of no avail to them.

Objection #1: "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). They say that Christ here makes an extraordinary promise to Peter upon his glorious confession, this promise being that Christ would build His church upon him. Peter therefore of necessity must be the chief of all the apostles and the head of the church.

Answer (1) The promise here made to Peter by Christ is that He indeed was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that He would therefore not build his church upon a sandy foundation, but rather upon Himself as the immovable Petra, that is, rock. He would make this foundation so solid and immovable, that all the subtlety and power of Satan would not be able to prevail against her, and that therefore Peter also had no reason to fear, but would also certainly be kept and established. Upon this he could reflect with comfort after he had denied Him thrice; and not only he, but also all the other apostles who were present, as well as all who cherish the preservation of themselves and of the church. He should therefore not be offended when he would observe that Christ died on the cross, and when he would encounter many adversities in his office as apostle. This is the literal meaning of these words. It is thus evident that there is no reference whatsoever to the supreme headship of Peter.

(2) Petros (Peter) and Petra are clearly distinguished here, just as these two words are distinct in their original meaning. Petros refers to a stone, a pebble, or a brick. Petra refers to rock layer, or a rocky mountain formation upon which one would build a house. Such houses are so immovable and strong that they can withstand storms, torrential rains, and floods, which is not true of those which are merely built upon sand (cf. Matthew 7:24-27). The Lord Jesus here refers to Peter as Petra, making an allusion to his name as the Lord Jesus generally did in His parables which are recorded in the gospels. From Petros He proceeds to Himself, calling Himself Petra, having previously been promised by that name. "I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16). "The stone which the builders refused" (Psalms 118:22). In the New Testament these texts are

applied to Christ. It is therefore also stated concerning Christ in 1 Corinthians 10:4, "For they drank of that spiritual Rock (Petra) that followed them: and that Rock (Petra) was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). Christ is likewise called Petra in Romans 9:33, where we read, "... rock (Petra) of offence" (cf. 1 Peter 2:7).

(a) Christ is called Petra in God's Word, however, and this name Petra is never attributed to Peter.

(b) The endings of the words petros and petra are different. The one noun is masculine, and the other feminine.

(c) The conjunction which is placed between the two words indicates that the subsequent word petra has a different meaning from the previous word petros. It is therefore not stated that the church will be built upon Peter, an apostle, but upon Christ, the spiritual Petra.

(3) What is stated concerning this petra cannot be said of Peter; namely, that the church would be built upon him, and that therefore, being built upon this petra, the gates of hell would not prevail against her. Is the church built upon a man? Is she immovable because of a man? Is everyone called to put his trust in a man, and to make flesh his arm and strength? A curse is pronounced upon such in Jeremiah 17:5. Those who, having hearts of stone, wish to put their trust in a pope -- in a man whose heart is as hard as a rock -- will with him not escape the curse. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord" (Jeremiah 17:7). Christ is the foundation, the only foundation upon which the church is built. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). This was the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. They were not the foundation themselves, but they laid this foundation by preaching Christ, "Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:20-21). The apostles, and thus also James, Cephas, and John, were eminent supporters of this congregation which was built upon Christ. For this reason they are called "pillars" (Galatians 2:9). Therefore Peter is not the petra, that is, the foundation upon which the church is built, but it is the Lord Jesus Christ who endures forever, is omnipotent, and preserves Peter and the church from apostasy, causing her to remain unmovable against all the attacks of the devil. The name "Cephas," as Peter is called in Galatians 2:9, is not a derivative of the Greek word kephale (=head), but rather of the Syrian word kepha (=stone), which was the language Christ and the apostles used, as was generally true of all the Jews at that time.

Objection #2: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

Answer (1) The word "key" does not refer to sovereign power, for it is undeniably true that Christ alone possesses such power. "I ... have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18). Rather, it refers to ministerial authority, whereby a servant of God is thus authorized to open the door to those whom Christ has commanded to give entrance, and to close the door for those whom Christ has commanded to keep out or cast out. This means to proclaim the forgiveness of sin to repentant sinners in Christ's Name, and to declare to the unrepentant, in Christ's Name and on Christ's behalf, that they still are and remain in their sins. It is this authority with which Peter is here vested by Christ. Who can even produce a semblance of evidence that Peter had supreme authority over the apostles and was the head of the church? He who is said to be servant, is by the

same declaration said not to be a lord, master, and head.

(2) The other apostles were vested with the same authority: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18); "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). It cannot be refuted that in both of these texts the Lord Jesus addresses all the apostles, vesting them all with this authority. Their position is therefore identical to that of Peter, and it is thus evident that the authority with which Peter is vested is no different from the authority with which all the apostles were vested, and thus the claim of Peter's supremacy has no validity.

Objection #3: In John 21:15-17 Christ commands Peter three times to feed His sheep. What else is to be concluded but that Peter is the shepherd par excellence, and thus the shepherd of all shepherds?

Answer (1) Such a conclusion must be entirely denied, for there is not the least connection between that which precedes and the conclusion drawn from this.

(2) The divine commission here given to Peter is the commission given to all other apostles -- yes, to all ministers -- in Acts 20:28 to "... feed the church." This is the necessary consequence of being a shepherd.

(3) Christ is the "chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4), and the "great Shepherd" (Hebrews 13:20). This honor Christ reserves for Himself and consequently He did not appoint Peter as chief shepherd.

Additional Objection: It must be of special significance that Christ commanded Peter three times to feed the sheep.

Answer: Since the word "feed" is not indicative of supremacy but of ministry and does not prove the supremacy of Peter, this is likewise not the thrust of this threefold repetition. It merely points to Peter's backsliding or regression due to his threefold denial. It was meant as an encouragement for his apostleship of which he had made himself unworthy, so that he would neither be inhibited in the exercise of his office nor abstain from doing so entirely, deeming himself unworthy of this task. In response to his threefold denial there was a threefold restoration.

All of this makes it very evident that Peter neither was a general bishop of the entire church nor had a position of supremacy over the other apostles and over the church. Thus, the pope of Rome is neither a successor of Peter nor the head of the church.

Bishops Have no Authority over Other Ministers

There is another point of contention among Protestants; namely, whether the office of bishop is a different and superior ministration than is the office of the ministry. Consequently, bishops have power and authority over other ministers, and they, with their entire congregations, are thus in subordination to the bishops. Popery answers in the affirmative. During the time of the Reformation, there were bishops in some countries who also had embraced the confession of the truth. However, they did not wish to yield their significant income and prestige. Consequently, they retained their dioceses, and argued that this was not contradictory to the Reformation. Thus, in this area they were in agreement with the sentiments of popery, as is still the case today. We,

however, along with the Reformed church, answer the above question negatively. The office of bishop is not a different and superior office to that of minister. This is evident for the following reasons.

First, nowhere does Scripture make a difference between bishops and ministers, nor does it teach that bishops are superior to ministers, or that the latter are subordinate to them. This is particularly so in those texts where reference is made to the ministries of the church (cf. Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28). This has therefore been fabricated apart from God's Word.

Evasive Argument: The apostles, as well as Timothy and Titus, ordained ministers.

Answer (1) It is not written, however, that they had and exercised power and authority over the ministers which they had ordained.

(2) When in a certain locality there is neither an established church nor a minister, but churches are in the process of being organized, then it is necessary that ministers be supplied from elsewhere, or that believing members of those churches be appointed as ministers. In such fashion the apostles ordained elders from city to city, and Paul thus commissioned Titus that he would likewise ordain others. If some believers were already present in a given locality, election of elders would occur by a show of hands of the congregation; thus we have not the least indication of distinction or supremacy.

Secondly, elders and bishops have one and the same office. Elders are bishops, and bishops are elders. In our language the use of the word "bishop" is equivalent to the use of "elder" (cf. Acts 20:28). There it is written that Paul "called the elders of the church," whereas in verse 28 these elders are called bishops, "over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (bishops)" (Acts 20:28). It should also be noted that in this one city there were several bishops, whereas Roman Catholics maintain that one congregation, yes, various and many congregations together must have but one bishop. This is evident in the following text, "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Php 1:1). In this one city and congregation there were several bishops who, along with the deacons, were greeted by him. If there had been other teachers and elders not comprehended in the term "bishops," he would have mentioned them likewise, for he even makes mention of the deacons, who have a subordinate office. From this it can clearly be deduced that there were but two offices in the congregation: bishops and deacons. It thus follows that the word "bishop" refers to both ministers and elders. This is also confirmed in 1 Timothy 3:1-16 where the apostle teaches what qualities bishops and deacons must have, as well as how they ought to behave themselves, without prescribing any special rules for ministers and elders. This clearly proves that they were considered to be bishops. This is also true in Titus 1:5; Titus 1:7, for those whom he calls elders in verse 5, he calls bishops in verse 7. We thus conclude that ruling as well as teaching elders and bishops have one and the same office. Thus, the office of a bishop is not superior to that of a minister, and bishops do not have power and authority over ministers.

Thirdly, all ministers have the same authority in the government of the church and in the use of the keys as has been given to the congregation and the elders (cf. Matthew 18:18; John 20:21-22). No distinction is ever made.

Fourthly, as we have previously indicated, all supremacy and the lording of the one over the other in the church is forbidden by God. We thus conclude that the office of bishop is no different from the office of ministers and elders. The office of bishop in some churches of Reformed persuasion [Note: Since the office of bishop never existed in the Reformed churches in Holland, à Brakel is most likely referring to Reformed churches outside of the Netherlands, the probable reference being to the Anglican church in England.] is nothing other than a remaining claw of the beast, and a remaining vice by which the antichrist has ascended the throne. This is all the more evident considering that he who has been ordained as priest by a bishop in the papacy and has been converted to Reformed religion, is permitted to preach without receiving a new commission. However, they refuse the pulpit to a Reformed minister who has received his commission from a Classis (i.e., equivalent of presbytery) rather than a bishop.

Objection #1: The high priest in the Old Testament was ranked above the other priests and Levites. The twentyfour priestly orders also each had a chief priest, who were the head priests. Consequently, also in the New Testament a bishop has a different and superior office than does a minister and an elder, and they must thus be in subordination to the bishops.

Answer (1) From this conclusion it must necessarily follow that there must be one bishop both over them and over the entire church on earth. Since they contradict this, their conclusion of necessity unravels, for their conclusion implies more than they are willing to admit.

(2) These ministrations (or services) were performed by different orders; the one, however, had no dominion over the other. This is likewise the case today as far as ministers, elders, and deacons are concerned.

(3) One may not make the ceremonial worship binding for the New Testament, since all ceremonial ministry and offices have been abolished.

Objection #2: The seven congregations in Asia each had but one angel, and thus there is one bishop which has authority over other ministers.

Answer (1) How does one prove that there was more than one minister in each congregation?

(2) Allow that there were more ministers, yet it is not proven that the one to whom the letter was sent had a higher position than the others, and that the other ministers were subject to him. In Paul's time there were several who simultaneously served as bishops in Ephesus (Acts 20:17-18). Consequently, the one angel of the congregation of Ephesus was neither the only bishop, nor had he authority over the other bishops. From this we can draw a conclusion about the other churches.

(3) One cannot use the word "angel" to designate one minister as being superior to another, since they all are messengers who have been given and appointed by God (cf. Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28). It is also true that every minister is an angel, that is, messenger (cf. Malachi 2:7).

(4) The letters pertained to the congregation itself; the initial address, however, was to one of the ministers or to the entire council of elders, this being the manner whereby the letter would be made known to the congregation.

Objection #3: Timothy and Titus were bishops who had authority over other ministers whom they had ordained and over whom they had to exercise judgment. Consequently the office of bishop is a different and superior office.

Answer (1) It is not written anywhere that they had authority over other ministers, which is the issue at hand. This we deny, as no proof for this is to be found anywhere in the world.

(2) They ordained other ministers from city to city since these churches still had to be organized. In such cases it was consistent with their office that ministers who were best situated for this should supply such localities with ministers.

(3) The fact that Timothy receives the injunction not to receive an accusation against an elder but before two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19), does not imply supremacy. Furthermore, those of equal rank may not receive an accusation against another but before two or three witnesses. An entire consistory, Classis, or Synod must act likewise. Were Timothy to render judgment concerning an accused elder, then this does not imply that he would do so by himself. Even Paul, when using the keys of God's kingdom to excommunicate an incestuous person, did so by assembling the congregation for this purpose (1 Corinthians 5:4). This therefore does not yield any proof for ecclesiastical government by bishops. We do not object to one or several ministers being appointed to watch over the life, doctrine, and ecclesiastical labors of other ministers. However, let there be no lording of the one over the other.

Thus we have observed that the government of the church is neither vested in one who is the head over all others, nor ought the church to be governed by bishops exercising authority over other ministers via whom they would govern various congregations. Rather, all ministers are of the same rank. The one is not inferior in his office to the other. As equals they must work together in all things.

We shall now proceed to indicate which offices God has instituted in His church. In doing so we shall consider the calling to these offices and the labors related to them.

Some offices are extraordinary, which God uses in special seasons and circumstances in the church. These are the offices of apostles, evangelists, and prophets. The Lord used these offices in the first days of the New Testament era. Even though the Spirit of prophecy still reveals future events to some individuals (something which can readily be denied by those who have had no opportunity to be acquainted with this), such revelations are then merely intended for those to whom they are given. They are accompanied with such a sense of the presence of God that such persons know them to be neither imaginary nor subtle deceptions of Satan, but that it is God Himself who reveals future events to them. Since such matters do not pertain to any doctrinal points, however, they are consequently also not binding upon others. Therefore, one does not sin in leaving such revelations for what they are. However, such revelations seldom become known to many.

We shall here discuss the ordinary offices, which are the ministers, elders, and deacons. Sometimes this number is reduced to two: the office of elder, which includes ruling and teaching elders, and deacons; or ruling elders and deacons only (cf. Php 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-8). Everyone will readily admit that there must be instruction for both young and old, that worship services must be conducted to hear God's Word and to give expression to the unity of the congregation, that

such services must be conducted orderly, and that those who conduct themselves in an ungodly manner during the worship services, that is, who are drunk and behave themselves in an unbecoming manner, may not be admitted or retained as members of the congregation. Since church government and the public ministry of the Word are a necessity, the question must be asked whether individuals must be sent forth for this purpose, and whether anyone may engage herein who has a desire for it and considers himself qualified for such a task. If a commission is necessary, it must be asked whether such a commission originates in man (thus being merely a human commission), or whether such a commission has its origin in God, which is executed by the church, and thus is a divine commission. We shall first discuss the divine commission of ministers -- the pastors and teachers. The Necessity of a Divine Commission for the Ministry of the Word
Question: Is a divine commission necessary for the office of minister?

Answer: Socinians and others answer negatively; however, we answer affirmatively. The need for a divine commission is first of all evident from several clear texts.

(1) "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20). One cannot maintain that this divine commission is intended for the apostles only and thus not for others, for this is a commission pertaining to doctrine and the administration of the sacraments. As long as this labor continues to be performed within the church, there must also be a commission unto this task. We know, however, that these labors must always continue in the church. They were not meant to cease at the conclusion of the apostolic age -- which is therefore also true for this commission. Added to this is the promise of the Lord Jesus to remain with His church until the end of the world. This promise could not have pertained to the apostles only, for they would not live that long. It thus pertains to the ministry and its related commission.

(2) This is also evident from Ephesians 4:11, "And he gave some, apostles ... and some, pastors and teachers." As you can observe, Christ has given pastors and teachers as well as apostles "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Wherever this ministry functions, ministers will also be sent forth. We also read that "God hath set some in the church, first apostles ... thirdly teachers" (1 Corinthians 12:28). God has therefore appointed ministers as well as apostles. This is likewise expressed in Acts 20:28, where we read, "over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."

(3) Consider also Romans 10:15, "And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" It is as much as being stated that no one can or may preach without being sent. One cannot evade the issue here by saying that Paul only referred to his time period, for such a limitation is nowhere to be found. The time frame is immaterial both then and now, for the matters and their conjunction remain the same in essence. By the manner in which he graduates from one matter to the next, he also shows that no one, either then or now, may preach without a divine commission. Both now and then it is one's duty to call upon God, which is likewise true for all the other duties which he mentions successively. How can one call upon God without faith, believe without hearing, hear without preaching, and preach without a commission? All the interrelated components precedent to being commissioned are true for all ages. This is therefore true for the last component as well, without which, according to the apostle, the others are rendered null and void.

Secondly, this is also evident from God's dealings in both the Old and New Testaments. God called and commissioned the tribe of Levi instead of the firstborn whom, prior to this, the Lord had separated to His service. He chose Aaron and his descendants to minister in the priest's office. The apostle states concerning this, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4). One of the tasks of the priest was to teach, a task which had to be performed as God's ambassador. "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:7). Sharp threats are issued to those who run without a divine commission. "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied" (Jeremiah 23:21). Likewise no one in the New Testament preached without having been divinely commissioned to do so. The apostles present these credentials at the beginning of their letters, and they in turn commissioned others. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church" (Acts 14:23); "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Timothy 4:14); "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Timothy 5:22); "... that thou shouldest ... ordain elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). From this we conclude that all who have ever preached were commissioned to do so. Consequently, a divine commission is also now a prerequisite.

Thirdly, ministers are God's ambassadors. "For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:7); "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador cannot do anything but what he is commissioned to do, and he thus speaks on behalf of his Lord.

Objection #1: It is everyone's duty to teach, and he who has been given some abilities is obligated to use them. Everyone must endeavor to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:39).

Answer: It is everyone's duty to do so privately. It does not follow, however, that everyone ought to do so publicly. Even if someone has the ability to govern, may he therefore ascend the throne and rule? The analogy applies here as well.

Objection #2: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Every believer participated in this, and thus a divine commission is not a prerequisite for the office of the ministry.

Answer (1) There were also elders, evangelists, and deacons among those dispersed believers, for one as well as the other was dispersed. Among them was also Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8) who had an extraordinary revelation and commission (Acts 8:29) and was also authorized to baptize (vs. 38).

(2) Everyone of these dispersed members declared the Word individually, the one to this person, and the other to another person. They thus did what everyone is called to do privately. There is no mention at all, however, of either the public ministry or the administration of the sacraments.

Objection #3: In 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 it is related how all members of the congregation were permitted to speak. "When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying" (vs. 26). No special commission is therefore needed to preach.

Answer (1) It can at once be observed that the reference here is to assemblies where the extraordinary unction of the Holy Spirit was present. The apostle here gives direction how everyone ought to conduct himself in the use of these extraordinary gifts. It must be obvious, however, that one may not draw a conclusion from the extraordinary to the ordinary.

(2) The reference is here to prophets who are instructed to speak in an orderly sequence. (3) In private meetings where there is discussion, everyone may contribute. Thus there is nothing in this text negating the need for a divine commission for ministers. Objection #4: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things, and ye need not that any man teach you" (1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27). Hereby it is evident that there is no need for ministers, and consequently there is also no need for ministers to receive a divine commission.

Answer (1) Did these persons make that much progress without instruction? Of course not, and thus they initially were in need of instruction. This of necessity renders the conclusion invalid.

(2) The apostle does not mean to say that they had now attained absolute perfection as far as knowledge was concerned, being beyond all need for instruction. He rather states that they had been illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and by this light they could discern between truth and error, thereby promoting their own progress. Their enjoyment of the Word and its ministry could thus be a fruitful endeavor.

We have thus observed that a divine commission is necessary for the ministry. We shall now proceed to consider the particulars of this commission. The Elements of the Internal Call to the Ministry This commission is both internal and external. An extraordinary, divine declaration is not an element of this internal commission. God does not do this, or does so only on very rare occasions, and thus one need not wait for this. There are other matters by which one may be assured of his internal calling. To these belong, first of all, a knowledge of the office. One must know what it means to be a servant of Christ, to be the mouth of the Lord, to proclaim that great gospel, to teach ignorant men the way of salvation, to be instrumental in delivering men from the devil, and to lead them to Christ. One must know that it consists in comforting those who mourn, stirring up the indolent, bringing back those who have strayed, exposing hypocrites and temporal believers to themselves, defending the truth against error, rebuking the ungodly, helping to keep out or expelling from the church those who lead offensive lives, and adorning the church, so that by the holiness of those who profess the truth she would bring glory to Christ. One must know that it consists in being an example and in being able to give an account of the souls entrusted to him. How can he who is neither thoroughly acquainted with these matters, nor perceives the weightiness of it all, nor takes this to heart, have intentions to be faithful? All of this must be known, considered, and experienced in order to be conscious of one's calling.

Secondly, there must be some knowledge of one's aptitude for this work. A fundamental knowledge of divine truths and thus being satisfied with a speculative knowledge of these is not sufficient. Rather, one must experience the power of these truths in his own heart, having been converted thereby. He will thus be able to speak from his own experience. He must also have the aptitude to clearly express his thoughts, and must have a voice which is capable of being heard by others. Even though the most qualified person must say, "Who is sufficient for these things" (2 Corinthians 2:16), one must nevertheless be conscious of some aptitude. Shortly we shall consider this aptitude more comprehensively.

Thirdly, there must be an extraordinary love a) for Christ and a desire to make Him known; b) for the church to present her as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2), and to cause her to shine forth with light and holiness to the honor of God; c) for the souls of the unconverted to snatch them from the fire, as well as of the converted to strengthen, comfort, and continually provide them with spiritual food.

Fourthly, one must be willing to deny all that is of the world, such as honor, material goods -- yes, even life itself. If someone is of low social status and wishes to become someone of renown or to acquire material goods by way of the ministry, his objective is entirely wrong. He would be much happier as a shoemaker, for in my opinion there is no man more abominable than an unregenerate minister who uses the holy things of God to his own advantage.

Fifthly, there must be a great desire for this work (1 Timothy 3:1). There must be continual stirrings to give oneself to the Lord by way of this work, and there must be a concern about whether or not one is called. There must be anxiety when ulterior motives are perceived in the heart which in turn causes one to entertain the thought to refrain from this work; or when the heaviness of the task, and a sense of inability causes one to look up against this work, engendering a desire to be relieved from this work, as with Moses and Jeremiah. The stirrings will nevertheless persist and overcome the objections. This in turn will give him more liberty before the Lord and he will find himself more willing than beforehand because by the objections he will have a clearer view of the motives of his heart. Then his heart does not condemn him, but rather convinces him of his sincerity in this matter. By these and similar arguments one can ascertain his internal calling. We shall now proceed to consider the external calling. The Elements of the External Call to the Ministry The external calling also is not extraordinary in nature. This was true only for the prophets and the apostles. This occurred either entirely immediately, or concurrent with certain means. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3). When we speak of the normal, external calling, then this call does not proceed from God by means of the government, but from God by means of the church. When a church needs to be established in a certain country, and all means are lacking to obtain ministers who are divinely commissioned, then the church, which is vested with the primary authority to call, is authorized to call some qualified men from her midst for this great work and to initiate them into service, even though ordination by way of the laying on of hands cannot transpire. The church always retains this authority to call, even when she is established. No one may challenge this or remove this authority from her. To make use of Jus Patronatus in an established church is an abominable practice. No one may force himself into the church by such means if he expects God's blessing upon himself and upon his ministry.

Even though the ordination is performed by divinely commissioned ministers, the external calling nevertheless pertains to the congregation which calls ministers either by every brother casting his vote (which is still customary in some churches in the Netherlands), or by means of the elders, for:

(1) the elders represent the congregation;

(2) the church does not exist for the elders, but the elders for the church -- they are not lords of the church, but rather her servants (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 4:3);

(3) the congregation is obligated to give heed to their doctrine and life, must examine the spirits whether they are of God (1 John 4:1), and must be on guard against false prophets and are not to hear or follow them (John 10:27);

(4) the congregation elected two, of whom one would be chosen by the casting of the lot (Acts 1:23). The entire congregation chose seven deacons (Acts 6:3; Acts 6:5-6), and the congregation sent forth some men to Antioch (Acts 15:22-23). Whenever Paul would make use of the keys of God's kingdom, he wished to do so together with the congregation (1 Corinthians 5:4). This is not contradicted by the fact that Paul commissioned Titus to appoint elders from city to city (Titus 1:5), for 1) churches still had to be established there, and 2) Paul commanded him to do so in the ordinary manner, according to his own practice, that is, by a show of hands of the congregation. It thus remains certain that neither a bishop nor ministers (being vested with authority) are authorized to call ministers, but rather the congregation herself.

Within an established church (which has the primary prerogative to call), one can readily distinguish between: the commission to the ministry, the call from and unto a particular church, and ordination in her midst. The commission occurs in the presence of many elders gathered either at the classical or synodical level. There must first be a careful examination of life, doctrine, and ability of those who present themselves to serve Christ in His church. "The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2); "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Timothy 5:22); "And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless" (1 Timothy 3:10).

Upon this examination follows the commission, authorizing them in the name of Christ to preach, to administer the sacraments, to exercise discipline, and to perform whatever pertains to the pastoral office.

Such authorization is not given at the time when the preparatory examinations are administered. Such candidates are not authorized for anything, not even to preach the Word as an ambassador of Christ. For preaching as God's ambassador and the administration of the sacraments cannot be separated. The Lord Jesus assigns preaching and baptism to the same persons in Matthew 28:19. Such candidates are only permitted, under the supervision of ministers who are situated in the various localities, to exercise their gifts and to let themselves be heard in the vacant congregations. Such an authority is only given to them when they are called by a congregation and are ordained there by a minister appointed for this purpose by the classis. In some localities the above-mentioned authority is given after the preparatory examination has been administered to such candidates, and they are then sent forth into the holy ministry without being aligned with a particular congregation. This commission bestows the authority to proclaim the gospel as an ambassador of Christ and to administer the sacraments, even before one is called by a particular congregation. Such a commission gives one freedom to go from one congregation to another upon the extension of a call. Such a calling I do not deem to be as a new commission, but rather as a request, "Come over, and help us." Such a call, after having sought the Lord, one may either accept or decline in accordance with what one deems to be most advantageous for the church. Such a commission gives liberty not only to conduct oneself as an ambassador of Christ in one's own particular congregation, but wherever one may travel; such a commission pertains to the office in general.

I am joyful, and on many occasions it affords me liberty, that I may have such a general commission without limitation to a particular location, which is true for all Frisian candidates. The words of my commission are as follows: ... Itaque per praesentus literas, testatum facimus, nos as dignissimum ministerii munus (quod Deut.s bene vertat) praefatum dominum Wilhelmum à Brakel admisisse, sicut etiam admittimus, in album et ordinem ministrorum Christi recepisse, sicut etiam recipimus eique potestatem dedisse, sicut etiam damus Euangelium ex Dei praescripto pure praedicare, venranda N.T. Sacramenta reverenter adminitrare, claves aperiendi atque claudendi regnum caelorum, ecclesiasticam, scilicet disciplinam prudenter exercere, oniaque, quae ad ecclesiae regimen spectant tum publice, tum privatum perager, prout fidum Christi ministrum decet; etc., which translates as follows: We therefore bear witness by means of these documents that we have admitted the aforesaid Wilhelmus à Brakel into the most worthy office of the ministry (may God cause it to prosper), having likewise admitted and accepted him as belonging to the servants of Christ, also accepting and authorizing him to preach the gospel purely according to God's precepts, to administer the honorable sacraments of the New Testament, to use the keys of the kingdom of heaven to open and to close; that is, to carefully administer ecclesiastical discipline, and also to engage specifically in all that pertains to the government of the church, both in public and in private, as it behooves a faithful servant of Christ, etc.

Such candidates must be elected by the congregation or her elders according to God's institution and the good order of the church, and upon such election and calling they may make themselves available, this being the objective of their commission or of their preparatory examination. Having accepted the call, the candidates to whom the preparatory examination have been administered are examined once more. Subsequent to this they are ordained by the laying on of hands (which is in accordance with the examples given in Holy Scripture, and the established tradition of the church) in a specific congregation by a minister appointed by the Classis. This laying on of the hands does not occur, however, when due to a call, someone moves to another congregation. In Friesland there also is no new installation, due to the general commission in use there. The Need for Persons in the Ministry to Examine Themselves

Let every minister consider and reflect before the Lord, examining himself and answering upon the following questions: Have I been sent of God, or did I run myself? Do I know what pertains to this office? Was I convinced that I had some aptitude for this as far as external knowledge is concerned, and am I likewise spiritually acquainted with the experience of regeneration, faith, hope, love, holiness, God's dealings with the soul, spiritual warfare, and the various conditions of the soul, in order to bring forth old and new things out of the treasure of my heart, to address everyone according to his condition, and particularly to give everyone publicly and privately his portion by way of personal experience, and to speak from heart to heart? Did I have a special love to preach Christ, to be instrumental to the conversion of souls, and to promote the welfare of the church? Was I continually stirred up in my soul to accept this work? Has it been my concern whether or not the Lord has sent me, and have I prayed much in order to know this? Have I at times been desirous not to be engaged in this work, considering the magnitude of this task and my inability? Were those desires to draw back repeatedly conquered by love for this work, or was I frequently put at ease and confirmed in my intention? Have I been troubled by ulterior motives which time and again disappeared by perceiving my sincere motive in the presence of the Lord? Did I perceive a frame of heart by which I was willing to deny myself by parting with material

goods, honor, and my life for the Lord Jesus and His church? Or did I only pursue honor and prestige, the acquisition of material goods by which to improve my temporal circumstances, and which, outside of this office, would have been poor and insignificant? Or had I advanced in my studies to such a degree that I of necessity had to proceed? Did I ever really examine myself concerning these matters, or did I merely run without such self-examination?

Concerning the external calling, ask yourself: How did I arrive in this congregation? Did I flatter the elders of the congregation, thereby soliciting their favor? Did I establish friendships in order to control these friends? Did I give gifts? Did I interact with the worldly members of the church in order that they would impose me upon the congregation? Has money been promised and given in order thus to come to this congregation, and if this was done by friends without my knowledge, did I make restitution after this came to my knowledge? The consideration of these questions can be beneficial for students before they enter the ministry, and can be useful to cause every called minister to be discovered to himself as to whether he has only come to kill and to destroy (John 10:10), or to feed upon himself without fear (Jude 1:12). If someone has become convinced that he has no commission for this lofty office, but rather has forced himself in with unlawful objectives and by unlawful means, let him humble himself before the Lord and let him seek reconciliation in the blood of Christ, and endeavor as yet to be called internally. If he does not do this, however, I advise him to stop, even if he must beg for his bread, for a most dreadful judgment hangs over the heads of such individuals. He will have to pay a high price for the good name and the advantage which he has acquired. If anyone stoops so low that, in order to quiet his conscience, he rejects a calling altogether, and merely views a minister as a hired school teacher, let him be a hireling. However, if anyone is convinced of his commission, let him use this commission to undergird himself in his inability, to engender liberty in the administration of his office, to believingly pray to be qualified, and to patiently exercise trust in all trials which he will encounter in his ministry.

He who is convinced of his divine commission must then also view himself as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus. As such, and with that authority, he must perform all his work, such as preaching, catechizing, the administration of the sacraments, visitation, and the use of the keys of God's kingdom. This will make him bold and faithful, and he and his work will receive more approbation. Such must be the conduct of all ministers relative to their commission. The Responsibility of Church Members Toward the Internal and External Calling of Ministers

Church members cannot perceive the internal commission of ministers, and therefore it also ought not to be their concern. It is also not their business to examine the external calling of ministers too carefully. When someone has been called by the elders of the congregation, they must acknowledge him to be an ambassador of Christ. If the minister is in reality a Judas, this is a matter pertaining to himself only. Ungodly ministers are ambassadors, even as Judas was, and the congregation must also hear them. "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works" (Matthew 23:2-3). If elders, in calling a minister, have been remiss in their conduct, and if they have allowed themselves either by promises or threats to call such a minister, they will be accountable for this. If a minister has been called, if this calling has the approbation of the Classis, and if he has publicly been installed in the congregation, the congregation must acknowledge him as such and must hear him as long as his life is not ungodly and as long as he preaches the truth. The congregation is the happier, however, if she may have a godly minister who was called in the

right way and in a godly manner. The impression must nevertheless remain in the congregation -- whether the minister is converted or unconverted, or if his calling was proper or less than proper -- that Christ has sent him by way of ecclesiastical procedure. He must therefore be heard as such, and if his words are in agreement with the Word of God, they must then be received as words spoken in Christ's Name. They who may thus conduct themselves in all simplicity will be edified by the ministry, and the commission and the qualifications of the minister as an ambassador of Christ who speaks on Christ's behalf, will make much more impression upon the soul than if one merely views ministers as proponents of truth; or if one focuses on the person instead, thereby easily allowing himself to be offended. A proper consideration of the commission, the qualifications, and the authority of ministers (who not only proclaim beneficial truths but who are ambassadors of Christ), as well as the fact that Christ has deemed the congregation and each individual member worthy of having an ambassador sent to them to speak to them in His Name that which He has commanded them, will have a powerful effect upon the hearts of the members. The ministers must therefore impress this upon the congregation, and the members must instruct each other concerning this, so that everyone may acknowledge and hear the minister as such.

Members must thus be on guard to do nothing whereby the commission of ministers loses its importance. This occurs when the ministry is imitated by someone who, either in his home or in a different location gathers people together, and according to the format of a sermon announces a text, expositis the text, and makes application; or if someone sets forth some touchstones by which (it frightens me to think of it) he declares one to be either spiritually alive or dead. One then runs without being sent, thereby removing the impression concerning the commission of ministers out of the hearts of the people, and thus making the ministry less fruitful. Even if someone is highly talented, being more talented than the best of ministers, and even if it is someone's objective to edify, and a person is edified by this, then this does not justify such a practice, which generally will do tenfold more damage than good. Such a practice is generally accompanied by pride and self-promotion, frequently resulting in divided sentiments. Frequently the cause of the ungodly is bolstered, or the hearts of the godly are tossed to and fro, disturbed, and saddened by the imprudent propositions of such preachers. I anticipate that such a practice will cause much confusion in the church. Oh, that the Lord would fill such individuals with terror if they are as yet unconverted. If they are converted, that He would then convince them of their error and cause them to cease such activity!

I am not opposed to special gatherings of church members. I despise such ministers who keep godly members from the Lord's Supper either because they have such special gatherings or because they are opposed to them. I make it my business to encourage members to meet together, since the communion of saints requires this. I am, however, opposed to disorderly assemblies as well as to the practice mentioned. One must not strive for dominance in such assemblies, but each person must have equal input. Such assemblies must be conducted by way of mutual discussions, the reading of a chapter from God's Word, a mutual exchange of questions and answers (one person may lead to ask the questions), the singing of psalms and spiritual songs together, the reviewing of a sermon, the encouraging and comforting of each other, and praying together. Upon such gatherings the Lord's blessing would rest, and the Lord Jesus would be present according to His promise. Such gatherings should neither be conducted too frequently nor should they last too long, lest one be blamed for being lazy, squandering his time, and

neglecting his household. One must actually demonstrate the contrary to be true. It would be more prudent if one were to have such gatherings during the day rather than at night, especially if men and women gather together.

032. Chapter 28: The Offices of Minister, Elder, and Deacon

----- CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT ----- The Offices of Minister, Elder, and Deacon

Having considered what is essential as far as internal and external calling are concerned, we shall now proceed to consider the particulars of the offices God has established in His church, as well as the labors pertaining to each office. The Office of the Ministry

Due to their position and labor (and thus due neither to superiority nor territorial influence) we must first of all consider the pastors and teachers, that is, the ministers. The apostle refers to them by these two names in Ephesians 4:11. This is not to suggest that these titles represent two different offices in the church and thus require a different person for each office. Neither does it suggest that the pastoral office is superior to the teaching office. Much less is it suggested here that the office of a teacher, referred to as Doctor Theologiae, is a superior office to that of a pastor, and thus has higher prerequisites. Rather, these two titles refer to one and the same office, since a pastor is required both to teach and to feed his flock. In our time, however, Doctor of Theology is an honorary title. A person may have this title and be acknowledged as such. The pastoral (or ministerial) office is an office instituted by God, executed in the Old Testament under the title of "priest" and in the New Testament under the title of "pastor." Although commission and calling are executed by human agency, they are nevertheless executed in the name of God. Each pastor must therefore conduct himself as an ambassador of God. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Concerning the pastoral office, we must consider the qualifications of the persons and the distinctive elements of their labors. The Qualifications for the Ministry As a personal quality it is a general requirement that such a person be suited for this task and that he be faithful in its execution.

First of all, it is a specific requirement that such a person be a learned person. I do not understand this term to refer to the knowledge of several languages, for knowledge of languages does not constitute scholarship, but is merely a means thereto. Knowledge of the Latin language adorns a minister, but such knowledge is not absolutely necessary for this office. It is nevertheless very helpful, since philosophy, theology, and the most prominent expositions of the Holy Scriptures are recorded in this language. Knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages is much more essential, as the Holy Scriptures were originally written in these languages. They ought therefore to be known by every minister. Learning, however, consists in a thorough knowledge of many matters, wisdom in the utilization of this knowledge, and aptitude to present this knowledge in a manner that is beneficial to others. It is therefore beneficial that a minister be trained in philosophy or natural wisdom. This will render him the more qualified to deal with theological matters. A thorough knowledge of theology is, however, an absolute requirement for a minister. He ought not to be satisfied with having memorized a summary statement of truth -- having lodged some propositions in his brain merely to pass the examination in a respectable fashion -- and with possessing only as much knowledge as is necessary to put together a sermon by using a variety

of books. Wretched minister and wretched congregation where such is the case! To be a good theologian one must have a deep, penetrating knowledge of a variety of theological issues with which he has become conversant due to frequent dealings with them. This requires much study of Scripture. A minister therefore ought not only to read the Word much but also search out the intent of the Spirit and the context, comparing text with text and ascertaining what is the fulfillment of prophecies and types. All of this is nevertheless of no avail if he himself has not been illuminated and converted by the Holy Spirit, so that the truths which he reads in God's Word are also found in his own heart. He should know by personal experience what conversion, prayer, believing in Christ, the wrestlings of faith, the subtle delusions as well as the assaults of Satan, darkness, the sealing work of the Spirit, self-denial, and mortification of sin, etc. are. He will then be a Timothy who from a child had known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make him wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). He will then be a "scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," and "like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matthew 13:52). He will then be able to say, "That ... which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that ... declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1; 1 John 1:3).

Secondly, such a person must be apt to teach (1 Timothy 3:2). All good theologians are not able to be pastors and teachers. Everyone does not receive the gift to communicate the treasure of truth, to make oneself understood, and by revelation of the truth to express himself in a clear and desirable manner to the consciences of men. He may be able to edify himself, but with his treasures of knowledge he will be of little benefit to others, which, however, is the specific objective of the office of pastor and teacher.

Thirdly, he must be a man of gravity, "... with all gravity" (1 Timothy 3:4), "in doctrine shewing ... gravity" (Titus 2:15, in order that "no man despise thee" (Titus 2:15). Job conducted himself as such, "The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth" (Job 29:8-9).

Three vices must be avoided here:

(1) One must not be pretentious. One then seeks to create the appearance of gravity even though such is not the case, or desires as it were to be singled out and have people say, "There he is." One accordingly becomes pretentious in all things, wears his hat accordingly, holds his head in the air, and walks with a ridiculous gait. How abominable is such ridiculous pretension which has self-aggrandizement as its mother!

(2) One must neither be surly nor stern. This is the fruit of pride, imagining himself to be far above others, deeming himself to be something and expecting everyone to deal with him as if they were subordinates. Or this may also be the result of a poor upbringing, whereby one does not know how he ought to conduct himself among people.

(3) He must also avoid despicable immaturity in word and behavior, which proceeds either from a vain heart or from one's upbringing. Since a minister must avoid these things, he must likewise strive most diligently to be friendly and grave at the same time, so that his sheep will neither be shy in his presence nor have contempt for him.

Fourthly, a minister must excel in love for Christ, His cause, and His sheep. This must be evident to the congregation and will be very conducive to edification. Paul gives expression to this love: "...our heart is enlarged" (2 Corinthians 6:11); "Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Corinthians 12:15); "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8). This love towards the congregation must not be motivated by a mere desire for reciprocal love nor be the result of some natural attractiveness. Rather it should solely consist in the desire for her spiritual welfare. This love must proceed from love for Christ. "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:13-14). Such a frame will cause one to interact with the members as a friendly father. "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thessalonians 2:7). This love will cause a minister to pray much for the congregation and pray that he himself might receive grace to communicate this to the congregation. He will study for his sermons prayerfully, and he will prayerfully traverse the street towards the pulpit. His prayer is not that he may avoid disgrace or shame, nor that he may speak in a manner pleasing to the congregation, rendering him honor and respect and enabling him to draw crowds. If such is his secret motive (even if he does not say so expressly) and he pretends to have another motive while praying for the honor of God and the edification of the congregation, he frequently does this to satisfy his conscience, but his own honor is his primary motive. Love, however, will cause him at all times to pray for the congregation, thereby seeking her benefit. "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (1 Thessalonians 3:10).

Fifthly, there must be self-denial, that is, a willingness to sacrifice one's honor, goods -- yes, even one's own life. "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry" (Acts 20:24); "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). This is how a servant of Christ ought to be. He must not give opportunity for contempt, slander, and oppression due to misbehavior. If he walks in all sincerity, however, having only the welfare of the congregation in view, he must willingly endure whatever may befall him; he must neither allow himself to be hindered in anything nor become discouraged. He should let Paul be his example. "Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience ... by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true," etc. (2 Corinthians 6:3-10).

There is no creature more abominable under the sun than a minister who seeks himself, for he uses God and all that is sacred to satisfy his own evil lusts. How abominable it is to display holy zeal in prayer, preaching, and speech, and yet to have nothing but strange fire or to pretend love for God in order to receive love and honor for self! This abominable frame is accompanied by another dreadful vice: envy. Always being fearful that others will diminish his reputation, he begrudges others their excellent gifts and graces. It grieves him when he perceives that the ministry of others finds entrance, brings souls under conviction and leads them to Christ, and causes souls to be moved and melt away in quiet tears under their ministry. He ought to accomplish this, and this ought to come about by his agency. Yes, he will abhor those who have been drawn by the ministry of others. Those who love other ministers become an object of his

hatred. Where is love then for Christ and for souls? He not only fails to pursue the objective of the ministry, but he has an objective contrary to this. Whatever is not suitable to accomplish his objective is not fit for use at all.

Sixthly, he must be diligent. A lazy and indolent man is not fit to be a shepherd. The office of bishop consists of work (1 Timothy 3:2), and such a man must be vigilant (1 Timothy 3:2). Evil shepherds are described as follows: "They are all ... sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isaiah 56:10). The Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, was occupied from early morning till late in the evening, and was engaged in prayer during the night. A good shepherd must follow this example, for there is much work to be done. There must be prayer, the searching of God's Word, and a studying to preserve and improve his acquired knowledge (and thus have a treasure of varied knowledge). There must be the preparation of sermons (accompanied with the endeavor to bring them into his heart before he preaches them), the visitation of healthy as well as sick members, and action must be taken whenever the situation demands it. Since all of this requires time, and since time is of such short supply, he must be vigilant, allowing no time to pass by idly. If someone has come into the ministry for monetary reasons, or to lead a nice, soft, and easy life, he ought to return from where he came, for this office requires work. He who wishes to receive money without work possesses it unrighteously.

Seventhly, he must be an example in all things, so that he may be able to say to the congregation as Paul did in Php 3:17, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." He also states, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). The apostle also states what a minister must exemplify. "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Add to this 1 Timothy 3:2-7, and take note of every word: "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

If a minister is guilty of giving offense, he will immediately hear, "Physician, heal thyself." He will have no freedom to rebuke, his words will find no entrance, the name of God will be blasphemed, and many will be offended. If he excels in virtue, however, and his life emanates much light, his word will have much effect upon the hearts of the hearers, his presence will command respect, and many, due to their sins, will be rebuked in their conscience, and be stirred up toward godliness when they see him. A minister must therefore diligently give heed to his internal condition and his external behavior. He is like a polished diamond; the smallest hair or thread on it will easily be detected. He must be aware of the fact that he is observed to a far greater degree than one would be inclined to think; and that men are more aware of his internal condition than he would suspect. This concludes our discussion of the required qualifications of a minister. The Duties of a Minister

We will now proceed to discuss the work which ministers must perform in the execution of their office. This work consists of 1) prayer, 2) preaching, 3) catechizing, 4) visitation, 5) the administration of the sacraments, and 6) the exercise of discipline.

First of all, a minister must pray. I am not referring to the special exercise of prayer in which a minister must continually be engaged, but rather to the engagement in congregational prayer when he functions as the mouth of the congregation toward God. We read of this in the following passages, "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all" (Acts 20:36); "And we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed" (Acts 21:5).

(1) A minister must certainly also pray in secret before he goes to the pulpit, praying for the Spirit of prayer and for the ability to preach. To read a form prayer from a book, or to formulate and memorize one's own prayer, and repeat such a prayer time and again, is generally a sign of an intercessor without feeling; and those who pray along with him (or after him) will likewise do so without feeling. I do not object to reflecting ahead of time upon matters which must be brought before the Lord on behalf of the congregation. I also do not object to making notes of some points in order to assist one's memory. This must not always be the same, however, but ought to change according to time and occasion. Furthermore, one must be dependent upon the Spirit and bind oneself neither to words nor matters, but follow the Holy Spirit who maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered as far as matters, expressions, and motions are concerned.

(2) In public prayer a minister must not only endeavor to have respect and reverence for the great Majesty to whom he is speaking; he must also manifest this externally without pretense or imitation of others, but in truth and moderation.

(3) The matters must be presented in a manner suitable to move and stir up the congregation to follow him in a prayerful frame, and repeatedly say "amen" upon his prayers. It is dreadful to babble some words in an unintelligible fashion, jumping from one matter to the next, and to speak on without any rhyme or reason. The congregation would benefit much more and be much more attentive if a form-prayer were used than with such a vain production of words.

(4) When the minister prays for himself, asking for assistance in preaching, he must refrain from praying in such a fashion as if he were praying in the solitude of his room by using the words "I" and "my," for then the congregation cannot pray along with him. He must, however, speak in the third person, and then in such a manner as being conscious of being the mouthpiece of the Lord to His people, praying that God would qualify him for this task and that by him the congregation would be edified.

(5) He must also refrain from referring too much to his bodily weaknesses if he either does not feel well or imagines this to be so. This gives too much an impression of soliciting pity from people or providing an excuse if he does not preach very well, either because he did not study enough, or to solicit adoration for doing well in spite of being so weak. His second task consists of preaching, which is a great task indeed. "And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:2); "Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2). For this work it is needful:

(1) In lifting up his heart, he must seek to remind himself in a lively manner that God has sent him, that he ascends the pulpit as an ambassador of God, speaks in the name of God, and is as the mouth of the Lord unto the congregation. This ought to cause him to fear and tremble concerning the matters he will bring forth, as well as the manner in which he will do so, as the Lord will take careful notice as to whether he preaches as he was directed to preach.

(2) He must seek to remind himself in a lively manner of the necessity and advantage of the office of the ministry, since it is a power of God unto salvation and the means whereby God translates souls out of the kingdom of the devil and from the power of darkness into His marvelous light, and thus into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. He must therefore take careful note of both what he says and how he speaks, considering whether it is suitable for the attainment of that goal.

(3) He must have the heart of a preacher; that is, he must stand in awe of the God in whose Name he preaches, and with love seek the welfare of the souls to whom he preaches. He must know himself to be entirely undone in himself and have a lively impression of his own inability, so that he will not trust too much in having studied properly. He ought to pray much beforehand, not so much to get through the sermon, but for a sanctified heart, for a continual sense of the presence of God, for suitable expressions, and for a blessing upon his preaching to the conversion, comfort, and edification of souls. His concern ought not to be whether the congregation will be pleased with him and will praise the sermon, but his motive must rather be a love for the welfare of the congregation.

(4) He must first seek to impress upon his own heart the matters to be preached, seeking to be brought into the frame in which he wishes to bring others, and thus speak from heart to heart.

(5) He ought to use all his scholarship to formulate the matters to be presented, in order that he might express them in the clearest and most powerful manner. While using his scholarship, however, he must conceal his scholarship in the pulpit. To labor to be reputed as being scholarly, and to bring much Latin into the pulpit for this purpose, is only a seeking of self. Every word of Latin is nothing but a pound of flesh (that is, carnality) and is frequently held in contempt by scholarly divines, whose objective it is to make themselves pleasing to the consciences of men by the revelation of the truth. I am not now referring to the practice of extracting the full meaning of the original Hebrew and Greek words.

(6) He must select subject matter for consideration (preceded by prayer) which he deems to be most suitable for his congregation, as well as for the circumstances and events of the moment. If he deals with a chapter, book, or epistle sequentially, there ought nevertheless to be occasion for the preaching of free texts.

(7) In all his preaching his objective ought to be to touch hearts, and thus while aiming for the heart, to apply this, to comfort, and to stir up.

(8) Having performed his task, he ought to descend from the pulpit as Moses descended from the mountain, so that his awe for God and the weightiness of that great task may as yet be manifested upon his countenance, and that, after having descended from the pulpit, he would not immediately begin a discussion about other matters or ask about what is new.

(9) Upon arrival at home, he immediately ought to go to his room and consider in what frame he has preached. There he ought to humble himself before God concerning that which was lacking, to thank the Lord for His assistance, and to pray for a blessing upon the Word for himself and for the congregation. His third task consists of catechizing; that is, to impress the truth upon the minds and to promote godliness by way of questions and answers. "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed (i.e., catechized)" (Luke 1:4); "Let him that is taught (i.e., catechized) in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth (i.e., catechizes)

in all good things” (Galatians 6:6). I cannot comprehend how a minister who does not engage in the task of catechizing can live and die with a good conscience. The people are generally ignorant, and fluent sermons are not suitable to implant the first principles of truth and godliness in their minds. Catechizing is the most suitable means unto this end, it being identical to preaching, albeit the method is different.

Catechism instruction can be conveniently arranged in four categories. (At this time we shall neither discuss private catechism instruction provided by parents for their children nor the private instruction of each other).

First, there must be catechism for children, whereby the first principles of the doctrine of Christ are impressed upon them in a manner agreeable to their level of comprehension. Since they are baptized, and thus incorporated into the church, it is the obligation of ministers to focus upon them also, and to shepherd them as well as other members.

Secondly, there must be catechism for adults who are inclined to partake of the Lord's Supper. How will they make confession of faith and give an account of the hope which is in them if they are not thoroughly acquainted with the truth, and how will they know if they are not instructed? The instruction which they have received as children is not sufficient. They must receive further instruction in the knowledge of the truth, and they must be stimulated in the practice of godliness. The church must give heed whom she permits at the Lord's table, for the welfare or the degeneracy of the church hinges upon this. How gullible are such ministers who admit members to the Lord's table upon the recitation of the articles of faith and the Lord's Prayer, and how wretched are the members who are admitted on this basis!

Thirdly, there must be catechism for young men and other males, thereby making them competent to defend the truth against opposing parties, and to use them as “helps” (1 Corinthians 12:28). As such they can be used to give instruction and direction to others, to visit the sick, to read both in the church and upon ships of the merchant marine and the navy. A minister will endeavor to prepare the most able among them for the ministry.

Fourthly, there must be catechism which focuses on the practice of godliness, in order to explain what God's ways are with souls in their conversion and as they progress in spiritual life. It gives opportunity to deal with cases of conscience pertaining to the various states of the soul, such as joy and sorrow, zeal and indolence, as well as strife and victory. Direction must thus be given so that everyone may steadfastly walk in the way of godliness. This may occur by way of open discussions where each person asks and answers questions under the direction of a minister, or it may occur by way of formal catechizing, either in public places or in the private gatherings of only a few. The fourth task is the task of visitation; that is, the visitation of members from house to house. “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks” (Proverbs 27:23). In order to know the members, the minister must ask every member about the condition of his soul. He must ask each member how he conducts himself; that is, whether he is accustomed to pray and read God's Word in solitude in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. Does he conduct family worship? Does he instruct his children, or cause them to be instructed? How does he conduct himself while engaged in his profession? Is he diligent in attending the public worship services? Does he keep the Sabbath? What does he do for the edification of others? A minister will thus have reason to deal with everyone according to each person's circumstances. It is not only necessary to do so prior to

the administration of the Lord's Supper, but also on a daily basis irrespective of such an occasion. He must therefore not only deal in this manner with those who are ill or who, due to weakness, are bound to their homes, but also with those who are in good health. Prior to the administration of the Lord's Supper he ought not to frequent house after house as a funeral director who hastens to finish his task, thereby avoiding the rebuke that one does not visit; neither must he say the same thing to every member, such as, "Is there something that would hinder you from attending? If not, we wish you much blessing," etc., repeating this over and over again. Nor must he first engage in social conversation and then at last say something concerning the Lord's Supper. Such conversation will render the heart incapable of deriving much benefit from what will be said. He must immediately come to the point. Visits in homes where one receives a good glass of wine or some other form of refreshment cannot be designated as membership visitation. Due to this, there would be insufficient time to visit other homes, and other members must then be satisfied with only a word or two. How wretched are such ministers and how wretched are those house visitations conducted in such a manner! The fifth task is the administration of the holy sacraments. Those who are sent forth to preach are also sent forth to administer the sacraments; the Lord Jesus conjoins these. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them" (Matthew 28:19). As ministers are the mouthpiece of God in preaching, they are likewise the hand of the Lord Jesus to give His bride the wedding ring. In this task the minister must conduct himself with the greatest reverence for God. Each time he must renew the impression that he performs this task as an ambassador of Christ, that he imparts the signs and seals of the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he seals to every participant the promise of the gospel, namely, that "whosoever believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." If the minister administers the sacraments without this spiritual frame, performing this labor in a thoughtless and lackadaisical manner, he is then guilty of a dreadful desecration of the holy things. The sixth task is the usage of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). In a special sense the minister may and must use the key of the Word of God to proclaim to believers the forgiveness of sins, applying this to specific individuals whom he perceives to be true believers, thereby strengthening those that are weak in faith. He cannot know this with infallible certainty, but he can know whether there is a resemblance to spiritual life, thus believing in his heart that such a person is a believer. In such cases his judgment will generally be correct; however, he can be deceived and therefore the specific application is made upon the condition that they indeed are believers. The minister may and must also make specific use of the key of the Word in reference to ungodly members, making application to specific individuals. He must declare that they are unconverted, have no part in Christ, and will go lost -- all this upon the condition that they do not repent. As a minister must use this key by making specific application, he must likewise do so publicly from the pulpit. He must first of all give a clear analysis of who true believers are, so that every one may perceive what his own condition is; he must then proclaim to such the forgiveness of sins. On the other hand, he must clearly and forcefully uncover the condition of the unconverted, proclaiming unto them that they are still objects of the wrath of God and must anticipate condemnation if they remain unconverted. The minister must use this key faithfully with much tenderness of heart, without respect of persons, and with boldness, upon the authority given him by Christ, to promote the building up of His kingdom. He must therefore give heed to the manner in which he uses this key. If he leaves this key unused, he is unfaithful to Christ and His church. If he thereby grieves the

godly and hardens the ungodly, he ought to fear for the judgment of God. "Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life" (Ezekiel 13:22). The second key, Christian discipline, is not to be used independently by him, but he must use it as a member of the consistory. We shall discuss this a bit later in this chapter. The Office of Elder

Having discussed the office of the ministry, we shall now proceed to the second office of the church, which is the eldership. Of old there has been much opposition to this office, as it rightfully opposes anti-Christian dominance and supremacy in the church. The bishops in England also reject this office, since it runs counter to their exercise of dominion. The Arminians, who with their flattery endeavored to bring the government on their side, thus surrendering ecclesiastical authority into the government's hands, have rejected this office, even though they now have elders; they refer to this office as a new discovery. Also among us there are those who would like to move in this direction in order to promote either their errors with more freedom or to lord over others. It is therefore a necessity, prior to presenting the duties of this office, that we demonstrate the office of elder to be a divine institution. This is evident for the following reasons: The Eldership: A Divine Institution

First, we read in 1 Timothy 5:17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the Word and doctrine." The overseers of the church are here denominated with the general title "elders," this being either due to age, since elderly men were chosen for this office, or due to their wisdom, being referred to as characteristic of age. Timothy was of a young age; he was nevertheless chosen as an elder. A clear distinction is made here between elders who govern and those who also teach. The apostle elevates the latter above the former, which is clearly indicated by the word "especially."

Evasive Argument #1: This only refers to a distinction between ministers: those who labor with all their energy and those who are less energetic in the performance of their labors.

Answer: Those who are delinquent in their task are not worthy of double honor, but rather of being rebuked. The first part of the text therefore does not refer to ministers.

Evasive Argument #2: The first part of the text refers to deacons.

Answer: Deacons are never referred to as elders, and their task does not consist of government.

Evasive Argument #3: The reference here is to elders who receive remuneration. Governing elders, however, do not receive remuneration; therefore, the first part of the text does not refer to elders.

Answer: It is nowhere forbidden that elders receive remuneration. If they spend all their time in the work of the congregation, the congregation is obligated to compensate them for this. Secondly, we read in 1 Corinthians 12:28, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that ... governments." The governing office is distinguished from the teaching office, for the words "first," "secondarily," and "thirdly" prove clearly that each reference is to a specific office. The fact that the word "governments" refers to elders, whose task it is to govern, is evident from 1 Timothy 5:17 which speaks of "elders that rule well."

Evasive Argument #1: "Governments" refers to civil governments.

Answer: God did not place the office of civil government within the church. Governments rule and issue laws as the bearers of authority. The Lord, however, has forbidden all lording over others in the church. The apostle wrote this to the Corinthians whose governments consisted of unbelieving heathens.

Evasive Argument #2: "Governments" cannot refer to elders here, since they are mentioned after "miracles," "gifts of healings," and "helps." They should have been mentioned prior to these, since they have more worthiness than the matters just mentioned.

Answer: No degree of worthiness may be concluded from the fact that one thing is mentioned first and the other last. In honoring one's parents, the mother is placed before the father (Leviticus 19:3). Priscilla is mentioned before her husband Aquila (Acts 18:18).

Thirdly, in the Acts of the Apostles elders are generally distinguished from ministers, as individuals who govern but who do not teach (cf. Acts 15:2; Acts 15:4; Acts 15:6; Acts 15:22). In Jewry there were also elders who were distinguished from Levites, priests, and scribes (Matthew 16:21). Thus, the Lord Jesus also wills that His church of the New Testament be governed by men who are distinguished from its ministers. This can be observed in the following passage: "They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. They were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men" (Acts 15:2; Acts 15:4; Acts 15:6; Acts 15:22).

(1) However, the apostles were also elders (cf. 1 Peter 5:1-2; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1). In addition to them there were also other elders.

(2) The apostles reserved the labor of preaching in Jerusalem for themselves. "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:2; Acts 6:4). We never read that at that time there were others in Jerusalem; that is, other than the apostles who preached, or that there were other ministers besides the apostles. Therefore, other elders are here distinguished from the apostles. The office of elder is consequently distinguished from the office of the ministry.

Objection #1: Elders are partly unlearned men. Many belong to the lowest rank of the population, and even dominate over the ministers. There is therefore no need for them, for the ministers can handle the labors themselves, etc.

Answer: Of what origin were the apostles? Their lack of qualification and their shortcomings no less rendered their office void than it did for ministers. The eldership is beneficial even if it is only to hold ministers accountable as far as doctrine and life are concerned, and to prevent ministers from being domineering. In order that all be governed well in the church, ministers cannot handle this government by themselves. It has pleased God to appoint such an office in the church, and that is the end of all arguments. Who would dare to say to God, "Why doest Thou thus?"

Objection #2: In 1 Timothy 3:1-16 the apostle makes mention only of bishops and deacons.

Answer (1) Whatever is not stated in one text can be found in other texts. (2) The title “bishops” can refer to both types of elders.

Objection #3: It is the task of elders to feed the flock (Acts 20:28). This takes place by means of the Word, which is the task of ministers. Thus the word “elders” must be understood to refer to ministers.

Answer: To have the oversight and to feed the flock pertains to both rulership and preaching. It is also the obligation of elders to privately speak from the Word of God and to exhort and rebuke by means of the Word. In view of all this it remains a certain fact that the office of elder has been instituted by God.

Elders are not permitted to serve of their own accord, but they must be elected by the congregation, as has been shown above regarding ministers. Therefore, we shall not discuss this any further. To this office belong the qualifications of the persons holding the office and the performance of their labors. The qualifications of elders we shall also not discuss further, as they are identical to those of ministers; their qualifications we have discussed extensively. The second qualification is the exception, namely, the one which pertains to public preaching. This is not to suggest that elders neither ought to be without learning nor have qualifications needed for preaching; be it far from us to suggest this. The more knowledgeable and qualified they are, the better it is. These qualities, however, are not as absolutely essential for ruling elders as for teaching elders. We shall now make a few remarks about the labors of the elders. The Duties of an Elder Their purpose for being in church is not to sit upon a soft pillow in front of the church, nor to imagine that they stand above other members and thus can order them around. They may also not behave as if they were lords and masters over the ministers, it being their duty to give heed to the doctrine and life of the ministers. It is also the task of ministers to give heed to the doctrine and life of the elders. They also may neither oppose the good counsel of the ministers within the consistory, nor deem it to be a masterpiece if they succeed in checkmating the minister. Neither is it intended that the elders be but “yes-men” who blindly follow the minister in his wishes. Rather, it is their task in all humility, and with wisdom and love, to assist the ministers in promoting the welfare of the church. As is true for ministers, the labor of elders is also twofold, for they perform these labors either individually or in cooperation with other consistories, Classes, and Synods.

Every elder has a duty toward the congregation. He must view himself as having been sent by the Lord to perform these labors. With this impression and in this capacity he must accept and perform all his labors. The primary task of elders is to “take heed ... to all the flock,” and “to feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28; cf. 1 Peter 5:1-3). This means that they must endeavor to keep the congregation together, to return those to the flock who have strayed, and to be watchful against wolves who come from without to create unrest among the members with false doctrine. They must immediately give attention to this by chasing them away by means of the Word of God, providing good pasture for the flock. Their task is not only to call ministers and to search for the most qualified and godly among them, but they must also encourage them to preach, catechize, and lead gatherings intended for edification. It is also their task to prevent or resolve all quarreling and discord, so that the members may live together as lambs in love and harmony. They must keep an eye upon the entire congregation and, out of love for her welfare, be concerned for the possibility of calamities.

Secondly, they must particularly give heed to the walk of each member. There must be careful supervision as to how one conducts himself at home; that is, whether there is love and harmony, and whether each member in his particular position of the household conducts himself properly towards others. They must inquire whether family worship is conducted, whether God's Word is read, whether the children are instructed, whether they are raised appropriately, whether they are attending school, and whether they are being trained for an honest profession. They must inquire whether the father of the home has an honest profession, as well as how he conducts himself in this profession. Elders must inquire what reputation each member has among the local population, in order that they may know how they ought to deal with each member. In one word, they must keep an eye upon everything, and if they are informed that something is not well somewhere, they must immediately make work of correcting the situation. For this purpose it is necessary for elders to divide the congregation into sections, similar to what ministers do in the cities. They will then be able to take much more careful note of things. Elders must not think that they have performed their duty if they accompany the minister on family visitation, even if they do not say a word. No, the purpose of this is to make this family visitation all the more credible, and to make a deeper impression upon the members concerning the necessity of preparation for the Lord's Supper. It will also enable them to assist the minister in word and deed if there are situations which require this, and to learn from the minister how to deal with souls. He is also to observe where the minister, upon having conducted family visitation, needs to visit to follow up whatever needs to be attended to. The elder must, however, also do this work himself. In order that everyone be persuaded to perform the duties God has laid upon them, the elder must take note of:

(1) the words take heed, feed, and overseer (Acts 20:28). This task is not properly performed unless particular attention is paid to whether everyone behaves himself appropriately as far as confession and walk is concerned, as is stated in the form;

(2) the fact that giving heed to each other is even the duty of every individual member. "And let us consider one another" (Hebrews 10:24). This is therefore much more true of him who bears the title of elder;

(3) this question: "Would it be detrimental if an elder thus conducted himself? Would he do wrong?" Everyone would have to reply "no" to this. Furthermore, would it not do much good, would it not have a restraining effect upon the members, knowing that they are observed and that their behavior would come to the attention of the minister and elder? Would not the edifying effect upon the congregation be considerable? Everyone will obviously have to answer in the affirmative. Consider therefore that "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Thirdly, he must instruct the ignorant, for,

(1) this is everyone's duty. "Teaching and admonishing one another" (Colossians 3:16). This is therefore much more true for an elder.

(2) This is unquestionably the task of ministers. Whatever a minister does, outside of preaching, however, is also the duty of elders, for together they bear the title of elder.

(3) The Synods have declared that it is not only their duty to instruct every ignorant person from house to house, but also to give catechetical instruction, doing so not only in this or that individual

home, but also publicly in the church.

(4) The questions are: Would an elder sin in doing so? Would it not be good and beneficial if he did so? The answers to these questions will also convince him in his conscience that such is his duty.

Fourthly, he must exhort, rebuke, and comfort, for,

(1) what else would it mean “to take heed concerning the flock,” “to feed” and “to take the oversight,” but to ascertain whether everyone behaves himself appropriately? Would it merely consist of being observant? No, but it rather consists in the elders conducting themselves according to the occasion.

(2) It is the duty of every member. “But exhort one another daily” (Hebrews 3:13); “Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thessalonians 5:14). This is therefore much more the duty of elders.

(3) It is the duty of ministers and thus also of the elders, for we are here referring to specific duties.

(4) We could again ask the same questions: Is it sin? Is it not good?

Fifthly, he must visit the sick, also widows and orphans, and all others who have some particular trial, for,

(1) this is everyone's duty. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” (James 1:27); “I was sick, and ye visited me” (Matthew 25:36). How ashamed such elders ought to be who withdraw themselves from this task!

(2) It is the duty of ministers and thus it is also their duty.

(3) Their own conscience testifies that such is a good rather than an evil practice.

(4) The sick are commanded to call for the elders. “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him” (James 5:14). The word “elder” is used without restriction, so that it pertains to all who bear the title “elder,” that is, both teaching and ruling elders.

If these duties are performed with heart and soul, according to all these particulars, with the consciousness of being sent by God, and all this is acknowledged by both elder and congregation, then this will result in a prosperous congregation. These then are the duties which elders themselves are obligated to perform. We shall relate the duties which ministers and elders must perform together after we first briefly point out what the duties of the deacons are. The Office of Deacon The third office which God has instituted in His church is the diaconry. The diaconry pertains to an office in the church, distinct from the offices of elders and ministers, which has as its purpose to support the poor in the congregation in their physical needs. Since God gathers His church primarily from among the poor, there will always be poor persons in the church. “For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land” (Deuteronomy 15:11). This gives opportunity to those with means to demonstrate their generosity, and for the poor to acknowledge the Lord's providence regarding them and to be thankful. It could readily occur that several poor members, unknown to those members with means, would thus be neglected, perish

due to want, or be forced to beg -- which would be a matter of shame to the church. It can therefore easily be seen that it is needful that there be some whose work it is to have oversight over the poor. It has therefore also pleased the Lord to institute such an office in the church. Concerning this office we must note the calling, the required qualifications, and the task itself. The Deaconry: A Divine Institution

First, it is evident that the Lord has instituted such an office, for we read in Acts 6:3, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

Secondly, the deaconry was not only intended for that era, when due to urgent circumstances all goods were brought together and the church lived from one common purse. Rather, since the poor will never be absent in the church, the deaconry must continue at all times. In the congregation at Rome there were also deacons, to whom the apostle said, "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity" (Romans 12:8). He also wrote to the deacons in Philippi: "... with the bishops and deacons" (Php 1:1). In 1 Timothy 3:1-16 he instructs Timothy concerning what manner of men deacons must be, thereby confirming that the deaconry is a divine institution.

Since the deaconry is a divine institution in the church and for the church, deacons must be chosen by the church. This must either be done by all the brethren or by the representatives of the church -- her elders -- and not by the civil government. It was done in this manner in Acts 6:1-15. The apostle insists that deacons must first be proved, and after this are to serve (1 Timothy 3:10). Such probation and subsequent service implies an election. This is emphatically stated in the form for the installation of deacons. "And in the first place I ask you, both elders and deacons, whether you do not feel in your hearts, that ye are lawfully called of God's church, and consequently of God Himself, to these your respective offices?" Since deacons are intended for the church, it is not fitting that they distribute alms to those outside the church, and thus mix the gifts of the church with the common provision for the poor, for:

- (1) this is contrary to the purpose and objective of the office.
- (2) Such a practice subtly promotes the mixing of the church with those who are without, as it treats all the poor as being equal; the church, however, must obviously be separate in all things.
- (3) This will impede the generosity of many, for their gifts would then not be distributed in harmony with their objective.
- (4) It would be to the disadvantage of the poor in the church, who otherwise could be supported in a much more abundant measure.
- (5) It confirms papists and others in their errors and ungodly life, since they receive support regardless.
- (6) It robs the church of its holy radiance. Such radiance would be all the more evident if the deacons, due to an abundance of funds, would manifest voluntary generosity to some individuals outside of the church. The Qualifications of a Deacon The apostle describes the required qualifications for deacons. "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Timothy

3:8-9;1 Timothy 3:12). Add to this all the virtues they must have as Christians in order to be examples to others. They must especially manifest those virtues which flow out of the virtue of generosity.

(1) They must manifest compassion: "Having compassion" (1 Peter 3:8). The burden of the poor must so weigh upon them, as if they themselves were afflicted with it. They may neither be rude nor proud, nor may they snarl at them as if they had dogs or enemies before them.

(2) They must be merciful, which is a kindness causing one to be inclined to help another. "Blessed are the merciful" (Matthew 5:7); "Be ye therefore merciful" (Luke 6:36); "Be pitiful" (1 Peter 3:8). The opposite behavior would be to shut one's heart, to harden oneself toward the poor, not giving them anything, or if, out of a sense of shame or for any other reason one must give, he then gives it in such a manner as if he were casting a piece of bread to a dog.

(3) As a father cares for his children, they must be careful and concerned as to how the poor can manage their affairs, have enough to live, and thus be able to thank the Lord. "I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor" (Job 29:15-16).

(4) They must be cheerful and friendly. "... he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:8); "Be pitiful, be courteous" (1 Peter 3:8). They must be of a friendly disposition. A kind word and a friendly countenance are most refreshing for the poor, who due to their poverty are dejected. A grim countenance and a harsh word, however, cut through their soul. The work of deacons pertains to the collection and distribution of monies, as well as to caring for the souls of the poor.

First, they must collect. They must do so in cooperation with the ministers and the elders, who together must superintend both the poor as well as those who have means. For the office of the ministry includes the offices of elder and deacon, and the office of elder includes the office of deacon. I repeat, deacons must consult with them to determine where sufficient means will be obtained, but also to be diligent in providing in situations of which they are aware.

Secondly, they must distribute. In distributing funds they must use wisdom and caution, seeing to it that they do not give thoughtlessly. They must give most to those who have the greatest need, and less to those who are lazy and waste that which has been given to them, in order to teach them to work and to be frugal. Orphans, the aged, the sick, or mothers who have given birth each require a different approach. Those who are to blame for their poverty and who are capable of working must again be treated differently. This is also true for those who, due to a handicap, cannot work, even though they are healthy. It is again different with those who would rather perish from hunger with their families (which is a sin), than to allow it to be known that they are receiving something from the deaconry. A different approach is also needed for those who would be reduced to poverty unless some monetary help be given to them enabling them to remain solvent. Much wisdom is needed to clearly discern time, manner, and circumstances in making these decisions.

Thirdly, the deacons must also care for the souls of their poor, for they are as fathers to them; and whatever one member is obligated to do to another, they must excel in doing to those over whom the Lord has placed them.

(1) They must instruct the ignorant, and bring them to the church services and to catechism instruction.

(2) They must exhort, rebuke, and comfort according to individual circumstances. (3) They must visit the sick, either preparing their souls for the hour of death, or exhorting them to increase in godliness if they may again become healthy. In doing so they will “purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ

Jesus” (1 Timothy 3:13). They will be an ornament to the church, being enabled to be of more benefit to the church than before. Their gifts and graces will be increased as well. Among all the offices there is not one office which is more burdensome and detrimental to the body than the diaconship. It therefore frequently amazes me and gives me cause for rejoicing that the Lord gives the deacons such willingness and zeal, a fact which is generally true in the Netherlands. Upon receiving rich gifts they are as happy as if they had received them themselves. It does not trouble them to be engaged in their task until late in the evening. In no meeting is there generally more order, more unity, and more faithfulness than among the deacons. The Lord also rewards them, giving them honor and respect, and frequently grants that their own circumstances improve rather than deteriorate.

Exhortation to Faithfulness in the Execution of the Offices

Especially in reference to these spiritual offices, knowing and doing must go together. We shall therefore add to the description of these offices an exhortation to be faithful in their execution, for which we present the following motives:

First of all, ministers, elders, and deacons, does not the Lord Jesus, the King of His church, call everyone of you to your respective office and task? It is considered a great honor in the world to be the ambassador of a king. Here, however, we have the Lord of lords and the King of kings, who is very God Himself, the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His Person, who as Mediator is exalted at the right hand of the Father, seated with the Father on His throne, and crowned with honor and glory. It is He who has called you to His service, having sent you forth with a message recorded in His Word. He who reveres this King, who has spiritual eyes to perceive that this spiritual honor is incomparably greater than worldly honor, and that the honor which God and the Lord Jesus bestow upon the holy angels and the children of God is not to be compared to any honor bestowed by men, will deem it to be the highest honor to be His ambassador and messenger. He does not do so to boast of this, but rather is as willing and ready to execute his ambassadorship joyfully as the angels are when they receive a message from God. The greater the person is who sends you the more careful one ought to be to obey his command to the letter. Behold, therefore, that the great King bestows such honor upon you. He has given you such a glorious, precious, and advantageous commission, and His eyes are continually upon you. Therefore, give heed to engage in your task in a heartfelt and faithful manner. Be then faithful and diligent, while often reflecting upon 1 Corinthians 9:16-17 : “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.”

Secondly, the Lord has provided you with such gifts and talents as are needful for the work to which He has commissioned you, giving unto one less and to the other more. These talents have been given to you in order that you would improve them. He moreover has given you esteem and respect among the people, thereby giving you reason, and granting you good opportunity, to use

your talent advantageously. What manner of person would you be if you either would allow these wondrous benefits, talents, opportunities, and esteem to be unused, or if you were to display them proudly, seeking to attain worldly honor with spiritual benefits? They are too precious for this. Acknowledge therefore their preciousness and may you burn with zeal to use them for that purpose for which they have been given, namely, to serve your Lord and to be beneficial to His church.

Thirdly, the salvation or damnation of precious and noble souls hinges upon your labor. When viewing a church full of people, be reminded that every person has an immortal soul and by nature is traveling upon the broad way to destruction -- a destruction which will be everlasting. There are no other means whereby they can be helped but by you in whose mouth the Lord has placed the word of reconciliation. If you allow them to go their own way, they will be lost. Whose soul would not be moved to help them? If someone has but fallen in the water, everyone will cry for help and do whatever he can to help. How moved one ought to be when reflecting upon the eternal destruction of men according to body and soul! You, having been sent by the Lord Jesus to help them, ought especially to be moved. Would you not, as much as possible, combine all your skills to help them by instructing, exhorting, and rebuking them, and thus take such souls by the hand to draw them out of the fire, removing them as spoil from the gate of hell and bringing them to the feet of Jesus?

There are also converted persons in the church. Among them are little children, as well as those who have made spiritual progress. Each one of them desires and cries out for food, for milk, and for a piece of bread in order that his spiritual life may prosper. There are those who gently progress upon the right way, but there are also those who, as lost sheep, wander about. There are those who are healthy, those who are sick, and those who are near unto death and about to enter eternity. Everyone opens his soul and longs for a strengthening and encouraging word. Everyone anticipates your coming, and as it were draws the words out of your mouth. You have bread and wine at your disposal, and the Lord has sent you to strengthen and encourage them, having qualified you for this task. How could you bring yourself, be it due to laziness or carelessness, to let them die for hunger by not giving them the food which the Lord Jesus entrusted to you on their behalf? If there be but any stirrings of love or compassion, consideration for souls -- whether they be converted or unconverted -- these things will move you to help them with all your might.

Fourthly, reflect upon the congregation over which the Lord has appointed you as overseers. It is the church of God which Christ has bought with His blood, which Christ has loved, and for which Christ has given Himself. There you have the Lord's precious sons and daughters, his darling children, over whom the Lord has appointed you as nurses. Will you then not tenderly treat such darlings of the Lord -- protecting them from the violence of those who wish to harm them, keeping them from error, giving them food and drink, and instructing them as such beloved ones of the Lord Jesus? Did Jesus buy them with His blood and would you not concern yourself with them? If the love of Jesus toward His church fills your heart toward the church, it will also make you diligent to care for her with all your might and to seek her welfare.

Fifthly, the prosperity of the church renders God glory upon earth. Therefore, when the Lord Jesus taught us to pray, "Hallowed be Thy Name," He immediately pointed to the means whereby this is attained: "Thy kingdom come!" It is the church which ought to be the glory of Christ and show forth

the praises of the Lord who has drawn them out of darkness into His marvelous light. God's Name is blasphemed when it goes ill with the church and when there are many offenses. When, however, the church shines forth with holy ornaments, is adorned with delightful virtues, and bears much fruit, the Lord will be glorified. The Lord's attributes will then be honored, the angels will jubilate, the ministers will rejoice, the children of God will delight themselves, and those who are without will perceive the holiness of the Lord and be filled with awe. Then voices praising God will be heard in such a fashion that the heavens will resound. Therefore, overseers of the church, the Lord has appointed you to labor that the church be in such a condition. Consequently, if it is your delight and desire that the Lord be glorified, be very diligent to cause the church to be in such a condition.

Sixthly, every one of you in particular must give account to God for the souls which have been entrusted to you. If you have been unfaithful, woe be unto you! If you have been faithful, it will be well with you. Do not imagine that your performance will not be examined. The Lord will most certainly call you before His judgment seat and say to you: "Give an account of the manner in which you have ruled. Have you been true to your commission, your talents, and all the wondrous opportunities you have had? How did you deal with souls? Are you to be blamed for some of them going lost? Did you strengthen the hands of the ungodly? Did you allow the death of those who wanted to die? Did you tenderly give attention to My lambs and sucklings? Or did you unjustly grieve them, slay them, and take their veil away from them? (Song of Solomon 5:7). Where are the souls which by means of your service have been converted, comforted, and built up?"

How dreadful will this investigation and interrogation be for many overseers! How pitiful and dreadful will be the sentence that will be pronounced upon them! If only they had never been born and had never been an overseer! What will it be to perish due to one's own sins, and then also to be burdened by so many souls! They will see you in the last judgment and rise up against you, saying, "You knew very well that I was ignorant, and that I lived in sin. If you had looked after me -- had warned, rebuked, instructed, and led me in the way of salvation -- I would have been saved. Look, however, you unfaithful minister, you unfaithful elder, I am now going lost! Let God require my blood from your hand, and deal with you as a wicked and lazy servant!"

However, what a precious moment it will be for faithful ministers, elders, and deacons when the Lord will make manifest their labors, their prayers for the congregation, their special discourses, their exhortations, their warnings, and the manner in which they gave direction to souls. He will then cause them to enter into glory, saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

Take the following texts into consideration as a warning and an exhortation: "His blood will I require at thine hand ... thou hast delivered thy soul" (Ezekiel 3:18-19); "They watch for your souls, as they that must give account" (Hebrews 13:17); "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30); "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:23). Do not lightly pass by these texts, but reflect upon them for some time, until you sense the weight of them upon your heart and it will stir you up to be faithful in your office.

033. Chapter 29: Ecclesiastical Authority and the Use of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven

----- CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE ----- Ecclesiastical Authority and the Use of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven

Having discussed the labors each minister, elder, and deacon must perform, we shall now proceed to consider the labors ministers and elders must perform cooperatively.

Ministers and elders when laboring cooperatively constitute consistories, Classes, and Synods. The Necessity of and Biblical Basis for Ecclesiastical Assemblies The propriety of such assemblies is first of all evident when considering the need for them. It is naturally evident to man that there can be no republic or society without having an assembly of those who have been appointed as rulers. This is particularly true when such republics and societies include various provinces, cities, and villages. It is thus also a requisite in the church that her elders assemble, not only in each individual church, but also in the provinces. In turn, there must be assemblies representing several or many provinces. If need be, there must also be assemblies consisting of delegates from all churches throughout the world, for there is but one church. In this manner the unity of doctrine will be preserved, and the church will be delivered from confusion.

Secondly, this is also evident from the manner in which the church of the Old Testament conducted her affairs, namely, by way of a council. The Lord Jesus acknowledges this by stating, "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council" (Matthew 5:22).

Thirdly, this is evident from the manner in which the apostolic church conducted her affairs. "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter" (Acts 15:6); "... when ye are gathered together, and my spirit ..." (1 Corinthians 5:4).

These assemblies are either superior or subordinate to each other; however, their arrangement is not hierarchical, but rather pertains to jurisdiction.

First, their purpose is to preserve the unity of true doctrine, to defend the true meaning of Scripture against errors which surface, and thus be "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). Their purpose is neither to institute a new doctrine and a new religion, nor to vest Scripture with authority, nor to be the highest and infallible judge in disputes. For:

- (1) God is the only Lawgiver (James 4:12);
- (2) one may neither add to nor subtract from Scripture (cf. Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19);
- (3) the Lord Jesus rejects human commandments and institutions (Matthew 15:9);
- (4) it is the calling of ministers to teach all that the Lord has commanded them in His Word (cf. Matthew 28:19-20);

(5) every member must be watchful against becoming a servant of men, not allowing himself to be brought under the dominion of anyone (cf. Galatians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 7:23).

Secondly, their purpose is to maintain good order, so that “all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). Their purpose therefore is to prevent the one from lording over the other, so that the practice of religion may be edifying and without confusion, and that such practice be not neglected.

Thirdly, their purpose is to avert all that would give offense, and to use the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that is, the exercise of Christian or ecclesiastical discipline. The Purpose of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven

Let us consider the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Keys are symbols of authority, and this authority is legislative in nature. The Lord Jesus, as the Lord of the church, has such authority over her. “He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth” (Revelation 3:7). This authority is also one of administration, and is used as such upon the command and on behalf of the Lord Jesus. “And the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder” (Isaiah 22:22). Thus, the church has power either to include in or exclude from the church.

We shall now speak of the kingdom of heaven. We are not referring to the kingdom of power, nor to the kingdom of glory, but rather to the kingdom of grace, which is the church, and wherein everything is of a heavenly nature. It consists of a heavenly King, heavenly subjects, heavenly goods, heavenly walls and gates, and heavenly power to grant or to deny entrance. This authority is permanent, is not contingent upon locality, nor does it originate in the elders, as if they were proprietors of the church. They do not have this authority in and of themselves, and they may not exercise authority as they wish. This authority is neither naturally theirs nor has it been bestowed upon them, for this authority is and remains Christ's. They are but servants by whom Christ exercises His authority. This authority pertains to binding and loosening, and to the forgiving or retaining of sin. “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19); “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (Matthew 18:18; cf. John 20:23). This certainty neither issues forth from the ministers nor is it the result of some agreements whereby God has bound Himself to act according to the wishes of elders. Rather, this authority belongs to Christ and is exercised in His Name and according to His precepts. “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him. ... Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him” (Isaiah 3:10-11).

Two Keys: Preaching and Discipline

There are two keys: the Word of God and Christian discipline. The first key is the proclamation of the Word of God. The Lord has given this Word to His church, and has authorized His servants to proclaim it in His Name. “He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me” (Luke 10:16). Because of this authority they proclaim to believers the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36); “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). With this same authority they close the kingdom of heaven for unbelievers and the unconverted; that is, as long as they remain in such a

condition and do not repent. "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Romans 2:9); "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). There is a great difference between someone knowing this personally, by a private individual saying this to him, or if a servant of Christ -- either publicly or privately -- with specific application says to someone, "Believer, you are an heir of eternal life and your sins are forgiven"; or to an ungodly person, "I declare to you that God's wrath is upon you, and that you shall be condemned if you do not repent." Since these words have been declared to them by a servant of Christ upon Christ's injunction, and since the Word is of equal authority, it must find such entrance into the hearts of both parties; that is, to the comfort of the one and to the terror of the other, as if the Lord Jesus said this to them in person. The second key is Christian discipline. This has been given to the church as an administrative power to close the kingdom of heaven to those who give offense and are ungodly, and to open it again to those who repent concerning their former life, promise reformation of life, and confirm this with their deeds. Neither Jews, heathens, nor those outside of the church are subject to the use of this key, but only members of the church who give offense, be it that they are only baptized or that they have been admitted to the Lord's Supper. "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:13-13). Those who are within the church are subject to Christian discipline if they go astray in either doctrine or life and persevere in their sin after having often been admonished. "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:13); "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:20). To excommunicate a person is equal to depriving him of Christ's protection, and to deliver such a person to him who rules beyond the boundaries of the church [Note: The Dutch reads: "... die buiten heerst ..."] , that is, Satan. The Steps in Christian Discipline The purpose of excommunication is to exclude offensive members from the church, no longer to recognize them as her members, and to keep them from the Lord's table. Such an extreme measure is arrived at by way of several steps. The first step consists of exhortation, warning, and rebuke, be it privately at home, or if this is not requested, in the presence of the consistory. The second step is to refuse admittance to the Lord's table, since the objective of censure is the repentance of the person who gives offense, as well as to prevent the church from being slandered, and so that no one else will be offended by or imitate his sins. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6). Thus, there are some occasions when someone who has committed an offense must be refused admittance for the benefit of the church -- someone whom one otherwise would admit as far as the person is concerned, since he manifests very genuine sorrow and lives a blameless and godly life both before and after the committed offense. The second step of censure is specifically intended for those who persevere in giving offense. The third step consists of informing the congregation about the person who perseveres in giving offense in life and doctrine, so that members may know that the keys of God's kingdom are being used, that they may pray for the repentance of the one who has gone astray, and also that the one who gives offense may be put to shame and come to repentance. Such announcement must initially be made without the mentioning the name, and thereafter if the situation remains unchanged, the name must be announced, so that it may make that much more of an impression upon the heart of the offender as well as in the congregation.

If all of this is to no avail, one must proceed to the fourth and last step, excommunicating him, and thus depriving him from all fellowship with the church. This means that he will no longer be acknowledged as a brother or sister, but rather is considered to be a heathen. Such was true for the administration of censure in the Old Testament. "That soul shall be cut off from his people" (Genesis 17:14); that is, his name would be erased from the genealogy and he would be reckoned as neither belonging to the seed of Abraham, nor as being a partaker of the covenant established with his seed. The Lord Jesus speaks likewise when He states, "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:17). It is that of which the apostle Paul speaks: "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:13). The End and Objective of Christian Discipline The end and objective of Christian discipline is spiritual and thus neither pertains to all men as such, nor to the meting out of physical punishments. It only pertains to people who are members of the church whose doctrine and life are not in harmony with God's Word. Its purpose is:

(1) to cause the sinner himself to be ashamed, so that he may know how far he has departed from godliness as defined by God's law and how much his life differs from his confession; also that he may become ashamed before God and His church and thus come to repentance. "Have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thessalonians 3:14);

(2) that the sinner may be sensitive to censure as being a punishment imposed by the Lord Jesus and thus repent from his evil ways. "... that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5); "... that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:20);

(3) to cause other members to fear the punishment which the Lord Jesus imposes; all children fear when a father chastises a child, and this causes them to walk circumspectly. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Timothy 5:20);

(4) to remove offenses from the church for the benefit of those who are within the church, but also that they who are without would not use such offenses as an opportunity to slander religion. "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (Romans 2:24);

(5) to prevent the judgments of God from coming upon the entire congregation. "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men" (Jeremiah 5:25-26); "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:30-31).

Appropriate Conduct with Regard to Censure As far as censure is concerned, we must consider the conduct of 1) the elders who administer censure, 2) the person who is being disciplined, and 3) others towards those who are under censure. They who administer censure must do so in all fairness, without respect of persons. They must also do this with much carefulness, meekness, and gravity, so that it can be seen on their countenances that they are conscious of the presence of the Lord Jesus and are performing this task in His Name. They are to do this in all humility, thereby manifesting that they do not engage in this in a domineering sense, but as servants who manifest sorrow and compassion with the wretched circumstances of such persons. Thus, in doing so, they are pursuing the welfare of these persons as well as of the congregation. The person who is under censure is under obligation to be very sensitive to it and to submit himself with sorrow to

the discipline of the church. He must do so considering it to be the disciplinary action of Christ Himself, realizing the promise which he made when admitted to the Lord's table, and acknowledging that the church acts thus for his welfare and the well-being of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. If, however, a church has become so degenerate and if the elders are so ungodly that they permit offenses to go unpunished -- and thus oppose the godly who excel in orthodoxy and a virtuous life -- and use the keys of God's kingdom against them, such application of censure is of none effect to those who are censured unjustly, and is deemed null and void by other godly members as well. Such use of censure is not according to the ordinance of Christ, but contrary to it. "The curse causeless shall not come" (Proverbs 26:2). This curse will rather come down upon the heads of those who grieve the hearts of the righteous by their treachery and who strengthen the hands of the ungodly (Ezekiel 13:21-22).

Members must conduct themselves prudently towards those who are under censure and, commensurate with the step of censure, must rebuke them and withdraw themselves from them. "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). When, however, the highest step of censure is imposed upon someone, such withdrawal must be more complete and more evident. If the opportunity is there, or if in some edifying manner we can create an opportunity, then, while manifesting the distance and separation between us and him, we must lament his wretched condition and exhort him to repentance. If, however, this has no effect and he instead becomes more wicked, allow him to go as a heathen and a publican. "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:17); "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus 3:10); "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6). The kingdom of heaven is thus closed by way of Christian discipline. Such closure, however, is not permanent, but lasts only until such persons repent, and by confession and deeds show their heartfelt sorrow in immediately turning from their errors or offensive life and instead lead an exemplary and godly life. In such an event the kingdom of heaven is again opened for them by reacceptance into the fellowship of the church as a brother and a sister, and readmittance to the Lord's table. In doing so there must be a manifestation of joy and love, since there is even joy in heaven over every soul which repents (Luke 15:7; Luke 15:10). Such restitution is to be observed in 2 Corinthians 2:6-7, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." The Foundation for Christian Discipline The use of censure in the church has always had many opponents. Since this is still the case, it is needful that we further clarify the foregoing by answering the following question: Has the church been vested with such spiritual authority as stated above?

Erastians and Arminians either deny all administration of spiritual authority in the church as far as the use of censure is concerned -- insisting that only the gospel be preached and nothing else -- or if they admit to some measure of authority, they maintain that the civil government is vested with this and administers it through the elders of the church who function as her servants and subordinates. We, on the contrary, answer in the affirmative and maintain that the Lord Jesus has vested the church with such authority. This authority is entirely distinct from the authority of civil government and must be executed only on behalf of Christ and not on behalf of the government.

This is first of all confirmed by texts in which this is expressly stated: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19); “If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican” (Matthew 18:17); “For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Corinthians 5:3-5; 1 Corinthians 5:13); “I would they were even cut off which trouble you” (Galatians 5:12); “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17); “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Thessalonians 3:14); “A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject” (Titus 3:10); “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 John 1:10).

Considering all these texts together, or each of them individually, the use of censure in the apostolic churches is very evident, as is also the command of Christ and the apostles to keep those who are offensive in doctrine and life outside of the church. It is also clear that if such persons are within the church, they are to be cast out, excommunicated, not to be interacted with, to be removed out of the midst of the church, and to be shunned. The church was commanded to do this without there being the least reference to civil government.

Evasive Argument: At that time the civil governments were pagan and therefore could not perform this task. Therefore, the church of necessity had to do so herself. If the civil government is of Christian persuasion, however, such authority is vested with her.

Answer: It is irrelevant whether or not the civil government is of Christian persuasion. Civil governments as such have the same authority, and all Christians are obligated to submit themselves to all governments in identical fashion, whatever their religious persuasion may be. Being a Christian or not a Christian relates to the persons who are in governmental office, not to the office itself. Nowhere is a Christian government vested with more authority than a pagan government. The church maintains her own identical form and nature, irrespective of the nature of civil government.

Secondly, such ecclesiastical authority is evident from the terminology used to describe the labors of the elders of the church. They are called “stewards of God” (Titus 1:7); “overseers” (Acts 20:28); “ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1); “governments” (1 Corinthians 12:28); “them which have the rule over you” (Hebrews 13:7; Hebrews 13:17); “them ... are over you” (1 Thessalonians 5:12); “elders that rule” (1 Timothy 5:17). Regarding their labors the following is written: “to take heed to all the flock ... and to guard against wolves” (Acts 20:28-29); “to do all things decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40); “... for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12); to present the church “as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2).

All this terminology pertains to being vested with authority to do certain things; the church is therefore vested with authority. Such authority does not originate with the civil government. Thus

the elders, in the use of this authority, are not servants of the government. Rather, this authority originates with the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of His church, and the elders of the church exercise this authority as servants of Christ. Furthermore, without closure and opening and without exclusion or inclusion, this authority can neither be exercised nor can its objective be achieved. Consequently the church has been vested with such authority.

Thirdly, such authority was exercised in the Old Testament. God Himself cast Cain out of the church (Genesis 4:14; Genesis 4:16). In many texts God commands the excommunication of those who give offense, cutting their souls off from the people. It is one church, and since authority existed then, this is therefore also true today -- for this authority does not pertain to the ceremonial law, but rather is related to the very essence of the church and thus is of a permanent nature. To cut off souls from among the people is not a putting to death, but rather an erasing from the genealogy of the children of Israel, that is, the church. This means that such persons would not be reckoned among the seed of Abraham, but would be considered as heathens and publicans, as Christ explained it in Matthew 18:17 when He spoke of censure.

Fourthly, the very nature of all corporate entities and organizations demands that there be order and authority to exclude all those who do not abide by the conditions upon which they were admitted, but who instead seek to generate confusion in the entire organization. The church is a spiritual community, and those who are admitted into this community are admitted upon making a vow. Consequently she also has the authority to exclude those who violate their vows or undermine the well-being of that community.

Fifthly, consider also:

(1) the first Synod (Acts 15:1-41). It issued directives (vs. 24); it rebuked and condemned error (vs. 25); and established ordinances (Acts 16:4). It is thus very evident that the church has the authority to permit elders to govern and direct her, and to this belongs necessarily the power of inclusion and exclusion.

(2) This has always been the steadfast practice of the church of all ages. It has also been the steadfast confession and practice of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands since the time of the Reformation. This is confirmed in The Form of Ordination of the Ministers of God's Word. "Finally, it is the duty of the Ministers of the Word, to keep the Church of God in good discipline, and to govern it in such a manner as the Lord hath ordained; for Christ having spoken of Christian discipline, says to His apostles, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ... with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, committed to them (whereby they exclude and include) according to the charge given them by God." This is likewise confirmed in The Form of Ordination of Elders: "Therefore, in the first place, the office of elder is ... diligently to look, whether every one properly deports himself in his confession and conversation; to admonish those who behave themselves disorderly, and to prevent as much as possible, the sacrament from being profaned: also to act (according to Christian discipline) against the impenitent." The Form of Excommunication conveys this very clearly. Note especially these words: "Wherefore we at this present are necessitated to proceed to this excommunication according to the command and charge given us by God in His Holy Word." Our Heidelberg Catechism states in answer 82, "Therefore it is the duty of the Christian church, according to the appointment of Christ and His apostles to exclude such persons." In answer 85 we read: "Thus: when according to the command

of Christ, those ... are by them (the elders of the church) forbidden the use of the sacraments; whereby they are excluded from the Christian church and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ." In the Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 32, we read: "For this purpose excommunication or church discipline is requisite ... according to the Word of God."

Add to this the Christian, praiseworthy, and exemplary Resolution of the Most Noble Commissioners of the Province of Friesland, formulated in the year 1645, to which they hold rigorously, and of which everyone is repeatedly reminded. We read there: "In order that the church may maintain her rightful authority as far as censure and discipline are concerned, which hereby is fully granted to her." The foregoing makes it very clear that this is not the peculiar opinion of some private individual, but that this has been the continual confession and practice of the entire Reformed Church in the Netherlands. Therefore, those who either contradict this or oppose it in practice are in this respect not in agreement with the Reformed Church, but with all their power are engaged in mutilating the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Forms of Unity.

Objection #1: "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matthew 13:28-30). Behold, here it is expressly forbidden to pull out the tares, and the command is given to let them grow.

Answer: The field is not the church but the world (vs. 38). The tares are the wicked, and the harvest symbolizes the end of the world (vs. 39). The meaning of this parable is this: It is not according to God's will that there are only the godly in this world, but also the ungodly. Therefore, in order to the gathering of the elect, the ungodly must not be eradicated since godly children also do come forth from the ungodly, and this could not occur if all the ungodly were eradicated. Consequently, we maintain that this text does not pertain at all to the church and her authority to censure, for censure does not pertain to the hypocrite but to those who give offense.

Objection #2: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone" (Matthew 18:15). Thus public rebuke and excommunication do not belong in the church.

Answer: (1) Read also verses 16-18; you will then observe that such excommunication is commanded. It is the Lord's will, however, that we would come to this extreme measure by way of steps.

(2) The Lord makes reference in verse 15 to one's conduct relative to private, rather than public offenses.

Objection #3: "But let a man examine himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28). This is therefore not the consistory's business.

Answer: The one does not exclude the other, for also the overseers are enjoined to do so. "Do not ye judge them that are within" (1 Corinthians 5:12). It is particularly the task of elders to do so when someone is neither able nor willing to examine himself.

Objection #4: You will thus stigmatize people and thereby cause them to be abhorred.

Answer (1) Let those who wish to live ungodly lives remain without.

(2) This is self-inflicted, for the church does not make their conduct public, but rather punishes only that which has become public.

(3) This is not the objective of censure; but its objective is their conversion and the well-being of the church.

Objection #5: Civil government is permitted to mete out punishment, but not the church.

Answer: Civil government does not have the authority to use the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Those keys have not been given to it, but rather to the church. The civil government punishes those who disturb the peaceful coexistence of its subjects, doing so by way of corporal punishment. The church, however, punishes those who act contrary to truth and godliness, doing so with spiritual discipline. They both have different objectives and there is thus a different manner of punishment. He who is disciplined by the church may nevertheless be a good subject of the government.

Objection #6: By such a practice a government is established within a government, and the fact that these two are in opposition to each other must necessarily result in the demise of a kingdom or a republic.

Answer: This would occur if both governments were of the same nature. They are entirely different in nature, however, as has been shown in our first proof (p. 162). If they both maintain their proper position, they will never be in opposition to each other, but will fortify each other. The disobedient are punished by way of ecclesiastical authority being vested in the keys of the kingdom of heaven. This authority is also used against those who are disobedient towards the civil government. The Relationship of the Civil Government to the Church This generates another question: Does the civil government have any authority at all with regard to the church? If yes, what does or does this not consist of?

We wish to preface our answer to this question by stating that first, all members of the clergy -- ministers, elders, and deacons -- are subject to the civil government as individuals, and thus are in one and the same category as other people. I repeat, as individuals. This is not true, however, as far as their ecclesiastical standing is concerned, for as such, they are subject to consistories, Classes, and Synods, and thus are subject to the only King of the church, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, if members of the clergy conduct themselves contrary to civil laws pertaining to all citizens, they, just as other citizens, may and must be punished according to the magnitude of their crime.

Thirdly, since members of the clergy are not servants of the civil government, but as individuals are in the same category as all other citizens, they have the same right to legal defense. Therefore, in the event of an indictment, legal procedures must be initiated against them the same as against other citizens.

Fourthly, members of the clergy and the entire congregation, each in their own position, are obligated to honor and obey the civil government conscientiously -- with heart and in deeds. They are to do so not by way of compulsion, but in an affectionate manner, out of love for God, whose supremacy and majesty are reflected in the office of civil government. No one is released from the duty of rendering honor and obedience simply because he is a member of the clergy or of the

church. This is true even if the civil government is either pagan, Islamic, heretical or Christian, good or evil, godly or ungodly, compassionate or severe. It is the duty of elders to stir everyone up to render such honor and obedience. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (Romans 13:1).

Question: Does the civil government exercise any authority at all with regard to the church?

Answer: It has no authority whatsoever in the church, but it does have authority with regard to the church. We thus most strenuously oppose the Erastians and Arminians who posit all authority and government with the civil government, subordinating all ecclesiastical authority and government to the civil government, from which it is in turn delegated to the church. We have contradicted this notion in the foregoing and shall shortly do so again. We are likewise opposed to the view of the papists who remove all who belong to the church from governmental jurisdiction. At the same time, they maintain that the civil government may not render judgment at all in the realm of religion, and that the civil government must merely follow blindly and execute whatever the church has deemed and judged to be correct. We are also opposed to the view of the Libertines who insist that the government may not be involved with religion at all, but must permit every religion in its territory to proclaim whatever it wishes. We declare that the civil government does indeed have authority with regard to the church and is obligated to make use of this, which is a matter we subsequently shall demonstrate to be so.

Question: What authority does the civil government not have?

Answer: It has no authority whatsoever in the church and may not rule over the church as lords and masters.

Government officials may not act as if they are servants sent of Christ -- in Christ's Name preaching, administering the sacraments, using the keys of the kingdom of heaven, commissioning ministers, appointing elders in the church, and decreeing what or what will not be preached concerning divine truths, and what are or are not the fundamental points of the Christian religion. They also have no right to depose and expel ministers who are godly and blameless in doctrine and life, and who have been lawfully called as the ministers of given churches. They may not, as lord and master over the church, reject such men, declare the calling to be null and void, efface it, etc. The government has no authority relative to such ecclesiastical matters, for in doing so she would reach for the crown and scepter of the Lord Jesus, whose prerogative this is. Those governments who are not refrained by the many examples of divine judgment will pay a bitter price for such a practice. The Lord Jesus Christ: The Only and Sovereign King of His Church From the following it is evident that the civil government has no authority to rule as lord and master over the church and, by reason of its authority, to decree and govern everything according to its pleasure.

First, the Lord Jesus is the only and sovereign King over His church, and is her sole Ruler; He alone legislates (Galatians 6:16). He alone gives order as to how His laws are to be made known: by the preaching of the Word (Matthew 28:20), by the administration of the sacraments (Matthew 28:19; Matthew 26:26), and by the use of the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19). He alone appoints and sends forth His own servants (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28), and it is His will that whatever is done in the church be done in His Name (Matthew 16:18-19). Consequently, the civil government has no authority to rule over the church, to impose laws upon her, to issue forth

directives as to how these are to be carried out to appoint ministers and elders, or to execute or cause anything to be executed in her name. Let everyone therefore be fearful of infringing upon Christ's jurisdiction and government, lest the same judgment come upon them as rests upon the pope.

Secondly, Christ has delegated the authority to govern His church only to the church and to none other. This we have shown in the foregoing by way of five proofs. Thus, the civil government neither has authority over nor in the church, for it is not the church, nor is it a member of the church as a governmental body. Its dominion over the church would therefore be of a foreign and tyrannical nature, which this King will not tolerate.

Thirdly, the servants, whom the Lord Jesus desires to have in His church and to be chosen and sent forth by her, are expressly named in Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28. This we have confirmed in chapter 27 with three proofs. These servants are apostles, evangelists, prophets, shepherds and teachers, elders, and deacons. However, not one word is mentioned about the civil government. Let the civil government, if it wishes to rule over the church, demonstrate that it has received such a charge from the Lord Jesus, and we shall be satisfied. It is, however, not able to do this. Therefore, if it wishes to dominate and control without a charge from the King of the church, this is nothing less than tyranny for which it will pay a bitter price. The Differences Between Civil and Ecclesiastical Governments

Civil government and ecclesiastical government are so essentially different from each other that it is impossible for one government to rule over both jurisdictions. This is evident from the following reasons:

(1) Civil government has its origin in God as Creator and Preserver. The government of the church originates in and has been established by Christ as Mediator.

(2) Civil government is an authoritative government. In the church, however, there may not be the least lording over the other (1 Peter 5:3). All government in the church is characterized by service and is entirely executed on behalf of another, that is, Christ. In order for the church to belong under the jurisdiction of the civil government, civil government should not be authoritative in nature, but rather would be characterized by ministering in the name of Christ. The government will have to admit, however, that its rule is neither characterized by service nor executed on behalf of Christ, but rather consists of authoritative rulership. Its manner of government can therefore not function within the church.

(3) Civil government pertains to the exercise of worldly power. Its jurisdiction pertains to this world and is executed toward people as people. Its laws and punishments pertain only to the physical realm. On the contrary, the government of the church is of heavenly origin, and those who are governed belong to a kingdom which is not of this world (John 18:36). The laws are of heavenly origin and punishments are spiritual judgments. That which is of the world can neither be applicable nor pertain to that which is heavenly, for it falls far short of the heavenly and is of an entirely different nature, having entirely different subjects. Thus, as far as the form of government is concerned there is no comparison in degree nor is there any commonality. How then can worldly authority and the use of the sword (which only pertain to the physical realm) have any place in the church? (4) Civil governments rule by the sword. The church, however, rules by means of the keys

of God's kingdom; that is, by proclaiming the gospel, administering the sacraments, forgiving or not forgiving sin, disciplining those who give offense, rebuking, refusing admittance to the sacraments, refusing church fellowship, reinstating those who repent, and commissioning and calling the elders of the church. These things are all interrelated, and the church which does the one, does the others also. Any person who is not devoid of intelligence, or who is not deliberately wicked and ungodly, but yields to reason and the Word of God will have to conclude by all this that civil government has nothing in common with the manner in which the church must be governed. If it wishes to use its authority to control one area, it must of necessity also have control over all other areas, be it immediately or by way of subordinates, which, however, the elders are not. For instead of speaking on behalf of Christ, they would then have to say: On behalf of the government I declare unto you the forgiveness of sins, etc. Such an idea would be repulsive to everyone. If such an idea is repulsive to the civil government, the government likewise ought to be repulsed by the idea of ruling over the church, or allowing such tyranny.

Fifthly, during the time of the apostles and the subsequent rule of the pagan emperors, the church had her own government which at that time functioned at its very best. Consequently the church possesses an authority which is inherently perfect and not subject to any influence from the civil government. Since the church at that time was not dependent upon the civil government, this is also true today, as both the nature and the authority of the church remain the same.

Evasive Argument: The civil governments at that time were either Jewish or pagan and thus were hostile toward the church. Our present governments are Christian and lovers of the church.

Answer (1) I declare that those who wish to dominate over the church are enemies rather than lovers of the church, for they rob the church of that which Christ the King has given to her for her well-being.

(2) Irrespective of whether the civil government is pagan or Christian, or has either a friendly or hostile disposition toward the church, the distinction between the office of civil government and the church does not change. Both Christian and pagan governments have the same rights. Whatever is the duty of a pagan government is likewise the duty of a Christian government. Upon becoming a Christian, a government official will then join the church and submit himself as a Christian to the government of Christ in His church. The church, however, remains the same and is thereby neither annexed to the civil government nor included in its jurisdiction. If a specific individual belongs to the East Indies Company and attains to a governmental office, the company remains the same. He neither rules the company nor assumes a leadership role any more than he did before. The company is no more subject to the civil government than was true prior to this and is true presently. Such is also true for a father, whether he is pagan or Christian. This neither increases nor diminishes his paternal authority. A man's authority over his wife and a master's authority over his servant do not increase, neither are of a new sort than was true prior to being in government. Such is also the case here. Religion neither increases nor decreases the authority and jurisdiction of the civil government. From all this it is very evident that the church has received her own administrative authority from Christ and she administers the same on His behalf. The civil government does not have the least authority in, nor power over, the church to thus rule her. This applies to the doctrine, the sacraments, the use of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the calling and sending forth of ministers and elders of the church.

Objections Answered Pertaining to the Unique Jurisdiction of Civil and Ecclesiastical Governments

Let us now consider the futility of the arguments which could be produced against this, so that the truth may be all the more evident.

Objection #1: Civil government must extend to whatever is located within its jurisdiction; that is, from the greatest entity to the least. Since the church is included in its domain, the civil government must then of necessity control all things and govern everything according to its pleasure.

Answer (1) The jurisdiction of civil government would then also extend to one's wallet and all personal belongings of the citizen. This would also pertain to the food that would be served at every mealtime in each home, to the rooms where each member of the family will sleep, to the moment when each will enter or leave his home, and the hour certain things are to be done. Then the conscience, the religion of each man, and whatever else an atheist could think of, would also be subject to the civil government. These absurdities make it very evident that the authority of the government does not extend to everything (whether great or small) within its jurisdiction.

(2) The civil government has jurisdiction over whatever promotes a good social interaction between citizens as such. In that sense all members of the church as people, including ministers and elders, are subject to the government. This we admit, but neither God nor the people have vested it with authority beyond that. Thus the proof is invalid in both its first and second proposition. Even if its jurisdiction extends to the entire physical realm of society, it does not follow that therefore it extends to the church as well, for that kingdom is not of this world -- this kingdom has no other king than the Lord Jesus. Whatever she performs is executed on behalf of the Lord Jesus who is her all-sufficient King, in spite of those who regret this fact.

Objection #2: If the government of the church were of such a nature, that is, not subject to the civil government, there would be two governments in one country or city. This cannot be true if a country or city is to continue its existence.

Answer: This would be true if both governments were essentially of the same nature, having the same subjects and the same objective in view. This is, however, not the case. In the one case authority is of a ministerial nature and is exercised on behalf of the Lord Jesus. Those who do not wish Him to rule in their land as King would obstruct Him if they could. The other authority is of a ruling nature, which God, as Creator and Preserver, has given to civil government. The one pertains to the spiritual, and the other to the physical realm. The one relates to spiritual life and salvation, and the other to physical life and a harmonious societal life among people. Since these two forms of government are so distinct from each other, they cannot interfere with each other, nor be a hindrance to the other. If they each function within their boundaries, however, they will promote each other's welfare. Since the management of families and of the various organizations within a republic can coexist with the management of the civil government, this is much more true in regard to the function of the government of the church and the civil government, which are essentially different and thus uphold each other.

Objection #3: Many God-fearing kings in Israel ruled in and over the church. Therefore, the civil government also has a rightful claim to rule over the church.

Answer (1) The deeds of some persons may not be used as the basis for a rightful claim.

(2) Some of the rulers or kings of Israel were also prophets, who received immediate declarations and commands from God. We may not make a logical deduction from these examples as far as others are concerned.

(3) Nowhere is it written that God-fearing kings ruled over the church. We do read, however, that they protected her and actively promoted her improvement after she had been corrupted by ungodly kings. There are several examples of ungodly kings, however, who according to their pleasure, wanted to control the practice of religion and rule over the servants of the Lord. Such was true of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin by erecting the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Ahaz caused an altar to be built which resembled the altar of Damascus, and he himself sacrificed upon it. Uzziah, "when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. ... And they (the priests) withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord ... go out of the sanctuary ... then Uzziah was wroth ... and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, ... and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him" (2 Chronicles 26:16-20).

Objection #4: Solomon deposed one high priest and appointed another. "So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord; and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar" (1 Kings 2:27; 1 Kings 2:35). The civil government therefore has power to rule over the church.

Answer (1) Except for this one singular example, there are none to be found of a similar nature. You cannot deduce someone's rightful claim from one act committed by one person. This is furthermore true upon considering that Solomon committed many sinful deeds which are not worthy of imitation, but are rather to be avoided.

(2) Abiathar had committed a crimen laesae majestatis; that is, the sin of offending royal majesty. Together with Adonijah, who exalted himself as king, he had rebelled and made himself worthy of death. Solomon had mitigated his punishment and changed his death sentence to exile; consequently, Solomon did not remove his priestly dignity from him. Due to exile, however, he was not permitted to minister in the priestly office, which could only occur in Jerusalem. Therefore his not being a priest was not the punishment itself, but the consequence of the punishment. This exile did not pertain to the office itself, but to the administration of the office. He is therefore expressly acknowledged as a priest after he had been sent into exile. "And Zadok and Abiathar were the priests" (1 Kings 4:4).

(3) The appointment of Zadok in the place Abiathar was only intended to protect the divinely established priestly order wherein Zadok, not being designated to this office by his birth, had to succeed Abiathar. In view of this rightful claim, Solomon appointed him and protected him as such. There is therefore here no semblance of evidence that the civil government is permitted to rule over the church and her ministers.

Objection #5: Kings as well as civil governments are the nursing fathers of the church, and thus are authorized to rule over the church. "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens

thy nursing mothers" (Isaiah 49:23).

Answer (1) Kings and their wives, that is, their queens, are here placed on the same level. We know, however, that the right to govern belongs to the kings and not to their wives, from which it is evident that the reference here is not to rulership, but to an act of benevolence. Cyrus, although he was a heathen, was thus a nursing father of the church; this was likewise true for Ahasuerus. This is also applicable to Constantine the Great, Theodosius, Queen Elizabeth, Count Frederick III (also called Frederick the Pious), etc.

(2) These kings and queens are presented here as being in utmost subjection to the church while humbling themselves before her. We read in the same verse, "They shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet" (Isaiah 49:23). It is therefore far from the truth that they would rule over her. Let him who does not reverently wish to bow before the church, as being the bride of King Jesus, refrain from ruling over her in the presence of her Bridegroom.

(3) The word "nurse" (for "fathers" is not to be found in the original text) does not imply supremacy, but is indicative of the labors of a servant. The nurse of a royal child -- this being applicable to the church -- is less than the child who is being nursed. A nurse must not treat and direct the child according to her will, but only according to the express orders of the father: "This you will do, and this you will not do." A nurse may not refuse to accept the servants whom the father appoints for this child. She may not drive them away and accept others according to her will. A nurse is not permitted to diminish or modify the privileges which the father has given to the child, but it is her duty to protect the child and his privileges, and to prevent any harm from being done to the child. Thus, the idea of dominion is not implied in the word "nurse," but is expressly excluded.

(4) Civil governments are not the nurses of the church simply because they are governmental bodies. The word "government" has nothing to do with the matter, for civil governments are generally enemies and persecutors of the church. The text in question, however, is a promise that the Lord would stir up the heart of certain great, reputable, and mighty men and women, who with all their might would be benevolent to the church. This is the duty of all who are appointed to high places. We have thus observed that the civil government has no authority whatsoever in the church and may also not rule over her. Nevertheless, all members of the clergy, without exception, must be subject to the civil government as much as other men.

Objection #6: Moses is said to be "instead of God" to Aaron (Exodus 4:16). Moses represented the civil government and Aaron represented the church. The civil government thus ruled over the church.

Answer (1) Why does one not conclude the civil government to be the God of the church, since this word is used in reference to Moses? I do not deem it possible that anyone in civil government would dare to give himself the title, "God of the church."

(2) When God said this to Moses, Aaron was but a simple and ordinary person. He had not been called to the high priestly office as yet; moreover, when he was high priest, he did not constitute the church, and thus this argument has no validity whatsoever.

(3) Israel, at that time, did not constitute a republic, but was in bondage to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God sent Moses to Pharaoh to demand their release. Moses excused himself due to lack of eloquence and God gave to him the eloquent Aaron for the purpose of proclaiming to Pharaoh and the people the prophetic revelations which Moses, the prophet of the Lord, had received. Baruch was likewise the assistant of the prophet Jeremiah. Moses is thus not presented here as a ruler or a king, but as a prophet. This title therefore does not pertain to governments, for they are no prophets.

(4) The word "God" does not mean "ruler" here, since Moses was appointed to be a god unto Pharaoh. "I have made thee a god to Pharaoh" (Exodus 7:1). It is a certain fact, however, that Moses was neither a king over Pharaoh nor was Pharaoh a subject of Moses. Moses stood above Pharaoh as far as his prophetic ministry and majesty was concerned. God had called him to this for the execution of his mission to deliver Israel from Pharaoh's hand. We have thus demonstrated what authority governments do not have. The Responsibility of the Civil Government with Regard to the Church

We must now consider also what authority the civil government has with regard to the church. Such use of its authority we wholeheartedly uphold. The duties of the government with regard to the church are threefold. It has 1) the power of protection, 2) the power to legislate concerning external circumstances, and 3) the power to subdue evil influences.

First, the civil government is empowered to protect the church. It must protect the church from all oppression from without and within, so that no one will disturb or prevent either the exercise of religion or the meetings of consistories, Classes, and Synods. It must preserve the freedoms and the spiritual privileges which Christ has given to the church, so that she may use and exercise them without impediment. It must remove all external obstacles which either could be detrimental to religion or impede the growth and well-being of the church. It must do everything possible to promote religion so that the church may flourish under its protection and "may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:2). Such was the practice of the godly kings David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah -- a fact which can generally be observed in the books of Kings and Chronicles.

Secondly, the civil government has power to legislate concerning external circumstances. As such it can maintain order as far as the external circumstances of public worship are concerned -- such as the most suitable time for and place of worship, as well as that the welfare of the civil state be not impeded. It must also call ecclesiastical synods together, and see to it that other ecclesiastical assemblies are held, so that they in turn may promote the internal wellbeing of the church.

Thirdly, the civil government has the power of control with regard to ecclesiastical matters. It must see to it that members of the clergy -- ministers, elders, and deacons -- discharge their duties and not be negligent in this regard, as well as that they adhere to the established church order which is according to God's Word. It must publicly oppose those who by false doctrine and immorality trouble the church, or who by evil philosophies and opinions disturb the civil state as far as political matters are concerned. It must also prevent the continuation of such practices. It must exterminate false religions. It must promote the reformation of the church if she becomes entirely degenerate in doctrine and morals, and by the use of all political means imaginable restrain opponents and compel those who forsake religion to observe their duty, etc. In this manner Moses (Exodus

32:1-35), Asa (2 Chronicles 14:1-15), Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:1-19), Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29:1-36; 2 Chronicles 30:1-27), Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:1-33), and Nehemiah (Nehemiah 13:30-31) were engaged in the work of reformation. How blessed is the church and the civil state which functions in this way, and where the church and the civil government, each within their own sphere of influence, are faithful in the discharge of their tasks!

We thus observe that none ought to be of the opinion that the government is not to be involved in the church at all, ought not to be concerned about her, and ought merely to be the blind executor of whatever the church wishes her to carry out. There is a certain *Jus majestatis circa sacra*; that is, a rightful claim, power, or duty of civil governments with regard to that which is holy. The Belgic Confession speaks of this in Article 36: And their office is, not only to have regard unto, and watch for the welfare of the civil state; but also that they protect the sacred ministry; and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship; that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted. They must therefore countenance the preaching of the Word of the gospel everywhere, that God may be honored and worshipped by everyone, as He commands in His Word.

It is the duty of civil government to uphold not only the second table of the law, but also the first. It must see to it that God is honored. It may not tolerate any idolatry, worship of images, or any false religion within her jurisdiction, but must rather eradicate these. It must prevent the vain use of God's Name practiced by cursing, swearing, and blasphemy. It must prevent the desecration of the Sabbath, punish violators of this commandment, and see to it that the gospel is proclaimed everywhere within its jurisdiction. It must see to it that the church, as the darling of the Lord Jesus, is protected and preserved; and that neither internal dissension nor any external oppression disturb or destroy the church, but that instead she be safely preserved in the use of the privileges and liberties which her King Jesus has given her. The government must be engaged with regard to all these things, but not formaliter; that is, by intruding into the very essence of the matter at hand. It must do so objectively; that is, deeming her (the church) to be the object of its activity. Therefore we say that the civil government has authority with regard to the church, rather than in the church. Neither civil governments nor any other individual may exercise power in or over the church, for Jesus is her only King. The civil government has, however, an obligation with regard to the church. There is a significant difference between "in" and "with regard to." A civil government has authority with regard to marriage, but no authority in the marriage; with regard to a household, but not within the household. It likewise has authority with regard to the church, but not in the church. We have thus shown what authority the civil government has with regard to the church, and what authority the elders have in the congregation.

Exhortation to the Faithful Use of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven

Since the Lord has given these keys to His church, that is, comprehensive authority to govern the church, and thereby specifically to open the kingdom of heaven for some and to close it for others by the Word of God and Christian discipline, the elders must therefore take great care in the use of these keys, and the members must take great care to submit themselves to this authority. The Proper Use of the Key of God's Word

First, the elders must see to it that the keys of the kingdom of heaven are used properly. Since the one key is used primarily by ministers -- that is, in opening and closing by means of the Word of

God -- and the other key, Christian discipline, is used by ministers and elders together, we shall first address the ministers and then speak to both. The first key is used by ministers when proclaiming the Word of God. To what degree must they be careful and tremble when they use this key? But also, how bold and faithful must they be in using this key?

(1) It must continually weigh upon their heart that this charge has been entrusted to them, and that as ambassadors of Christ they must carry out this charge on His behalf. They are not engaged in their own work but in the work of Christ.

(2) They must continually remind themselves that the eye of the Lord Jesus is upon them, and that He takes careful notice of their frame of heart, their objective, and the zeal with which they engage in their ambassadorship.

(3) They must continually impress upon themselves that the salvation and damnation of the souls entrusted to them are related to the manner in which they use this key. If many individuals had been uncovered as to their spiritual state and had been excluded by this key of the kingdom of heaven -- that is, if with great dignity and fortitude it had clearly been declared to them on behalf of the Lord that they were living in sin and were subject to the wrath of God; that they had neither the forgiveness of sins nor salvation, but rather had to anticipate eternal condemnation if they continued in this way -- would they not have been moved and would they not have repented? Again, if many a person who is weak in faith had been uncovered as to the grace they possessed, and if thereupon with great dignity and fortitude both the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation had been promised them, with what joy would they have run their course, have grown in grace, and have increased in strength, since due to the neglect of the use of this key they spend their life in sorrow.

(4) In the preparation of sermons they must continually review the matters they study to ascertain whether it is their objective to say something whereby they will acquire the reputation of being scholarly and gifted, thereby drawing crowds. How such strange fire upon the altar of the Lord ought to be abhorred! Their only objective ought to be the faithful use of this key: to discover to every person his spiritual state, and thereupon proclaim either salvation or condemnation to them, so that an unconverted person may repent and a gracious soul may be comforted and stirred up. If this has been their objective while studying, this objective must likewise give them zeal, while preaching, to proclaim these matters to them as an ambassador of Christ.

(5) They must continually remind themselves of the texts of Holy Scripture which follow (as well as similar texts), in order to preach in a discriminatory manner, and not merely present the truth in a very general sense. They must also be concerned about accurately dealing with the spiritual state of every person, lest either due to ignorance concerning the spiritual state of the soul, or due to fear of man or a desire for man's favor, or an inappropriate love for the ungodly or a sinful aversion for the godly, they either do not present proof texts correctly or apply them incorrectly. Consider therefore the following texts seriously: "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him ... Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him;" (Isaiah 3:10-11); "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezekiel 3:18); "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is

pardoned" (Isaiah 40:1-2); "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire" (Jude 1:22-23). Lest you be in error in this, take the following text to heart: "Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life: therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver My people out of your hand" (Ezekiel 13:22-23). As faithful and emphatic as the ministers must be in the use of this key, so must the members also be attentive when the kingdom of heaven is opened or closed; that is, when sins are declared to be either forgiven or retained. They must pay careful attention to the description of the states and qualifications of those persons for whom heaven is either opened or closed, and ascertain to which group they belong. They must then apply what is spoken to themselves and consider the act of opening and closing as having been performed in reference to them, as well as the fact that it is the Lord Jesus who thus deals with them, which therefore renders it certain and efficacious. This ought to fill the unconverted with fear and ought to motivate them immediately to repent and thus escape the wrath to come. This ought to cause the converted to rejoice and endeavor, with spiritual joy, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they have been called. Oh, if the keys of God's kingdom were used and applied in such a manner, what impression the ministers would make!

We warn every member not to become involved in the task (nor to do anything that resembles it) to which the Lord Jesus has appointed ministers only. They have no right to examine everyone, and then to judge them and pronounce the sentence of life or death upon them. In this regard it is true, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). Such imitation will take away the impressions when the minister uses this key. It puts a blemish upon godliness which thereby is slandered and hated by others, for it will be said that such individuals judge and condemn others. They are generally people who have a high opinion of themselves, who due to pride and a desire for superiority wish to manifest themselves as extraordinary individuals who tower over others, whereas in reality they frequently possess less grace and are less qualified. They frequently, and as much as in them is, do damage to God's work in the little ones in grace who often have more grace than those individuals who judge and condemn them. As much as possible they will break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax. I therefore warn everyone not to think highly of himself, but rather to be in fear and humbly to esteem the other higher than himself. Let him fear God and refrain from engaging in that which the most excellent ministers do with fear and trembling, lest he be in error one way or another. We also exhort everyone who is weak in the faith not to allow such individuals to trample on their conscience, but to avoid such individuals, to cease having fellowship with them, and to join themselves to other godly members for mutual conversation, so that everyone may be edified, exhorted, stirred up, and comforted. The Proper Use of the Key of Christian Discipline The second key, Christian discipline, is used when both ministers and elders are assembled together. If there is any area where degeneration is to be observed, it is in the neglect of the use of this key. It is true that one congregation does more in this regard than another, and some are rather faithful, but in general it seems as if the Lord Jesus did not give this key to His church. Not only are the small foxes which spoil the vine not caught, but great wolves have dominion there. How the wall has been broken down so that the vineyard is vulnerable to being trampled upon! The wild boar is rummaging in her, and the leaven is leavening the entire lump. This causes God's Name and His church to be blasphemed, the sacraments to be desecrated, the good plants to be choked by the weeds, and God's blessing to be withheld from

His church. All this takes place because the ungodly have a place among His people. It is therefore to be feared that the Lord may one day remove the candlestick of His Word from such a locality.

What is to be done? There is no hope for improvement, for:

(1) there is no longer an example, and thus it is no longer known how matters ought to be. One no longer knows what behavior is considered to be offensive nor how the church must function if all is well with her. Congregations are considered to be flourishing when many attend the services, when many are accepted as members (even if they are as ignorant as heathens and are entirely worldly), and when there is external peace, although everyone is sleeping the sleep of carelessness.

(2) Many elders are as blind as the shepherds. "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter" (Isaiah 56:10-11). Many are foolish shepherds with "the instruments of a foolish shepherd" (Zechariah 11:15). What can be expected of such shepherds?

(3) Those who have discernment do not exercise it, and it is barely noticed if a blatant sin manifests itself spontaneously; one will even turn the head in order not to see it. Many are neither motivated by the love of God nor the well-being of the church and are not concerned about being faithful to the command of Christ. They therefore allow everything to run its course, neither pursuing that which gives offense nor making any effort to remove it.

(4) Such elders love peace and therefore do not wish to trouble themselves to know all that transpires in the church. This requires too much effort; the use of censure makes people angry, and they will have to endure their sharp tongues and turbulent meetings with them. All of this generates inner disturbance and it is therefore most conducive to peace to leave everything alone.

(5) They solicit the love, esteem, and favor of man, fearing the displeasure of the prominent members, as they have children who could be promoted or advanced by them. They may have a good relationship with certain individuals, be an occasional guest there, and enjoy a good glass of wine at such an occasion. This will close their mouth and tie their hands. Some members are quick with their tongues who will resolutely oppose the imposition of censure. They would then become too deeply involved with such individuals, and it would therefore be best to leave such individuals alone. If any discipline is administered, it is toward some individuals of low social status, of whom much trouble is not to be expected, and it then will pertain to matters which will bring such members in ill repute among the people. If they are able to pursue a godly person, whether he is guilty or innocent, they will be zealous to skin him alive and discipline him in a most severe manner. In doing so they are neither motivated by love, nor by concern for the well-being of the church and their souls, but rather out of envy and a desire to satisfy their passions. What can be expected of such elders?

(6) Due to the Lord's goodness there are still good and faithful elders who are of a disposition to act in this respect, but they either lack light or the ability to follow through. They also observe that there are so many situations where censure must be applied that they do not even know where to

begin. Even if they take the initiative, there is no one to assist and they will frequently stand alone. Even of those who support censure, he will encounter so much opposition that he will become discouraged and leave the task undone. A Final Exhortation to Be Faithful in the Use of the Key of Discipline

If this were but a task of a civil nature, we could be silent. It is, however, a task of the greatest importance and of utmost necessity. In order that we be stirred up, I therefore wish to hold before myself and all elders these brief statements for consideration.

(1) Remind yourself, and take to heart what we have stated in general to all elders with reference to your office. Go back a few pages (to chapter 28) and attentively read what must motivate you in this office. May it stir you up to reflect thereon and to exercise your duty in this respect.

(2) Take note that this key has been entrusted to you by the Lord Jesus. You are, as it were, the porters of a city. Such porters are most unfaithful who permit the entrance of an approaching enemy coming to destroy the city. You would likewise be unfaithful porters if you permit those enemies to enter and to remain within, and thus destroy the congregation which puts her trust in your faithfulness.

(3) You are the cause that the church is becoming degenerate to the core. You are responsible for all the consequences of this. As a result, God's Name is dishonored, many people are kept from joining the church who otherwise would do so, souls are destroyed who by the use of the keys of God's kingdom would repent, and the flourishing of godliness is obstructed. You will be the cause that one member imitates the other in the commission of evil, and that the godly are oppressed and secretly must sigh over the wretched condition of the church.

(4) Know that the Lord will bring you into judgment for all these things, and that there you will have to give an account of the manner in which you have ruled the church entrusted to you and concerning the souls over whom the Lord appointed you as an overseer. The Lord will demand the blood of all those souls who will perish due to the neglect of the use of this key. Oh, what a weighty responsibility this is, and how dreadful will God's judgment be upon all unfaithful elders! Oh, that many would never have been elders!

Oh, that all elders would be stirred up and, in this matter, would lift up their hearts in the ways of the Lord!

(1) Many -- and this is particularly true of elders -- are not acquainted with the nature and necessity of this duty. They ought to search the Word of God in order to become acquainted with this key and to learn how to use it. They ought to allow ministers, who are acquainted with this, to instruct them in this matter. If my instruction in this chapter would be conducive to this, it will be a joy to me.

(2) Everyone ought to be much in prayer for both light and a heart that will be faithful in these matters, for it is a battle which is waged against the entire world, a battle in which one either will not dare to participate, or in which one would readily succumb without an extraordinary measure of the Lord's help.

(3) You must engage in this task in the realization that it is the Lord's work, for in doing so you will gain ability and boldness. You will then begin to observe your congregation, neighborhood by

neighborhood, and if you become suspicious about someone, you ought to inquire about this. You should privately address such an individual, exhort and rebuke him, and seek to correct such a person in the spirit of meekness. If he hears you, you will have gained him. If he perseveres in his offensive behavior, you must bring such a person to the attention of the consistory in order that censure may be imposed upon him, and thereafter use this imposition of censure to make an impression upon the heart in private conversations. He will thus be subdued by this, or in anger resist this. It is then the obligation to proceed from one step of censure to the next. If the congregation becomes aware of the fact that she is thus observed in her ways, and that there is an immediate response when someone has committed an offense, there will be fear and shame, and each will walk prudently. To know better what is transpiring, there is need for some members who are most tender in their godliness to be convinced that it is everyone's duty to deal with offensive behavior, be it that this is done privately or becomes public knowledge. We are obligated to provoke one another to love and good works. One is obligated to exercise his duty faithfully, even though it brings hatred and slander upon himself. One must make it evident by his behavior, however, that he does so in love and in faithfulness, having the well-being of souls and the church in view. He must especially refrain from conveying superiority or from creating such an impression.

Members must also observe their duty in this matter, both toward those who are not under censure and toward those who are. Members must 1) not only exhort and rebuke each other (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 3:13), but 2) they must also bring those, who are inconsistent in their walk and who are not willing to listen to their exhortations, to the attention of the elders of the church, according to the express command of Christ. "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church" (Matthew 18:17).

Toward those who are under censure, members must:

(1) show themselves to be moved with sorrow and compassion, urging them to be sorrowful and to repent. They must do so, however, by maintaining a distance and a distinction between themselves and those who are under censure.

(2) Members must withdraw themselves from such and avoid all fellowship (2 Thessalonians 3:14). This is true for mutual dinner invitations, going for a walk, and whatever other form of fellowship would be indicative of familiarity, so that the one under censure may be put to shame. The degree of such withdrawal must be commensurate with the step of censure. In order to be faithful in this duty, everyone ought to know that censure is a matter which pertains to the entire congregation, even though it is to be initiated by its elders. Thus, he who is remiss in this is not faithful to the charge which the Lord Jesus has given him. You who are remiss will be held accountable for the sinner who perseveres in his sin, for the desecration of the sacraments, and also for the fact that the church degenerates and continues to be degenerate. It is truly a matter of great import to make oneself guilty of these things and to be the cause thereof. We therefore exhort everyone to be faithful and active in this, following the example of the household of Chloe who informed Paul concerning the offenses which were present in the congregation (1 Corinthians 1:11).

Those who are under censure must

(1) be very sensitive to the imposition of censure and the committed offense, of which the Lord Jesus says, "It is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (Mark 9:42).

(2) They must refrain from being opposed to censure upon themselves, and from responding in anger to the elders of the congregation who are imposing censure. Rather, they should with a tender heart submit themselves to them for it is, first of all, the Lord Jesus Himself who is engaged in this task, and it is performed on His behalf and upon His command. He who therefore opposes this, opposes the Lord Jesus Himself, which is a dreadful matter indeed. Secondly, when they were accepted as members, they have promised to submit themselves to the discipline of the consistory in the event that they would give offense. If someone acts contrary to this, however, he acts contrary to his own solemn vow. Thirdly, censure has in view the welfare of both those who are under censure and of the congregation. Therefore, if someone cherishes his own salvation and the practice of godliness, he must not resist those means which are subservient to this. Even if he were not willing to submit himself for his own benefit, love for the congregation ought to motivate him to this; for when this key does not function, the congregation will degenerate. The use of this key, on the contrary, purifies the congregation, makes others fearful of sinning, and delivers those who are weak from that which offends. It will cause the church to demand respect from those who are without, who in turn will aspire after godliness and salvation and will be enticed to join the church.

Blessed is the congregation where this may be practiced. "For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:3).

035. Chapter 30: The External and Internal Call

----- CHAPTER THIRTY ----- The External and Internal Call

Thus far we have discussed the Surety of the covenant and the partakers of this covenant, the church. We shall now proceed to consider the ways in which the Lord brings these partakers of the covenant into the covenant, and how He leads them to the ultimate goal of eternal felicity. The first aspect of this way is the calling. The Calling: God's Declaration of the Gospel to Sinners The calling is a gracious work of God, whereby He invites the sinner by means of the gospel to exchange the state of sin and wrath for Christ, in order that through Him he may be reconciled to God and obtain godliness and salvation. By means of this calling He also, by the Holy Spirit, efficaciously translates His elect into this state. The calling is a gracious work of God: "And (the king) sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:3; Matthew 22:14); "... Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3); "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

God calls neither by the law of nature nor by the works of nature, whereby, in doing good, He nevertheless does not leave Himself without witness to the heathen (Acts 14:17). "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him" (Acts 17:27). For in all this Christ is neither proclaimed to them nor are they exhorted to believe in Him. The heathen are subject to the covenant of works, and whatever God does in and toward them has reference to that covenant. They are thus obligated to live according to this rule, "Do this and thou shalt live." Therefore neither the law of nature, nor God's works belong to the calling; the heathen are not called. This call also does not occur by way of the moral law of Scripture. The moral law must be viewed in a twofold sense: It must be viewed either in its demands, whereby it reveals the perfect conditions of the covenant of works, or in its purpose, as having been given to the church as a rule of life and as the standard for true holiness. In its first sense the law is preached to convict man of sin (Romans 3:20), thus bringing man to despair of being saved by his works. Here the function of the law ends. If, however, Christ is simultaneously preached by means of the gospel, man, being rejected by the law, is allured by the gospel. Thus, wherever Christ is preached, the law functions as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ (Galatians 3:24). The law, however, neither teaches about Christ nor calls to Him, and thus the moral law is not a functional element of the calling. This is different as far as the ceremonial law is concerned, which belongs to the gospel. The true means whereby we are called, however, is the gospel. "Whereunto He called you by our gospel" (2 Thessalonians 2:14). The word "gospel" means a good tiding, the content of which is as follows: "Poor man, you are subject to sin and to the wrath of God. You are traversing upon the way which will end in eternal perdition. God, however, has sent His Son Jesus Christ to be a Surety; in His suffering and death there is the perfect satisfaction of the justice of God, and thus acquittal from guilt and punishment. In His obedience to the law there is perfect holiness, so that He can completely save all who go unto God through Him. Christ offers you all His merits, and therefore eternal salvation." He calls and invites everyone: "Turn unto Me and be saved, receive Me,

surrender to Me, enter into a covenant with Me and you will not perish but have everlasting life.” This declaration is recorded in the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. The first gospel declaration is found in Genesis 3:15, where we read that the Seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent. Since then, God has frequently and in various ways caused the gospel to be proclaimed (Hebrews 1:1). “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them” (Hebrews 4:2). Prior to the coming of Christ it was called the gospel of promises. “... separated unto the gospel of God, (which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures)” (Romans 1:1-2). Subsequent to Christ’s coming it is called the gospel of fulfillment. “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled” (Mark 1:14-15). The Distinction Between Law and Gospel

Law and gospel are frequently placed in contradistinction to each other. If in such a contradistinction the reference is to the ceremonial law, its purpose is to refer to Christ’s coming in the flesh, whose coming was typified by the ceremonies. The gospel of fulfillment, however, declares that Christ has come. In the matter itself there can be no contradistinction, since the gospel is comprehended in the ceremonies and proclaimed by them.

However, there is an essential difference between the moral law and the gospel. The law has first of all been given by God the Lord as the sovereign, majestic, and sole Lawgiver, and is pertinent to all mankind. The gospel, however, is the manifestation of God as being “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exodus 34:6), and does not pertain to all, but only to some. Secondly, the law can partially be known by nature (Romans 2:15), but the gospel can only be known by revelation (Ephesians 3:5). Thirdly, the law is a condition of the covenant of works which promised salvation upon the perfect keeping of the law and knows of no forgiveness (cf. Romans 10:8; Matthew 19:17). The gospel, however, is a declaration of the covenant of grace, promising believers forgiveness and salvation by Jesus Christ (Romans 10:8-9). Fourthly, the law begets the knowledge of sin in the sinner (Romans 3:20), confronts him with wrath (Romans 4:15), and thus brings forth fear and trembling (Isaiah 33:14). The gospel, however, is the precious administration of the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). This gospel is the means whereby God calls men unto salvation.

God could immediately and nonverbally reveal Christ to man, bring him to Christ, cause him to believe in Him, and thus lead him to salvation. It has pleased the Lord, however, in order that His manifold wisdom be revealed and His other attributes be glorified, to make man a partaker of this salvation by means of the word of the gospel, leading rational man in a rational way. The use of this means is referred to as calling, since all men are going astray on a way which is not good and which leads to destruction. God calls out to men who are going astray that the way upon which they are traversing will make them eternally miserable, and invites them to come to Christ as the only way unto salvation. The Distinction Between External and Internal Call

Concerning this calling a distinction is made between an external and an internal call. They both proceed from God, occur by means of this Word, pertain to the same matters, and are presented equally to all. Both calls are addressed to human beings who by nature are the same. They are, however, distinguishable. The one functions externally only by means of the Word, to which also the Holy Spirit does join Himself in His common operation, resulting in common illumination and historical faith. The other, however, penetrates the very heart of man, powerfully illuminating it with

wondrous light, revealing spiritual mysteries to man in their essential form, and powerfully inclines the will to embrace those mysteries in Christ, and to the obedience of faith.

There is an infinite difference between the corrupt intellect of man -- that is, the Arminians and other proponents of free will -- and the Holy Scriptures. The question is: Does the obtaining of salvation proceed from man? Is he the only and essential cause of his salvation, or is God the only essential cause and can man, being absolutely incapable, do nothing to obtain salvation? The Arminians will readily admit that God has prepared and accomplished salvation and that God has given and revealed Christ the Mediator. However, they attribute this acceptance and entering in upon that way to the good will and power of man. This could be likened to what transpires on a race track. The government has put the prize on display and has prepared the track. The acquisition of the prize, however, is contingent upon the runners themselves. In order to protect the idol of man's own ability and of his good will as being the cause of his own salvation, the Arminians would prefer to do away with the distinction between the external and internal call, between the noneffectual and the effectual call. They would view them as being the same, and thus recognize only one calling. The effect would then not be due to the efficacious operation of God working more in one person than in another. Instead, it would be related to the outcome; namely, that the one person obeys the call by his free will (which enables him either to respond or to reject this call) and thus be saved. Another person will despise and reject this call by the same neutral free will. Scripture, however, rebukes and refutes such foolish thoughts and demonstrates first of all that the calling is effectual unto salvation as a result of God's purpose, "... who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28); "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). The actual exercise of faith in those who are called proceeds from this purpose. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

Scripture conveys in the second place that there is no distinction in man himself, but that this distinction originates with God. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it" (1 Corinthians 4:7). Man, however, by attributing the cause of one having more faith than another to his goodness and power, would create such a distinction. There is thus a calling which is of an effectual nature and penetrates the inner man -- his intellect, will, and inclinations, changing and sanctifying them. This is the internal call. There is a calling by means of the Word of God which is not accompanied by God's effectual operation (which generates faith and love), but which comes to the external ear only. It leaves man in his natural state, who, in his wickedness, rejects this external call. He despises this call due to his free will which wills by way of necessary consequence. This is true of most who are called (Matthew 22:5; Matthew 22:14). We shall discuss both calls individually, considering the external call first. The External Call: Not Extended to All Men

Concerning the external call the question arises, Is this call universal; that is, does God call all men upon the face of the earth to Christ, and through Him unto salvation? The Lutherans answer in the affirmative. We maintain that this call does not come to all men. Although it does come to entire areas, nations, peoples, and languages, it does not come to all. The entire Scripture and the experience of all ages contradict this. Cain was the first to be driven away from the countenance of God, whereas the gospel remained in the genealogy of Seth. Abraham and his seed were received into the church of God and to them the oracles of God were committed, whereas God left

all the heathen to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16). "He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Psalms 147:19-20).

After Christ's coming, this calling has also not been universal. The entire continent of America was unknown and remained unknown for at least a thousand years and was thus deprived of the gospel. The interior is still largely unknown. [Note: It must again be remembered that this statement was made in AD 1700.] There have always been countries where the gospel has not been proclaimed. Also today, most nations upon the face of the earth are deprived of the gospel. This fact is so obvious that it cannot be refuted, and it thus remains a certainty that this calling is not universal.

Objection #1: All men have been called in Adam and in Noah, as well as in other ancestors who have had the gospel and rejected it. For this reason God removed the candlestick from them, as is evident in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22.

Answer: We deny that those descendants to whom the gospel has not been proclaimed can be said to have been called simply because their ancestors were called, for it is true what the prophet says, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" (Ezekiel 18:20). Thus, the rejection of the gospel by our ancestors cannot be imputed to their descendants. We deny that all men have been called in Adam, Noah and in other ancestors, for all who are comprehended in Adam and in Noah are not comprehended in the covenant of grace, nor are they the recipients of the offer of grace. In this respect everyone must be viewed individually, none being called by the gospel but those to whom the gospel is proclaimed.

Objection #2: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4); "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11); "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). From these texts it can be concluded that the calling is universal, and that all men are individually called.

Answer: The word "all" frequently means "various." Experience confirms that such is the meaning in these texts. These texts pertain to the proclamation of the gospel over the entire world, in contrast to being previously limited to the seed of Abraham. It refers to all sorts of nations without distinction, but not to every nation without exception.

Objection #3: Scripture indicates that there have been many believers who did not live where the church was situated, such as Job, Melchizedek, Balaam, Cornelius, etc. This proves that the calling extends beyond the limits of the visible church, and thus is universal.

Answer: From the calling of some individuals, one cannot deduce the universal calling of all. Some of these individuals lived prior to the time when Abraham's seed was set apart. Such was true in the life of Shem and the patriarchs, when the knowledge of true religion had not been entirely removed from other generations. Others, even though they did not belong to Abraham's seed, have lived where the church was situated, and due to such circumstances became believers and proselytes.

Objection #4: There have been many who, though living far from the church, lived godly lives and did good works. Their knowledge was consequently sufficient unto salvation. The calling is thus

universal.

Answer: The law of nature is innate in all men. From this proceeds natural religion and thus also natural virtues. In chapter one we demonstrated that this is not sufficient unto salvation. This natural knowledge, religion, and virtuousness differ in their essential nature from the true knowledge of God in Christ, and from true religion and virtuousness, so that the one does not necessarily follow the other. From all this it is certain that the calling is not universal. The External Call of the Gospel in the Old Testament Dispensation

Others, such as the Socinians, hold to an entirely different extreme, and deny that there was a calling by the gospel prior to Christ. They will indeed admit that the gospel was known to the prophets themselves who had extraordinary revelations, unless they be so exceedingly foolish as to consider the prophets as being irrational, merely viewing them as organ pipes which unconsciously bring forth musical sounds. Even if they would admit that the prophets were acquainted with the gospel, they wish to deny that the people had any knowledge thereof. Whatever they did comprehend would then only point to future times; namely, that in the days of the Messiah the Gentiles would call out to Him. We maintain, however, that people in the Old Testament were certainly called to believe in the coming Messiah unto justification, sanctification, and salvation -- as is now true in the New Testament -- albeit with less light and with less efficacy. This is evident first of all in some very clear texts. "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8). Abraham received the gospel and was called prior to being circumcised. From this the apostle concludes that those who are believers, though uncircumcised, are Abraham's children. This was not only true for Abraham, but for all his seed to whom He made this known. The Lord Himself testifies of this: "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Genesis 18:17-19). God knew, chose, and called Abraham for this purpose, and thus proclaimed the gospel to him in order that he would make this known to his children and his house after him. They therefore also had this gospel; it was also proclaimed to them.

Also consider Hebrews 4:2, "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." We in the New Testament have the gospel as did they of the Old Testament. This manner of speech gives expression to the fact that those of the Old Testament were somewhat superior, not as far as the clarity of the gospel is concerned, but in view of the fact that they had the gospel at an earlier time. They had the gospel, and the gospel was intended for them in those days. They heard it and were obligated to embrace it by faith, and it was their sin if they did not do so.

Secondly, this is evident in all the prophetic Scriptures. It is an irrefutable fact that these Scriptures contain many predictions and descriptions of the future Messiah, as well as many exhortations to believe in Him (cf. Psalms 2:1-12; Psalms 45:1-17; Psalms 72:1-20; Isaiah 40:1-31; etc). The prophetic Scriptures are summaries of the sermons which the prophets preached to the people, so that the contents of these prophecies were made known to them. They were thus obligated to repent and by means of these sermons were stirred up to believe. The

gospel was thus present in the Old Testament.

Thirdly, the entire ceremonial worship confirms this. All these ceremonies were not given to Israel in order that they would end in the external, and in the performance of rituals, but these were shadows of Christ who is the substance of them (cf. Colossians 2:1-23; Hebrews 10:1). By way of these shadows they were thus called to look forward to the coming Messiah and to believe in Him, something which the apostle demonstrates in the entire letter to the Hebrews. Therefore these shadows are an essential element of the gospel. Since they had the one, they also had the other.

Fourthly, the believers of the Old Testament were partakers of the benefits presented and promised in the gospel. They were partakers of the covenant of grace (cf. Genesis 17:1-27; Acts 3:25); they had the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 4:13); God was their Father and they His children (cf. Romans 9:4; Psalms 103:13; Jeremiah 31:20). They had the forgiveness of sins (Psalms 32:5), and furthermore they had all the benefits of the covenant of grace; they expected and obtained salvation (Hebrews 11:16). Wherever all these graces are to be found, there the gospel must be as well. Since these existed in the Old Testament, the gospel was also present.

Objection #1: The gospel was concealed prior to the time of Christ. At that time believers had only the promise, but not the matter itself. This is evident from the following texts.

(1) "These all died in faith, not having received the promises" (Hebrews 11:13).

Answer: This text says that they did not have Christ in the flesh whose coming was then promised. We do not read, however, that they had not the gospel, nor that they were not called to believe in the Christ who was to come. We read the contrary: They believed. They were thus called by the gospel, being of identical content (1 Peter 1:20), for faith cometh by hearing.

(2) "... according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:25-26). Here the apostle states expressly that the gospel was kept secret since the world began and only has been revealed in the New Testament.

Answer: The text itself refutes this sentiment, for the apostle speaks of a revelation to the Gentiles and not to the Jews. He says that it has been made known to the Gentiles by the prophetic Scriptures, as the gospel was contained and revealed in them. The Jews did have these Scriptures, however, and it was known to the Jews prior to this time, but was unknown to the Gentiles. Other texts also speak of this mystery which was known to the Jews but hidden from the Gentiles. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:5-6). This had previously not been revealed as clearly as it is revealed at this present time. It had not been revealed to the Gentiles at all, and no one had previously witnessed the fulfillment of the promises concerning the calling of the Gentiles. The apostles, however, witnessed that the Gentiles were converted by their preaching. The same meaning is expressed in the following texts: Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:26; 2 Timothy 1:10-11; Titus 1:2.

Objection #2: Moses was the mediator of the Old Testament, and Christ in the New Testament. Christ was thus not proclaimed to them, and they were not partakers of Christ.

(1) Consider John 1:17, where we read, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Answer (1) Moses testified of Christ and preached Christ to the people (Luke 24:1-53). The gospel was thus present during the time of Moses.

(2) The distinction here is not chronological, but pertains to the persons and their work. Moses was the means whereby God gave the law of the ten commandments as a rule of life for the partakers of the covenant and the ceremonial laws as typifying Christ. Neither Moses nor his laws were, however, the substance itself; this is true for Christ who is the same yesterday and today. Christ is the truth, the essence, and the embodiment of the matter which Moses typified.

Additional Objection: Consider Galatians 3:19, "It (the law) was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." Moses was thus the mediator of the Old Testament and Christ the Mediator of the New Testament. "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" (Hebrews 7:22); "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament" (Hebrews 9:15).

Answer: Moses was a mediator of interposition, who transmitted words back and forth between God and the people. Christ, however, is Surety and Mediator by virtue of atonement. "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). Moses could only be a mediator as long as he lived, and this was but for a short time, so that succeeding ages did not have Moses as a mediator; Christ, however, is the same yesterday and today. In the ceremonies He has also been slain from before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Moses being a mediator in the manner just stated made Christ known to the people on God's behalf, and exhorted them to believe in Christ (Luke 24:27). This was the reason why the ceremonial law was instituted. Thus, the gospel as well as the calling were a reality in the Old Testament.

Objection #3: In the Old Testament people did not possess the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace. It thus follows that they also did not have the gospel. They were therefore also not called unto salvation.

(1) This is evident in Hebrews 7:19, "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."

Answer: It is true that the law in and of itself could not give man hope unto salvation; however, the ceremonies led them unto Christ, by which believers of the Old Testament had access to grace by faith. They believed in Christ, and were partakers of the benefits of the covenant as is also true for us in the New Testament (as stated above).

(2) In Hebrews 9:8 we read "that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." "The holiest" refers to heaven. It is a known fact that the way to heaven had not as yet been made manifest. Thus, believers of the Old Testament were not called unto salvation by the gospel.

Answer: First of all, the apostle says in the following verse (vs. 9) that the holiest was “a figure for the time then present.” They therefore had a figure of heaven for themselves at that time. Secondly, the Holy of Holies was separated by a veil so that one could not look into it. This meant that all the ceremonies, considered by themselves, could not open heaven. It therefore meant that one could not enter heaven by means of this way, but rather that the antitype of those ceremonies, Christ, is the only way by which one can come to God (John 14:6). Thirdly, the apostle states that the way was not manifest as yet. He does not say that the holiest was not manifest, but that in the Old Testament they did not have Christ in the flesh, who is the way. Fourthly, he says that the way was not yet manifest, which neither implies that this way did not exist as yet, nor that this way was entirely unknown to them. It merely implies that this way was not as clearly known to them as was true after Christ’s coming, for they, by way of dark shadows, had to look upon Christ who was to come. Thus in 1 John 3:2 it is written about the children of God that “it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” although we nevertheless have some knowledge of it. The text in question refers to the measure of knowledge and the various ways whereby one may get to God through Christ, which then was by way of ceremonies, and now is without them.

(3) “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). Behold, it was Christ who for the first time brought life to light; it was thus not known prior to this.

Answer: First of all, it has been irrefutably demonstrated above that eternal life was known prior to the coming of Christ, that they sought it after this life, and that they endeavored to become partakers of that life (cf. Leviticus 18:5; Matthew 19:17; John 5:39). This text, therefore, cannot refer to a total ignorance prior to this. Secondly, Christ brought life and immortality to light by making satisfaction for sin in very deed, by delivering His people from death, and by meriting eternal life for them. Thirdly, the prophecies and ceremonies conveyed that He had not come as yet, nor had in reality accomplished this, but that He would come to accomplish all this. The gospel states that Christ has come and has accomplished everything. Fourthly, in former times everything was typified less clearly by way of shadows, which could not be as clear as the substance or the matter itself. In Christ, however, all shadows have been fulfilled so that the matter itself in its true form can be clearly discerned. Fifthly, the apostle actually applies this to the Gentiles who had not been called as yet, but were in blindness. After the coming of Christ, however, they were also called by the gospel to the light of salvation and to eternal bliss, which is evident from the verse which follows: “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Timothy 1:11).

(4) “And these all ... received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39-40). From this it appears that in the Old Testament they did not partake of the heavenly benefits.

Answer: First, they had the promise of the Messiah’s coming, but they did not receive the fulfillment: Christ’s coming in the flesh. Secondly, believers in the New Testament have some better thing than those in the Old Testament. This is not true as far as the matter itself is concerned, for the spiritual benefits of the one were also the portion of the other. Rather, some better thing refers to the manner in which they became partakers of it. They became partakers by way of shadows; we, by the matter and truth itself. They anticipated Christ’s coming in the

promise, and we may have the fulfillment; they possessed these benefits in hope, and we may view and possess them; they possessed these benefits to a lesser degree, and we may have all things (that is, Spirit, light, and life) in a greater measure. It has pleased the Lord not to send Christ in the flesh immediately after the promise made to Adam and Eve -- or to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then they would have already possessed it and there would have been no need for shadows. Since Christ tarried so long, however, causing His people to yearn for the time of fulfillment, and since Christ has come in our era, having accomplished everything, they were not the only partakers of true blessedness. We are partakers with them and they with us, albeit that we may be partakers of a better ministry.

(5) "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" (Hebrews 7:22); "He is the Mediator of a better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6). From this it is evident that Old Testament believers were partakers of temporal rather than spiritual benefits.

Answer: We deny that the word "better" refers to the matter itself; we have shown the opposite to be true in the above. Instead, the word "better" refers to the manner in which the covenant was administered, which frequently is referred to by the name "covenant" (cf. chapter 16, Vol. 1, p. 427).

We have thus observed that since the fall God has called His people by way of the gospel. The External Call of the Gospel Comes to All who Hear the Gospel

Question: Does God call all who are under the ministry of the gospel, but who as yet are not saved, or does God call the elect only?

Answer: God calls all and everyone who live under the ministry of the gospel. This must be noted so that one may have liberty to receive Christ by faith, which one would not have if the gospel were not offered -- and also in order that the justice of God would be acknowledged in punishing those who neglect so great a salvation and do not obey the gospel. The following must be noted in order that everyone may be convinced of this matter.

First, compare yourself with the wild Indians, who neither know Christ nor have knowledge of salvation. Do you not see that God deals differently with you than with them? Would you wish to trade places with them? Why not? Is it not because there is more hope for salvation where you are than where they are? Will not the condemnation of those who have lived under the ministration of the gospel, but who do not repent, be greater than the condemnation of the wild heathen? Why would this be if salvation had not been offered to you? This therefore proves that all who hear the gospel are called.

Secondly, everyone who is under the ministry of the gospel hears the voice of the minister as he preaches, exhorts, and rebukes. It is thus addressed to him who hears it. The minister is a servant of Christ, a "steward of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1), and an ambassador for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). Therefore he who hears the minister hears Christ, and he who rejects the minister rejects Him (Luke 10:16). Consider also that the very words of God Himself are contained in Scripture. Since, therefore, everyone hears the voice of the minister and the very words of God resound in his ears, all that is said is addressed to him who hears it and he is called by the gospel.

Thirdly, Scripture states clearly that many who perish had been called. "... many be called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:16); "... and (he) bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luke 14:16-18); "And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come" (Matthew 22:3). Had the guest without the wedding garment been invited? He most certainly was. It was not his crime that he did not come, but rather that he came in the wrong way, that is, without a wedding garment. It is thus evident that everyone who is under the ministry is called and invited to come to Christ.

Fourthly, there is a general and unconditional declaration to all, that is, to him who thirsts, who is without money, and who wills (Isaiah 55:1-2; John 7:37; Revelation 22:17). He who neither wills nor is thirsty will refrain from coming. This is his own doing and he will be responsible, having been invited and having heard this general calling.

Fifthly, since many reject the gospel, it is necessarily offered to them, for whatever is not offered cannot be rejected. "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). Many are disobedient to the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8), and are disobedient to the Son (John 3:36). It thus follows that Christ was offered to them and they were commanded to believe in Christ.

Sixthly, the exhortations to repent and to believe are joined together. No one will be in doubt that the exhortation to repent pertains to everyone, and thus each will also have to acknowledge that the exhortation to believe pertains to everyone, for they are of equivalent importance. "... repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Seventhly, unbelief is a dreadful sin; yes, it is a sin whereby we esteem God to be a liar. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John 5:10); "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin ... of sin, because they believe not on Me" (John 16:8-9). If Christ were not offered to him who remains in his unbelief, he would not be accountable and his unbelief would not be a sin. Since his unbelief is a sin, however, it is clearly evident that the gospel was offered to him.

Eighthly, since a dreadful judgment awaits unbelievers, the gospel has most certainly been offered to them, and they have most certainly been called. Observe this in the following texts: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8); "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin" (John 15:22). If everyone who is under the ministry of the gospel had not been called, and Christ had not been offered to them, how can they then be punished and how can their condemnation be the heavier? Since, however, they are punished for disobedience to the gospel, and are punished more severely than others, it follows that it was offered to them.

Since Christ is offered to all who are under the ministry, it not only follows that everyone may come and no one needs to remain behind for fear whether he is called or not; but it also follows that everyone is obligated to come to Christ and to receive Him in order to be justified, sanctified, preserved, and glorified. One must not interpret this to mean that everyone is under obligation to

believe that Christ has died for him and is his Savior. Far be it from us to suggest this, for this is not the essence of faith. Faith is not assurance; for assurance is a consequence of faith. Faith consists in the translation of a soul -- perplexed about his wretched condition and desirous for reconciliation, peace, holiness, and glory -- from self into Christ. Faith consists in receiving Him who offers Himself and who calls and invites every sinner to Himself, the promise being added that those who will come will not be cast out. It finally consists in a reliance of the soul upon Him as the almighty, true, and faithful Savior. If, however, someone is lively in the exercise of these acts and truly perceives this to be so within himself, only then does the assurance follow that Jesus has died for him. He who lives under the ministry of the gospel is obligated to believe in Christ. However, he is not obligated to believe that Christ has died for him and to be assured of this. Far be it from us to suggest this, for then someone could believe a lie, since faith can have nothing else but truth as its object.

God's Objective in Calling Men This begets another question: In calling the sinner to Christ, does God aim for the salvation of all? In calling all who are under the ministry of the gospel, is it God's objective that all would become partakers of salvation?

Answer: No, for God cannot fail to achieve His objective. Then all who are called would, of necessity, have to be saved. In order to understand this matter correctly, we should consider the following:

(1) The calling is first and foremost intended to gather in the elect. "And he gave some ... pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). God does not send the gospel to those geographical regions where there are no elect to be found. Furthermore, when the elect in a certain region are gathered in, God generally removes the gospel from that area. Since the elect are in the world, however, and are intermingled with others, the calling comes to all; that is, to all the elect and also to others. By means of the calling, that is, by means of the proclamation of the gospel, God grants repentance and faith to His elect -- which He withholds from others.

(2) We must make a distinction between the objective of God--He who works--and the objective of His work: the gospel. The very nature of the gospel is suited to lead man unto salvation, as it sufficiently reveals to him the way unto salvation and stirs him to be persuaded to believe. The gospel is not to be blamed when all who hear it are not saved; rather, man himself is the guilty one. He is to be blamed if he does not desire to be taught and led.

Such is the objective of the gospel. God's objective in causing the gospel to be proclaimed to the nonelect is to proclaim and acquaint man with the way of salvation, to command man to enter this way, and to display His goodness, presenting all the reasons to him for doing so and promising him salvation upon repentance and true faith in Christ. The Lord would indeed do this upon man fulfilling the condition for which He holds him accountable, and which the human nature, having been created holy in Adam had been capable of doing. If he does not accomplish this, it is not because God hinders him or deprives him of the ability to do so, but because man wills not; and thus man himself is to be blamed, for it is the goodness of God which should lead him to repentance. It is also God's objective to convict man of his wickedness in his refusal to come upon such a friendly invitation, as well as of the righteousness of God in punishing such rejecters of this offered salvation (John 15:20). Such is God's purpose and objective in allowing the gospel to be

proclaimed to the unconverted. It is, however, neither God's purpose and objective to give to them His Holy Spirit nor to save them. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, it would be contradictory to the omniscience of God. God knows those who are His. He knows that the reprobate will not be saved, and it cannot be His purpose or objective to save them. Man knows that a dead person will not arise; it therefore cannot be his objective to make him alive by calling him. God also knows this concerning the unconverted and the spiritually dead; this therefore cannot be His objective.

Secondly, it would be contradictory to eternal election. God has eternally chosen certain individuals by name and has appointed them to be the recipients of eternal salvation. This is in contrast to others whom He has not chosen, but concerning whom He wills that they remain in their sins and be condemned for their sins. Since He has decreed to condemn them righteously for their sins, it could not have been His objective to save them in having the gospel proclaimed to them. He had different objectives, however, which we have stated in the foregoing.

Thirdly, God cannot be thwarted in the achievement of His objective. He must of necessity accomplish what He has purposed, since He is omniscient, all-wise, and omnipotent. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10); "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it" (Isaiah 14:27). If God had purposed to save them, they of necessity would most certainly be saved. They are not saved, however, and God therefore also did not have their salvation in view.

Those who imagine that man, upon the proclamation of the gospel, has sufficient ability to repent and to believe in Christ (a matter which we shall discuss shortly), object to this. In their view nothing more is necessary than that the gospel be preached. They insist that by allowing the gospel to be preached God has as His objective and intent to save all -- and if sinners do not come and believe, this is contrary to God's objective. God thus does not accomplish what He has purposed; this, however, we have just refuted. They support their proposition as follows:

Objection #1: God would act deceitfully if He were to call someone to salvation, and yet were not sincere in doing so.

Answer: God calls all who hear the gospel unto salvation, and it is His objective and intent to give salvation to all who truly believe. Faith and true repentance are, however, singular gifts of God's grace, which He gives to all whom He wills to save. Others, however, God leaves to themselves who, being unwilling -- and due to their wickedness, blindness, and unwillingness, are unable -- do not fulfil this condition, and thus will not be saved. Since God has prior knowledge of this and has decreed not to give them the gifts of grace, and since He cannot be thwarted in the achievement of His purpose, He therefore also cannot have their salvation in view. God nevertheless does not deal deceitfully by making the way of salvation known to them, in obligating them by way of many arguments to enter upon this way, promising to save them upon repentance and faith in Christ. God sincerely and truly has all this in view. In all this He has in view that the unconverted be convinced of His goodness, their wickedness, and His justice -- and to punish them in consequence of this. The fact that man is not able to repent and believe is not God's fault, but man is to be blamed. God did purpose to provide them with all the means unto salvation, withhold additional grace from them, leave them over to themselves, and condemn them for their failure to

repent and for their wickedness; however, He did not purpose to save them. One matter may relate to various purposes, and thus by purposing or not purposing one thing, one cannot conclude the purposing or not purposing of something else. Here the objective relates to the means and not to the ultimate end of salvation. The gospel is an able and sufficient way unto salvation.

Objection #2: God invites everyone to come to the wedding feast, that is, salvation (cf. Matthew 22:3-4; Luke 14:16). It must thus have been His objective that they would come.

Answer: His purpose is to invite them, obligate them to come, propose salvation upon condition of faith and repentance, and not hinder them. The invitation contained a condition to come with a wedding garment. The guest without a wedding garment could not be admitted to the wedding feast -- not because he was not invited, but because by not having a wedding garment he did not meet the condition included in the invitation. It is God's objective to provide them with all the means unto salvation and to be acknowledged and glorified in this. In calling to the wedding feast there is, however, not the objective to carry them to the wedding feast and to give them the wedding garment. It is absolutely necessary that the Lord do this for them, since they of themselves neither understand nor are willing, and thus also are not able to do so. Since, however, it is not His objective to do this for them, not being obligated to do so, it follows that it was not His objective to save them. The invitation therefore obligates them to come and to believe, and if they come in the way of repentance and faith, they will also obtain salvation. This does not imply, however, that it is God's objective to unconditionally give them salvation or to grant them what is needed to meet the condition.

Objection #3: If God does not purpose the salvation of all who are called by the Word, no one would be able to take it seriously, and no one would dare to come, since none would know whether he were addressed by God.

Answer: God's Word, being the truth, is sufficient for everyone. One may freely rely upon it, and one will not be deceived. That Word promises salvation to all who believe and to all who receive Christ unto justification and sanctification. This declaration is directed to everyone, and everyone must believe it, apply it to himself, and say, "If I believe and truly repent, I shall be saved." God does have foreknowledge as to who will be unwilling to come. God leaves man over to himself, doing him no injustice by withholding renewing grace from him who once had the ability to obey God in all things. God permits man to exercise his own free will, whereby he voluntarily rejects Christ and all heavenly benefits. However, God grants to the elect, in addition to His Word, the Holy Spirit who bestows upon them faith and repentance. Since the required conditions are thus met in this way, they are saved. From all this we observe that man from his side must respond to the Word of God and believe that he will be saved if he believes and repents. He thus need not torment himself with the question whether God addresses him personally. He must leave this matter in God's hands. This is as much as asking: "Is God willing or is He not willing to give faith and repentance to me?" A sinner has no prior knowledge of this, and the Lord will give it to those to whom He pleases. The sinner, however, must understand it to be his duty to respond to the Word of God, to believe in Christ who is offered to him, to repent, and to believe that he will be saved if he does so.

We have thus observed that God from His side has not purposed to give faith and repentance to all men, and it is therefore also not His objective to save them all, but rather the elect only. He

nevertheless does not deal deceitfully with men. The Internal Call

Having dealt sufficiently with the external call, we shall now proceed to consider the internal call which in Scripture is called a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1), a calling according to God's purpose (Romans 8:28), the opening of the heart (Acts 16:14), a resurrection from the dead and a quickening (Ephesians 2:5-6), God's drawing (John 6:44), a deliverance from the power of darkness and a translation into the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13), and a calling out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). All this phraseology gives expression to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit who, in conjunction with and by means of the Word of God, operates upon the inner man, that is, his intellect, its eyes being enlightened eyes (Ephesians 1:18). Furthermore, He operates upon the will, inclining it toward love for the heavenly benefits to be found in Christ Jesus, and to the very act of receiving Christ (Php 2:13). To facilitate clear comprehension concerning this matter and to deal with points of contention related to this, we shall preface our discussion with these remarks.

First, in the internal call God works in a manner which is consistent with man's nature. Man is a rational creature who, gifted with intellect, reasons about matters which he encounters, judging whether it is needful or beneficial to have, pursue, or do such matters. If he judges affirmatively, he will also exercise judgment concerning time, place, and means; that is, when, where, and in what manner. This is referred to as one's practical judgment, for it presents and limits the matter in such a fashion to the will that the will spontaneously embraces the proposition. The will is a blind faculty which can only will that which is comprehended with the intellect, presenting the matter here and now in its desirability, necessity, and profitability. The will is thus also free and cannot be compelled to will something; it cannot be compelled to do something except (as has been stated) the matter be embraced by the intellect and is presented as being desirable. This freedom is not one of neutrality, as if it is immaterial to do or not to do something, or to either do the one thing or the contrary. It is impossible to will and desire something the intellect perceives to be hateful and to be avoided and presents it to the will as such. This freedom, however, is one of necessary consequence, whereby the will, without external compulsion and thus due to its own inclination, wills to do one thing or the other. (For a more comprehensive treatment of this, see chapter 15, Vol. 1, p. 407.) In calling man, God works in harmony with his human nature. The Lord does not compel the will, but the Lord grants the intellect eyes to perceive the spiritual dimension of spiritual things, and by means of that light the Lord penetrates the will and inclines it to embrace the matters with which it is now acquainted and finds desirable. The Lord thus engages both the intellect and the will.

Secondly, when God calls someone internally, this rarely occurs suddenly as appears to have been the case in the conversions of Zacchaeus, the murderer on the cross, and others. Albeit that for some the act whereby a sinner is translated into the kingdom of heaven and made alive -- that is, being dead one moment and alive the next moment (there being no intermediate state) -- the Lord generally uses some internal and external preparations, such as poverty, tragic occurrences, loss of property or loved ones, earthquakes, war, pestilence, danger of death, illness, or other things. This causes the person to become unsettled; he begins to contemplate repentance, the Word of God takes hold, he is convinced of sin, and he begins to perceive what eternal condemnation is. He also becomes acquainted with the Lord Jesus and with the blessedness of believers, and he desires to be in such a condition. He reads the Word, prays, joins himself to the

godly, escapes the gross pollutions of the world, etc. These matters are but common convictions which are experienced by the unconverted as well as the elect. Many such individuals turn back and depart from the way upon which they first seemed to have entered. When the time arrives, however, the Lord will translate His elect into His kingdom by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. These preparatory circumstances mentioned do not proceed from man, but are God's common operations. They also are not a step toward regeneration, nor are they sufficient to transform man. Under such circumstances man is not capable by the exercise of His free will to transform himself, to believe, and to repent. The efficacious and almighty power of God must join itself to such circumstances in order for him to be converted. These preparatory circumstances are but means which God gives and uses to deal with man in a manner consistent with his humanity.

Thirdly, when God calls someone internally, he will acquire a disposition which is entirely and essentially different from that which could be produced by nature or preparatory circumstances. The illumination and virtuousness of which man becomes a partaker due to the internal call does not differ from the natural state in degree, but in essence. It is not to be compared to the difference between the sun's initial rise and subsequent progression, or the beginning of a child's life and his further growth. The distinction is not by way of increase, such as with a balance. Suppose there is weight in the one scale, but gradually so much sand is added to the other scale that the weight of the sand exceeds the weight on the other scale, causing the balance to go toward the side of the sand. This would suggest that man is born again when human virtue outweighs his flesh and corruption. Far be it from us to hold to such a view, for that would amount to overturning the entire nature of regeneration and to deem pagan knowledge and virtue as being regeneration. No, the light and virtue in regeneration are of an entirely different nature. The Difference Between a Natural and Spiritual Disposition

Question: Is the difference between spiritual light and virtue and natural light and virtue one of degree or one of essence?

Answer: Socinians maintain that it is one of degree, whereas we maintain that there is an essential difference. We shall first demonstrate this to be true for light and then for virtue.

First, the light of nature proceeds from the impression that there is a God, and is only increased by the Word of God itself. Spiritual light, on the contrary, proceeds from illumination of the heart, by the Holy Spirit who shines in our hearts, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). The Lord enlightens the eyes of our understanding (Ephesians 1:18), and draws them out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). Thus, the very cause of this light is different. The most intelligent, brilliant philosophers and unconverted theologians are blind according to Scripture. "... and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:21-22); "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14); "And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:40-41).

Secondly, natural and spiritual light each focus upon a different object. The one focuses upon God as He has revealed Himself in nature and relative to the covenant of works (Romans 2:14-15;

Romans 1:19-22), whereas the other focuses upon God as He has revealed Himself in the covenant of grace, that is, in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). The glory of God may be seen in Him as in a mirror (2 Corinthians 3:18). They have the mind of Christ and understand the truth as it is in Christ.

Thirdly, natural light perceives spiritual things in a natural sense, and reduces spiritual things to the realm of the natural, for it is not capable of spiritual discernment (1 Corinthians 2:14). "But what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves" (Jude 1:10). However, the spiritual man joins spiritual things to spiritual things, discerns them spiritually (1 Corinthians 2:13-15), and even spiritualizes natural things.

Fourthly, natural light does not generate warmth, but leaves man cold, dead, and without faith. Spiritual light, however, generates the warmth of love and faith. "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures" (Luke 24:32).

Fifthly, natural light does not sanctify. The external call will at best stir up man to escape the gross pollutions of the world (2 Peter 2:20). Spiritual light, however, has a transforming effect. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32); "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). From all this it is evident that the light found within the regenerate is of an entirely different nature than the light within the unregenerate. It therefore necessarily follows that the virtuousness of the converted and unconverted is also of a distinctly different nature. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, these virtues proceed from different causes. Natural virtue is the result of natural light and relates to the law innate in nature (Romans 2:14-15). Spiritual virtue, however, is the result of the recreating and regenerating power of the Holy Spirit by means of the Word, and thus the result of spiritual light, life, and a spiritual conception of God (cf. John 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17). "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10); "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth" (James 1:18); "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). They are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4); "Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). This life, which proceeds from being a partaker of the divine nature, flows out of union with Christ and is thus of an entirely different sort from that which proceeds from the natural man.

Secondly, spiritual virtues proceed from faith which receives Christ, the life of the soul, and unites the soul to Him as such. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6); "... faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6); "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16). This is also confirmed in John 15:4, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." The virtuousness of the regenerate proceeds from union with Christ. This, however, cannot be said of the unconverted, for they are without Christ. There is thus a very essential difference between them.

Thirdly, the unconverted, however great all their virtues may be, are said to be “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:5); believers, however, are spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:5). All that stirs within a dead body is essentially different from that which proceeds from a living body. This is also true for the virtuousness of the converted and the unconverted.

Fourthly, the spiritual virtues proceeding from union with God in Christ, and thus from faith and spiritual life, are performed in love for God, in the fear of God, and in obedience to God as their Father, and thus with the heart of a child. None but those who believe can truly love God, for “faith worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6). Whatever does not proceed from love is of no value (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). Love is the fountain of virtue, and the contents of the law (Matthew 22:37). Believers are the saints who fear the Lord (Psalms 34:10). “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death” (Proverbs 14:27). They serve God as obedient children -- and not as a God who is strange to them and from whom they are separated. They, in faith, serve Him as their God and Father in Christ, be this faith weak or strong. “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:14-15). Since the unconverted are not united to Christ, without whom no one can come to God, their activity also does not proceed from this union, and is thus not motivated by love for God, the fear of God, nor obedience to God. From all this it is as clear as the noonday sun that the virtuousness of the converted is of a mold entirely different from that of the unconverted, and they are thus entirely different in essence. Therefore, both light and virtuousness in the converted and unconverted do not merely differ in degree, but their essential nature is different. The Internal Call: A Work of God's Grace

Fifthly, we furthermore wish to state by way of preface that the effectual call is a work of God's grace. The Arminians also use the word grace in order to create the illusion that they speak scripturally. They explain it in such a manner, however, that grace is no longer grace. They acknowledge grace to be nothing else but that which enables man to perform. They maintain, however, that the ability “to will and to do” originates in man himself. They reason as follows: I may thank God that I have been able to repent, but I thank myself for the fact that I was willing to repent. They make a distinction between sufficient grace and efficacious grace. The Arminians understand sufficient grace to mean that God has given sufficient ability to all men -- great and small, young and old, Jews, Turks, heathens, and Christians -- to repent and to believe in Christ. They refer to this as quickening, prevenient, operative, instructional, and suggestive grace. This grace, however, by whatever name it is called, is entirely subject to the free will of man which determines whether or not it is to be accepted. They furthermore proceed to refer to grace as being helping, cooperative, and supportive. They understand this grace to be collateral in nature; that is, operating side by side, each functioning independently and the one assisting the other. Thus, each party operates independently -- God from His side and man from his side. If therefore man receives the Word of God and begins to repent, God will assist him, stir him up, and will stimulate him all the more by various motives. This operation remains external, however, and man always remains free and in control to either submit to, or to reject the divine operations. Even after he has repented and becomes a believer, he is yet equally independent and is able to overturn the work of conversion again by the exercise of his free will, which does occasionally occur.

Moreover, the Arminians understand effectual grace to refer to the result. It is not effectual by the almighty power of God who would thus in actuality convert man, but only in reference to the result.

If man repents and believes in Christ, his calling is effectual because of what man has done. Others call this grace effectual due to some degree of suitability (congruitas), when God makes use of opportunities -- either a man's character or his condition being at its weakest and most pliable -- making use of a given moment, while simultaneously holding before him and impressing upon him suitable motives which persuade and convince him. All of this, however, culminates in one thing: Free will remains lord and master, having ultimate power to either accept or reject. God is merely a servant or a friend who advises and urges him to act, whereas man himself determines whether or not he will allow himself to be persuaded. All of this we reject.

Over against this we maintain the following:

(1) There must be a distinction between the gift of grace and given grace. The gift of grace is the goodness of God, the fountain from whom proceeds all the good which man receives. Given grace refers to the benefits which man receives, has, and possesses. Concerning the gift of grace we read, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Php 1:29). Concerning given grace we read, "For this is thankworthy [Note: The Statenbijbel reads: "For this is grace ...] , if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Peter 2:19).

(2) Grace is either common or special. God bestows common grace upon all men by granting them temporal benefits. "Nevertheless He left not himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven" (Acts 14:17). To this grace also belongs all the good which God bestows upon all who are called, by giving them the Word -- the means unto repentance and salvation. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). In addition to this, God generally gives illumination, historical faith, convictions, and inner persuasion to almost become a Christian (cf. Hebrews 6:4-6).

Special grace is the effectual call whereby man is illuminated with wondrous spiritual light, effectually changing his will, and thus in very deed translating him out of darkness into light, out of death to life, and from the dominion of sin and the devil to Christ and His kingdom. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9); "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). From these four prefatory propositions it is evident what the nature of the internal call is. We must now furthermore observe 1) how man is involved in his conversion, and 2) what God does in this respect. A Refutation of the Arminian Error that Man Has a Natural Inclination to Repent and Believe

Question: Does man have some internal disposition, propensity, ability, or power to believe in Christ and to truly repent upon the external presentation of the gospel, however powerfully this may be declared?

Answer: The Arminians and others answer in the affirmative. We, however, answer negatively and prove this as follows:

First, man is totally blind as far as spiritual things are concerned. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them" (Ephesians 4:18); "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen. ... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the

Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 2:14). The apostle is here not referring to men as consisting of soul and body. This would be applicable to all men -- this also being true for Adam, of whom it must be said that he comprehended spiritual matters. However, the apostle speaks in this chapter of the converted and the unconverted, stating that the converted do discern spiritual things (vss. 9-10). Concerning the unconverted he states (without making a distinction between them as being more or less evil) that they do not discern spiritual things. He refers to the natural man as *psuchikoi*; that is, as having a soul, and thus to men who have a natural intellect whereby they can reason, a natural will whereby they can love and hate, and natural passion whereby they can desire. He is thus in a natural state without the Spirit, of whom Jude writes, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 1:19). Of such the apostle says that they cannot discern spiritual things, which is not to say that it is impossible for a person to imagine them without revelations, for he speaks of such natural men who lived under the ministry of the gospel (vs. 8). This is evident from what he adds, "for they are foolishness to him." No one can ever speak of or consider to be foolish that which he has never heard. Man is so blind that the ability to see and understand must be given unto him. This is given to some and not to others. "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matthew 13:11). Someone who is blind to such a degree can neither will, repent of himself, nor believe in Christ, even if he hears the gospel.

Secondly, man by nature is of such a wicked and evil disposition that he is not willing to repent, nor can he will to do so, for he cannot respond with his will to that which he does not know. Even if one judges a given matter to be desirable in its very essence, he will have no interest in this now, here, and for himself, since the things of this world appear to him as being much more desirable and beneficial now, here, and for himself. Since that which is spiritual and that which is sinful stand in direct opposition to each other, one can neither delight in nor be desirous for spiritual things if he finds delight in that which is sinful and of the world. The natural man, however, loves that which is sinful and of the world, and thus he neither can nor is willing to love that which is spiritual. "And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40); "... and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37). If the natural man perceives but a few rays of spiritual light and life, he will hate it at once. "... men loved darkness rather than light. ... For every one that doeth evil hateth the light" (John 3:19-20); "... haters of God" (Romans 1:30); "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me" (John 15:18). Wherever there is such a disposition, it is impossible to be willing and to repent.

Thirdly, since man is ignorant and unwilling, he also cannot repent. "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (John 6:44). The phrase "no man" is all-inclusive. Whoever a person may be, he is unable and does not come. An almighty power and drawing is necessary in order for anyone to come. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). In verse 5 the apostle places the converted and unconverted in contradistinction to each other. Of the unconverted he says that they are after the flesh; of such he says that their *phronemamind*, will, thoughts, desires, contemplations, and wisdom are only focused upon that which is visible and sinful. They oppose God as an enemy -- they neither subject themselves to His law, nor are they able to do so. Consider also 2 Corinthians 3:5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." Paul here refers to both himself and the congregation,

which is an “epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God” (2 Corinthians 3:3). He defines what he considers himself and the congregation to be by nature. He thus states not what they are by the Spirit of God, but rather what they are capable of themselves; that is, by nature, stating that they are not sufficient to think of anything that has not been revealed. They can, however, only think of, comprehend, lovingly contemplate upon, and find delight in the spiritual things which the Spirit of God has written in the hearts of believers. He declares man to be entirely insufficient for this, and thus whatever they had and did was given of God who enabled them to do this. So much said about man's inability.

Fourthly, as far as spiritual life is concerned, man is dead, “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:12). The apostle is not only referring to those who had never heard the gospel, but also to those who had heard it, for Paul includes himself. Among the Ephesians there were many Jews (Acts 19:8), and the expression used is general in nature. He is not referring to natural death, but to being spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. Spiritual death consists of the absence of union with God, for spiritual life consists of communion with God (Galatians 2:20). Those who are without such a union are atheoi, that is, atheists or without God (Ephesians 2:12); those “having not the Spirit” (Jude 1:19). He does not speak of the punishment of sin, its wages being death, but of that death which is the very opposite of spiritual life. Since spiritual life is the very opposite of spiritual death, he speaks of spiritual death. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5). Since man is dead, he can therefore not make himself alive. Both nature and Scripture teach us that a dead person cannot do this, regardless of the manner in which he is dead.

Let us draw these four arguments together and arrive at one conclusion. One who is blind and ignorant is so evil that he is unwilling and instead hates; he is so impotent that he is absolutely unable; and he is dead, has no internal disposition, propensity, ability, or power to repent and to believe in Christ. The absolute impotence of man is also evident from all the texts which demonstrate that the declaration of the Word, however powerfully this may be done, is not sufficient to the conversion of man. Rather, in addition to the Word of God there must also be the effectual work of God in the heart of man. In 2 Timothy 2:25 we read, “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” This refers to the Word of God and to the lively manner in which it is proclaimed. Is this sufficient however? Does this result in repentance after some time? No, but he adds, “If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” The Word of God must thus be joined by the converting power of God. “Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh,” etc.; “yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day” (Deuteronomy 29:2-4); “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matthew 13:11). The Jews heard Christ preach; they had the Scriptures, and yet why did they not believe? The Lord Jesus says that more must happen to depraved man before he will believe; there must be a divine drawing. “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (John 6:44). In order for Lydia to be converted it was not sufficient for her to hear Paul preach; this had to be accompanied by the immediate operation of God. “Lydia ... whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). Man is thus unable to bring about his own conversion.

Sixthly, consider also that conversion is a work of God, being of such a nature that it occurs without the involvement of human activity. It is referred to as a creating (Psalms 51:11), a begetting (James 1:18), the removal of a stony heart and the giving of a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26), the enlightening of the eyes (Ephesians 1:18), a working both to will and to do (Php 2:13), etc. Shortly we shall discuss this more extensively.

Objection #1: "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes" (Isaiah 5:4). If from His side God has done everything toward man that is necessary unto his conversion, and if He furthermore expects repentance and holiness from man, it must be within man's power to repent.

Answer (1) The reference is here to the church viewed in contrast to all other nations, with which He has not dealt in such a fashion (Psalms 147:20), having permitted them to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16). This text therefore does not prove that all men have such ability, which is what they had wished to prove.

(2) The reference here is to the external means which lead unto salvation, which can be deduced from the presentation of matters in verses 1-3, and thus not to the work of conversion itself. It is the parable of a farmer who does everything that is required to make the earth fruitful and who, beyond this, can do nothing more toward the bearing of fruit, except to expect this from God. God had likewise done everything to Israel in an external sense as far as the means were concerned, and this obligated them to repent and to bear fruit, worthy of repentance. This is the objective of the parable, and we must not focus on all its particulars and look for analogies.

(3) The fact that God expected fruits neither implies that God could not enable them to bear fruit, nor that God did not know what the outcome would be. It is also not implied that such power is to be found in man who is nothing but barren soil bringing forth thorns and thistles, in spite of the fact that it receives rain and sunshine (Hebrews 6:7). It rather states that Israel was obligated to bear fruit. If they did not do this, due to their wickedness, they were to be blamed and would be worthy of being eradicated.

Objection #2: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Since God commands man to repent and to believe, it follows that man is able to do this, for God cannot obligate man toward that which is absolutely impossible for him to do. This would be an unjust as well as futile effort.

Answer (1) God created man so perfectly in Adam that he was able to obey and perform God's commandments. Even though it was not possible for Adam to believe in Christ, this was not due to inability to believe if God were to have made Him known to Adam. Rather, faith in a Surety for the satisfaction of sin could not be required from him in the state of rectitude. The human nature was therefore able to believe. Since man brought himself into the state of impotence, this does not remove God's right to demand from, and obligate man to do that which He had enabled him to do. A creditor may demand payment from a debtor even if he is unable to pay due to having wasted his resources. Such exhortations therefore do not imply what man is able to do, but rather what he is obligated to do.

(2) Man must acknowledge and approve of the fact that he is obligated not to sin, but rather to obey God. Man is so evil that he is not willing to do that which he knows to be God's command as

well as his obligation. Would God then not know what is man's duty, when man acquiesces in the fact that he is obligated to such obedience, even if he is so evil that he is not willing to obey?

(3) Such exhortations are not in vain in spite of the fact that man, being so evil, cannot oblige, for they convince man of his duty and of the justice of God were He to punish him for his sin. It is a means which God uses to bring His elect under conviction and to lead them to repentance and faith. Christ said to the dead Lazarus, "Come forth" (John 11:43). This command did not imply what Lazarus was able to do, and yet it was not issued in vain, for it was the means unto his resurrection. Likewise the command to repent as well as the Word of God are means unto conversion in the hand of God, but not in the hand of man.

Objection #3: Even pagans, as well as many unconverted, do good works as well as the converted. It is thus evident that man has retained the natural ability to do good works.

Answer: (1) Some pagans have so exceeded in the practice of virtue that they put many Christians to shame. If such virtues had been true virtues, why would there be any need for regeneration? Since regeneration is necessary, however, it is evident that their virtues did not have the nature of true virtues.

(2) There are four types of good works: natural, civil, externally religious, and spiritual good works. Unconverted persons perform the first three types of good works, but not the fourth. Their good works are good in materialiter, that is, in a substantial sense, but not as far as essence is concerned. They are not formaliter (that is, not truly) good works. Spiritual light, life, and virtue are not distinguished from the natural in degree, but rather in essence, as we have demonstrated above. Therefore we cannot make such an inference.

Objection #4: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (Matthew 13:12). This means that those who have sufficient grace -- which is true for all -- and who use it well, will receive more grace. It thus follows that man possesses the grace and the ability to repent.

Answer (1) The word "for" shows sufficiently that the reference is to those who are converted; that is, to whom had been given what had not been given to others as stated in verse 11, "It is given unto you to know."

(2) It is evident that the reference is not to what man possesses by nature, but rather to what he has received by means of the Word of God. This is confirmed by the fact that this was said to the disciples who had already been called and converted, and therefore had been given the ability to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, even though they were presented by way of parables. The reference is thus to the growth and increase of truly converted persons.

(3) Those who "have not" are the unconverted who have not received grace. They are of the opinion that they are not blind; they believe they are able to understand these mysteries as well as the most eminent Christian. "Are we blind also" (John 9:40). Those who have heard the preaching of the gospel, but do not understand it, or do not perform what they have understood, would become more blind and more hardened; their darkened heart would become even darker, and while pretending to be wise, they would become fools (Romans 1:21-22). Thus, from them would be taken even that which they seemed to have (Luke 8:18). The abused gifts of nature and the

common gifts by way of Scripture would be taken away as a righteous judgment. The same answer must be given in response to Matthew 25:29, where the same words are recorded, and are applied to the good and evil use of the talents. The reference there is neither to gifts which all men have by nature, nor to the good or evil use of these gifts, but the reference is to the church, the kingdom of heaven (vss. 1, 14). Within the church the Lord Jesus gives various gifts, both saving and common. Everyone is obligated to use these gifts for the benefit of others, that is, to the conversion of others. He whom the Lord gifts with grace to be faithful, and to be instrumental unto the conversion of souls, will be graciously rewarded by the Lord with a special measure of glory. The unfaithful servant, however, who had also received gifts (not graces) was cast into hell. Thus, nothing remains of the argument that there is all-sufficient grace in the state of nature.

Objection #5: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). Behold, here the act of opening or of not opening is attributed to man. He must therefore possess the ability to do so.

Answer (1) Here the church is addressed, and particularly the church of Laodicea. This therefore cannot be used to prove what ability all men possess by nature.

(2) This shows at best what man's duty is, but not what he is able to do. This is actually a promise to those who open the door, however, without there being any mention of whether they would open it in their own strength, or whether this would occur by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

(3) The reference is to the external call which is a means used to the conversion of the elect -- a means whereby the ungodly are convinced of their wickedness and of God's justice. This call is therefore not issued forth in vain. We have, at the same time, answered the question as to why Christ calls and knocks if man is not able, and why He does knock and call if He Himself opens the door (Acts 16:14). He uses this as a means.

Man's Passivity at the Moment of Regeneration Being as impotent as has been stated, it is clear and self-evident that man at the very first moment of his conversion is not independently active, nor does he cooperate with the prevenient and quickening grace of God, but is a passive object and solely the recipient of the illuminating and quickening power of God. We are not speaking here of a man who already has been regenerated, but rather of an unregenerate man being regenerated. Such a person is passive rather than active. This is first of all evident from what has been stated before concerning the impotence of man who is blind and does not know how matters ought to be; who is evil, unwilling, and hates that which is spiritual; who is impotent, thus rendering him unable; who is dead, and therefore in the initial moment of regeneration and conversion is not able to cooperate, but is merely passive. Such is the state of man according to the foregoing proposition. It thus follows that he functions neither independently nor cooperatively.

Secondly, since the difference between natural and spiritual light, life, and virtue is not one of degree, but of very essence (as stated in the foregoing), man is not able to change from one state to the other, nor is he able to cooperate in the act of translation from one state to the other. Rather, an almighty power is necessary for this. Who can change a stone into flesh, or an irrational animal into a man? Who then would also be able to change a dead person into a living person?

Thirdly, regeneration is a work that must be attributed solely to God and is an omnipotent work of God: (1) It is a work of God: "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture" (Psalms 100:3); "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13); "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13); "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:13).

(2) It is an omnipotent work, a work which has man as its only object. It is an act of creation, and by way of this creative work a new creature is formed. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17); "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10). We know that in the act of creation a creature is brought forth without any cooperation whatsoever. Regeneration is an act of resurrection from the dead and of making alive. "And you, being dead in your sins ... hath He quickened together with Him" (Colossians 2:13). It is an act of being begotten, of being reborn. "Of His own will begat He us" (James 1:18); "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). All these expressions refer to the work of the Creator, the Giver of Life, and the Generator, in which the creature who is resurrected and generated is entirely excluded from any cooperation. It is thus certain that man does not cooperate in the initial moment of regeneration, but is passive, and as the object, is the recipient of this operation. Even if, prior to this, he was human and thus functioned as a man, yet in reference to spiritual life he was dead and thus could no more cooperate in regeneration than a dead person could.

Fourthly, if man were to cooperate in the initial moment of conversion -- if he were to act independently in the most significant and essential aspect of conversion; that is, to be willing of himself to come to Christ upon the invitation of the gospel due to ability which he has in common with all men and is inherent in his nature -- a spiritually dead person would not only be able to be active, but would himself be the cause of his salvation and would distinguish himself from other men. This is contrary to the entire Scriptures which attribute this to God rather than to man. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive" (1 Corinthians 4:7); "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Man, therefore, does not cooperate, but he is entirely passive in this matter.

Objection #1: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" (Romans 8:26).

Answer: The apostle does not refer to the unconverted to whom the point of contention pertains. Rather, he refers to the converted who have been saved in hope (vs. 24). The Holy Spirit teaches such persons how to pray when they know not what to pray for as they ought.

Objection #2: "For we are labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9); "We then, as workers together with Him ..." (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Answer: The reference is not to man's work in his own conversion, which is the point in question, but to the work of the ministry, that is, the proclamation of the Word of God. In that capacity ministers are the instruments of God and thus work together with Him as means to the conversion of other men. No one will maintain, however, that they are able to convert men in their own strength. They cooperate as an instrument cooperates.

Objection #3: "But I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Answer: Paul does not refer to his labors prior to and at his conversion, but to his labors after his conversion. This labor did not pertain to himself, rather to others. He states here that his work in the ministry had not been fruitless as far as the benefit of others was concerned, but that he had been extraordinarily abundant and fruitful. However, he did not exalt himself because of this, but instead acknowledged the grace of God as having been operative in him as the cause. Thus, this text, rather than supporting this objection, states the contrary.

Objection #4: If man must be viewed solely as passive in his conversion, and is but merely the object and thus the recipient of divine operation, man can only be considered to be a stock and a block.

Answer: Man cooperates no more than did the body of Adam in receiving the soul, and as Lazarus did in his resurrection. Man, however, is neither a block nor a stock which is incapable of being the recipient of God's converting power, not being a suitable object for such operation. Instead, man is rational, has intellect, a will, and inclinations, and is thus a suitable object to be the recipient of God's operations toward conversion. Thus, God enlightens the intellect, inclines the will, and makes man willing without violation of the will. In this manner God makes man alive. It is true, however, that man can cooperate no more than that a stock or a block would be able to move from one place to another.

Objection #5: Then man may as well let everything run its course and merely let God work when it pleases Him.

Answer: Even though a blind and crippled person could not help himself, did this mean that he therefore did not have to avail himself of the waters at Bethesda or of a physician? Man's impotence ought to motivate him to use the means unto his conversion and attend church with the hope that it would please the Lord to deal with him. It is also his duty to repent and to believe in Christ. If he fails to do so, he sins and acts contrary to his duty and to his own judgment. It thus remains certain that man does not cooperate.

Having observed what man neither can nor will do toward his regeneration, we shall proceed to consider God's work in the internal call and regeneration, demonstrating that God works powerfully and irresistibly. The Internal Call: The Immediate and Effectual Operation of God

Question: Is the internal call, even though it occurs by means of the Word, an immediate and effectual operation of God which is exercised upon and changes the intellect, the will, and the inclinations, thereby in a spiritual sense making man alive from the dead?

Arminians answer negatively, whereas we answer affirmatively. Even though man cannot comprehend God's supernatural operations wherewith by means of the Word the soul is immediately wrought upon, changed, illuminated, regenerated, and endowed with spiritual life, God's Word nevertheless teaches us that God does this. He who changed Saul's heart in one moment (1 Samuel 10:9) and forms the heart of all men (Psalms 33:15), also transforms the heart of man. Man does not accomplish this himself, but God is the origin and the only cause of this. God endows man with a supernatural propensity by which man, after the endowment of this

propensity and regeneration -- due to divine cooperation -- performs spiritual deeds. God acts in harmony with the object, but the operation itself is supernatural. God indeed uses the Word as a means, but joined to this means is an immediate, omnipotent operation which touches the soul, thereby powerfully changing the soul as far as intellect, will, and disposition are concerned. This is first of all evident when considering the evil disposition and impotence of man prior to his conversion, as we have comprehensively shown. In order for one who is totally blind, for whom the crucified Christ is an offense and foolishness, who is only evil, is unwilling and hates that which is spiritual, and one who cannot do anything and is dead, to be converted and changed, an almighty power must be exercised which will interact immediately with him and change him. However, men are indeed converted, and this necessarily requires the exercise of almighty power.

Secondly, Scripture states plainly that the Word alone can have no effect upon the heart of such a person, but that the Word of God must be accompanied by a powerful operation of God upon the soul. He must give eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand (Deuteronomy 29:4), and the enlightening of the eyes of the understanding (Ephesians 1:18). With the revelation of Scripture, God must make the heart to burn within (Luke 24:32). His instruction must be accompanied by the gift of repentance (2 Timothy 2:25), and under the hearing of God's Word He must open the heart (Acts 16:14). This is also confirmed in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 : "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." If man cannot accomplish this, and if the Word of God alone cannot exercise such power upon the heart of man, the Word of God must be accompanied by the immediate, almighty power of God to change the heart, which is indeed the case as these texts have shown.

Thirdly, the manner in which God's work is denominated gives expression to such an immediate and efficacious work of God. From God's side conversion is referred to as a creation (Ephesians 2:10), as begetting (James 1:18), and as a making alive and a resurrecting from the dead (Ephesians 2:5). For a more comprehensive treatment of this, please refer to the foregoing. From the following and similar texts it is evident that God indeed promises to work in such an immediate and efficacious manner, and also that He indeed operates in this manner.

(1) God promises to do this: "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33); "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jeremiah 32:40); "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). Neither man, nor the Word of God would do it, but God Himself would conquer all opposition. God Himself would work so efficaciously upon the heart unto repentance.

(2) God does work efficaciously upon the heart unto repentance. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:13). Paul writes to the believers (ch. 1:1), exhorting them (ch. 2:12) to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. He further exhorts them to be neither proud nor puffed up, to do all things without murmurings and disputings, and to walk upon the way of godliness with childlike reverence and carefulness. He stresses that their faith and activity did not proceed from them, but that they were active by the power of God, "for it is God which worketh in you," etc. They have to avail themselves of and act upon this prevenient grace and operation, and be engaged by means of this power. God, who created the will, also

recreates the will in His elect. He does not need to deal with man as one man deals with another, who can only by way of a variety of motives seek to persuade someone to be willing in regard to a certain matter. Rather, God works as God, illuminating the intellect with a new light and giving to man a will so that he wills voluntarily and with desire. God causes this willingness to be followed by working. The apostle demonstrates this very same truth in 2 Thessalonians 1:11, "... that our God would ... fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power." They had the Word of God and it was preached to them in a most lively manner. The apostle demonstrates this to be insufficient to bring forth believers, that faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8), and that the Word of God must be accompanied by an almighty power of God to thus cause man to believe. "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Ephesians 1:19). The apostle says likewise, "(God) make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight" (Hebrews 13:21).

Consider all this together for a moment. Man is as blind, evil, impotent, and dead as has been stated above. God permits the gospel to be preached to many, but this has no effect upon most who hear it. However, others are converted because God joins His Holy Spirit to that Word, working in them what He does not work in others. He illuminates them with a marvelous light which He does not do unto others. He removes the heart of stone from them and gives them a heart of flesh, not doing so to others. He works in them to will and to do the work of faith with power, not doing so in others. It is thus an irrefutable fact that God interacts with the heart of man in an immediate sense and thus changes it.

Objection #1: The Word of God is the seed of regeneration (1 Peter 1:23), enlightens the eyes, converts souls (Psalms 19:8-9), is a two-edged sword, is lively and powerful, "to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Hebrews 4:12). The Word of God is therefore sufficient; nothing needs to be added to it, and it is not accompanied by an immediate, illuminating, and transforming power of God.

Answer (1) All these texts indicate nothing but that God works everything by means of His Word.

(2) If the Word of God had such inherent power, it would likewise have an effect upon all who hear it, that is, upon those who are in like circumstances; however, this is not the case.

(3) Scripture states clearly that the Word of God does not have such inherent power, but that the Word of God must be accompanied by the immediate, efficacious operation of God. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Objection #2: If the Word of God needs to be accompanied by the immediate and efficacious operation of God, man lacks a sufficient means unto salvation.

Answer: It is not the means which can be the moving cause to bring forth the effect. The Word of God is not a moving cause, but only a means in God's hand. The immediate operation is not the means, but is rather the moving cause. God does not give this means, that is, the Word of God, to all men, and wherever God gives this means, He does not interact with all by way of this means, but only with those whom He pleases. If one maintains, however, that the Word of God must still be accompanied by divine operation, and that the Word of God is not sufficient unto man's salvation, we indeed agree that man cannot convert himself by means of the Word of God.

Objection #3: If the Word of God must be accompanied by a work of God, man is to be excused if he does not repent, for he is not able to.

Answer (1) By way of such reasoning a heathen could also be excused for not perfectly fulfilling the law of nature, for he is not able to do so. The apostle states, however, that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).

(2) It is not so that man is able to progress to a point; that is, until he encounters the obstacle of his inability; but he is already obstructed by his unwillingness. If, as some maintain, man has a neutral will enabling him to will or not to will, he has no reason to complain, for he is using his free will to avoid God and to live in sin.

Additional objection: It is maintained, however, that man cannot will to do so, and therefore he is to be excused.

Answer: He is neither hindered nor restrained by either God, His Word, or by any creature. Instead, man is left to himself and he is so evil and hostile toward God, having such strong inclinations toward sin, that he is not able to will. He is thus to be blamed himself.

Objection #4: By maintaining that there is such an efficacious and immediate operation of God upon the soul, the freedom of man's will is destroyed and removed.

Answer: This we deny. God works in harmony with man's nature; however, He does not do so as one man would interact with another man. God causes man to will voluntarily, as was true when man was created. If God, who created the will in man, touches the will and the soul without removing the freedom of the will, why can this not be true in re-creation? In the first [creation], man and his will did not exist, but were created. In the second [recreation], man and his will are spiritually dead.

Additional Objection: At regeneration the soul already possesses its capabilities and they are activated only in the realm of the spiritual. As the will is activated in the natural realm by natural motives, it is likewise activated in the spiritual realm by spiritual motives. It therefore cannot be maintained that there is an immediate operation of God upon the will without impinging upon the freedom of man's will.

Answer (1) Such reasoning presupposes that natural and spiritual virtue do not differ in essence but in degree. In the above we have shown this not to be so; this argument is therefore futile.

(2) In the natural realm man has some principles, enabling him to will by way of natural motives; however, in the spiritual realm man is entirely dead, entirely evil, and not able to be activated to will and to work spiritually by way of motivation. There is thus a need for an almighty, supernatural power in order to cause the faculties to be engaged in a spiritual sense.

Objection #5: To hold to such an immediate interaction of God with the soul and its faculties is nothing but fanaticism.

Answer: This is not so, for fanaticism adheres to revelations outside of and contrary to God's Word. It yields to passions and sudden motions which override the mind and the will, being but vain delusions and fantasies. Regeneration, however, occurs by means of the Word of God and is

active according to the Word of God. If, however, one understands fanaticism to be “being driven by the spirit,” [Note: The difficulty here is that the word “geestdrijverij,” translated in the dictionary as “fanaticism” or “zealotry,” can literally be interpreted as “being driven by the spirit.” When à Brakel uses this word the second time he undoubtedly interprets it in such a literal sense.] that is, to be regenerated by the Spirit and thus to live and walk by the Spirit according to the rule of God’s Word, we have no objection, and the proposed absurdity is no absurdity.

We have thus demonstrated that man by nature is entirely impotent and unable. In the initial moment of his conversion he neither acts nor cooperates, but is only passive. God, by a supernatural and almighty power, interacts with and changes the intellect and will in an immediate sense, changing man from being blind to receiving his sight, and from evil to good. That which has been said confirms the validity of the question. The Irresistible Nature of the Internal Call

Question: Does God work irresistibly in those who are converted, conquering all the opposition of their evil nature, and in very deed translate them from a state of spiritual death to spiritual life?

Answer: The Arminians deny this, but we confirm this. Man by nature hates God and is opposed to God, His Word, and the gospel. Such is the state of all men. If, however, the one person is converted and not the other, this is not to be attributed to man -- as if it were true that the one accepts this grace by his free will and the other rejects it; rather this is to be attributed to the effectual operation of God, who works one thing in the one and not in the other. He not only effectually illuminates the intellect -- doing so irresistibly -- and irresistibly activates man’s inclinations, but He also irresistibly works upon the unwilling will in such a manner that the will wills voluntarily. This freedom is not one of neutrality (it being immaterial whether or not to do something), but one of necessary consequence, a person being willing by his own choice and inclination. This is evident from the three propositions which we have proven in the preceding material.

First, if man is blind and ignorant as to how matters ought to be; if man, who is evil and hostile towards God, hates and opposes whatever he encounters of God in His Word and in the converted; if he is entirely impotent and unable; if he is entirely dead as far as spiritual life is concerned; if he is entirely as we have proven him to be -- when such a person is converted, he with all his opposition will then not be able to resist the efficacious operation of God. He will not be able to prevent himself from being changed, nor prevent the translation of his heart and will into another state -- as is true for a dead person who, after having been restored to life, cannot resist being alive. Thus, the converting, almighty power of God functions in an irresistible manner.

Secondly, if man is only passive in his conversion, and is the recipient of divine operations only as object, and therefore does not cooperate at all (as has been proven) -- if such a man is converted, he is changed by an almighty, all-conquering, all-penetrating, and irresistible operation of God. Any object which is the passive recipient of action can neither oppose nor cooperate.

Thirdly, if God, in conversion, does not only illuminate the intellect by an almighty power and incline the inclinations, but also in an immediate sense interacts and changes the will, making it from unwilling to be willing -- then God’s operation in the conversion of man is irresistible. It is an almighty working power, a creative act, a begetting, a resurrection from the dead, a change of heart, the removal of the heart of stone and the giving of a heart of flesh, etc., as has been shown

prior to this. God's operation in the conversion of men is thus irresistible, almighty, all-conquering, and all-penetrating.

Fourthly, the calling is according to God's purpose; that is, He gives specific individuals eternal life. In the way of repentance and faith He makes all those partakers of this life, and those only, whom He has elected unto that end (cf. chapter 6: Election). "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Romans 8:30). Behold, there is thus an unbreakable chain: God leads His elect by way of the calling to eternal felicity. God saves them and calls them "with an holy calling ... according to His own purpose and grace" (2 Timothy 1:9). If therefore they are called according to this purpose in order that they might be saved, the calling power of God cannot be resisted, for God will accomplish His purpose. He has purposed this in His decree "and who shall disannul it" (Isaiah 14:27). It is thus both clear and certain that the calling is irresistible. Let us now consider for a moment what objections are made against this.

Objection #1: There are texts which state expressly that man resists this calling, such as, "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people" (Isaiah 65:2); "Thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house" (Ezekiel 12:2); "How often would I have gathered thy children together ... and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37); "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

Answer: All these texts do not refer to the internal call, nor to the moment of spiritual transformation, nor to regeneration. This is, however, the point in question; namely, whether the operation of the Holy Spirit can be resisted. Instead, these texts refer to the external call and to Christ being offered unto justification, sanctification, and glorification. We readily admit that the person who is not elected resists this call, for the carnal mind is enmity against God. The natural man hates both God and holiness, and can do nothing else but reject and resist this offer. It does not follow, however, that those who are regenerated would be able to resist the omnipotent operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby He makes a dead person alive, and from being unwilling, to be willing. This we deny, and these texts do not suggest this. Concerning the distinction between the external and internal call, we refer you to that which has been stated before.

Objection #2: "For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matthew 11:21). It thus appears that man can convert himself, and if this is possible, it is his free and arbitrary choice whether or not he will repent. It therefore follows that conversion does not come about due to the irresistible power of God.

Answer (1) This text does not refer to the true change and regeneration, but rather to an external conversion in sackcloth and ashes, which results from historical faith or as a response to miracles.

(2) This is a hyperbole whereby the Jews were convinced of their irresponsible wickedness and unbelief, this being even greater than that of the heathen. Observe this in Luke 19:40, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

Objection #3: "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves" (Luke 7:30). If it is possible to reject the counsel of God, this counsel can be resisted.

Answer: "The counsel of God" is not to be understood to refer to God's purpose, but rather to the external offer of the gospel which gives counsel how we may flee from the wrath of God. We fully agree that this can be resisted and is indeed resisted by the unconverted, until an all-conquering and irresistible operation of God takes place. This irresistible, divine operation, however, is manifested toward none other than the elect. It is God's will that they will be converted and there is no one who will be able to prevent this. The objections which remain have already been dealt with previously. The practical application will be dealt with in the two succeeding chapters.

036. Chapter 31: Regeneration

----- CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE -----

Regeneration

Having considered the work of God in the conversion of man, we shall now proceed to the consideration of the person who is the recipient of this divine operation, and thus is regenerated.

Regeneration Defined

Regeneration is a word derived from human birth. [Note: The Dutch word for “regeneration” is “wedergeboorte” which literally means “rebirth,” and is a derivative of the verb “to be born again”; hence à Brakel’s reference to human birth.] We must not understand this to refer only to giving birth itself, but it is inclusive of all that pertains to it, such as conception, fetal growth, and the birth itself. We must not be of the opinion that man possesses life prior to regeneration, as if there were a preparation for regeneration, which we would understand to be conversion. No, man is dead prior to regeneration and receives life by way of regeneration. There is no third state between death and life, and thus also not between being converted and unconverted.

Although we can make a distinction between calling, regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, considering them to be sequential -- that is, the one issuing forth from the other -- Scripture does not always use this distinction. Instead, Scripture comprehends all these in either one word or the other.

It is not the justice of God which requires regeneration, but it is a necessity as far as the will of God is concerned. Without satisfaction of the justice of God, absolutely no man can be saved. Regeneration, however, neither contributes anything toward satisfaction for guilt nor toward obtaining the right to eternal life. It would therefore not be in conflict with His justice if it so pleased the Lord, at the moment of death, to translate a person who is chosen and reconciled through Christ’s death into the state of perfection and thus into eternal felicity. This is true for such children who die prior to birth or prior to the years of discretion. All the regenerate, whether they live a longer or shorter period and are converted at an earlier or later date, are made perfect in one moment at the hour of their death. However, it is the will and wisdom of God concerning those who have come to the years of discretion, not to bring them into heaven except He first regenerates them in this life by means of His Word. The Necessity of Regeneration The necessity of regeneration is evident from the following: First, we read, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:3; John 3:5); “And make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel” (Ezekiel 18:31). Therefore those who do not receive a new heart will die.

Secondly, search the entire Bible and you will not find one person who was saved without being born again, regardless of how civil and externally religious he may have been. Even Nicodemus, a

teacher in Israel who was a man beyond reproach, and Paul, who was blameless according to the law, were in need of conversion in order to be saved.

Thirdly, (1) how could man have communion with God without regeneration? Man's nature is darkness, evil, hostile toward God, and pollution itself. God, on the contrary, is light and holiness. The ungodly cannot be in His presence (Psalms 5:5-7). Therefore, in order for man to have fellowship with God, he of necessity must be converted.

(2) It is also the promise of the covenant that God will convert those who are included in this covenant. "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33); "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Therefore, he who does not have a new heart is no partaker of the covenant. All who are included in this covenant will receive a new heart.

(3) Regeneration is also the objective of Christ's suffering and death. "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). He who therefore is included in what Christ has merited will be born again. To whomever Christ has been given unto justification, He has also been given unto sanctification.

If regeneration is so essential that without it no salvation is to be expected, how greatly man ought to be concerned that he be born again! For by nature he is unregenerate, dead, and on the way to perdition. How concerned everyone should be to know what his state is in this respect! How man ought to ask himself: Am I one of them? Ask yourself the question: Have I already been regenerated? Take heed to your answer, for there is no third state.

(1) Many are so thoroughly evil that they never ask themselves that question. If this question arises in their heart against their will, they push it away without answering it, it being a matter which is repulsive or of no concern to them. It can also be true that they certainly know that such an investigation would not turn out well and that it would cause them to be disturbed; they could then no longer persevere in sin with such delight, and this does not suit them.

(2) Others go to the opposite extreme, imagining themselves to be already regenerated, either because they wish that the life which they lead would indicate regeneration, salvation following upon such a life, or because they do not wish to entertain such gloomy thoughts about themselves -- that they are unconverted and in a condition upon which salvation will not follow. It could also be that one considers himself regenerated because at one time he either has been filled with terror concerning condemnation, or has been grieved over the commission of a vile and shameful sin. Having prayed for forgiveness at that time, he now refrains from the commission of many sins in which he previously indulged himself, diligently frequents church, and lives in such a fashion that he is beyond reproach. With such a persuasion man goes to bed, and sleeps peacefully while yet being in sin.

(3) Others, who are more attentive, do not wish to deceive themselves. They are concerned, but cannot come to a conclusion because they are neither well-acquainted with the nature of regeneration, nor do they have sufficient light to know themselves and what things have been

granted to them. To all of these we shall explain the nature of regeneration, so that everyone may examine himself in the light of it, the unconverted would come under conviction and seek after regeneration, and the converted would recognize their regenerated state, rejoice, be stirred to manifest their regeneration, and grow in it.

Further Clarification of the Doctrine of Regeneration

We shall speak of the following six aspects of regeneration: 1) that regeneration brings forth a nature which is fundamentally different from anything which is produced by the natural knowledge of God; 2) the state from which man is translated by way of regeneration and the state into which he is translated; 3) the means unto regeneration; 4) the various ways in which regeneration occurs; 5) the diversity of age when regeneration occurs, and 6) the fruits of regeneration.

First, take careful note of the fact that spiritual life issuing forth from regeneration is of an entirely different nature from the virtuousness engendered by the light of nature or of the external illumination by the Word of God. The difference is not one of degree, nor as if regeneration would simply induce man to refrain from more sins and stimulate him to exercise more virtue. Such is the imagination of the natural man, who thereby is easily misled to think that he is regenerated. The difference, however, is one of nature and essence (cf. chapter 30).

Secondly, the state from which and into which regeneration translates is from death unto life.

(1) We shall first take notice of the state from which the regenerate are translated, namely, spiritual death.

Corporal death consists of a separation of soul and body, and spiritual death consists of a separation between the soul and God. God has created man in such a fashion that he cannot find true delight and pleasure except in God. For this purpose, He made Himself known to man and caused man to live in communion with Him prior to the fall. After the fall, man has become fully separated from God; he does not know, seek, or love God; God is not his delight nor the object of his fear and obedience. Man, thus separated from God, wishes to remain separated from God, and the more he is left alone in this state of separation, the better he likes it. As long as he can find his delight in the things of this world he is satisfied. "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us" (Isaiah 30:11); "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job 21:14). Separated from God, they seek their only delight in the creature, each doing so according to opportunity, nature, and habit. That which is of the world is glorious and delightful in their eyes, and is worthy of being sought and pursued. Man retained the faculties of the soul, that is, intellect, will, and affections, and these must have objects in which they can find their fulfillment and delight. Whether he is dead or alive, is determined by the objects with which he occupies himself. If it is God and a right knowledge of Him, there is spiritual life. If it is anything other than God, anything that stands in contrast to God, anything that is visible, or anything that is a creature, such a person is spiritually dead. Consequently, all men are spiritually dead. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:18); "... without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12); "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5).

Upon spiritual death follows eternal death. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Over such the second death exercises its power (Revelation 20:6). From this state the elect are

delivered by regeneration.

(2) The state into which they are translated is spiritual life, namely, communion with God. When God regenerates a soul, He brings him into light, causing him to see that his misery consists in being separated from God, in not being conformed to Him, and in being subject to His wrath. He also causes him to see that all his salvation, delight, enjoyment, and bliss consists in seeing God, having Him as a reconciled God, living in fellowship with Him, and loving and fearing Him. The soul's happiness is measured by the clarity with which this is perceived and the degree to which this is enjoyed. As a result of regeneration Christ lives in the soul (Galatians 2:20), and the soul is one with God (John 17:21), walks with God (Genesis 5:22) and in the light of His countenance (Psalms 89:15), and finds fullness of joy in this (Psalms 16:11). It is good for such souls to be near unto God and to have Him as their portion (Psalms 73:26;Psalms 73:28). By reason of regeneration, God becomes the object of their love, fear, and obedience, and their good works "are wrought in God" (John 3:21). They thus live by the Spirit and walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

Thirdly, we must consider the means whereby man is regenerated. This is the Word of God alone, be it read or heard -- or whatever the way may be whereby one comes to the knowledge of the truths which are revealed only in the Word. "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1:18); "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23).

God does indeed use external means which cause man to be disturbed and to come to himself -- such as poverty, extraordinary judgments upon the nation, the home, or oneself; fear for and being in danger of death; dreams and unrealistic imaginations as if they saw visions; extraordinary deliverances and temporal prosperity; the observation of the godliness of others and their mutual love, as well as other incidents. These, however, are not means unto conversion, but only means to bring them to the Word, to subdue them, and to make them pliable. The Word of God, however, is the only means. The conversion of those who do not attain to the knowledge of the way of salvation is not true conversion.

Regeneration and its Attending Circumstances Fourthly, we must consider the manner in which regeneration occurs, which varies greatly.

(1) Some are converted in a very sudden manner, as in one moment. Such was the case with Zacchaeus, the thief on the cross, many on the day of Pentecost, and the jailer. With others this transpires less rapidly.

(2) Some are converted by way of great terror and consternation caused by being confronted with the law, death, and condemnation, such as was the case on the day of Pentecost, and with the jailor (Acts 16:27).

(3) Some are converted in a very evangelical manner. The salvation and the fullness of the Mediator Jesus Christ overwhelm the soul, and the sweetness of the benefits of the gospel so fill their souls that they have no time to think upon their sins with terror. They are, as it were, swallowed up by the gospel, and as a Zacchaeus they receive Jesus with joy (Luke 19:3;Luke 19:10).

(4) Some the Lord converts in a very quiet manner by granting them a view of the truth. Quietly they perceive their sins and their state of misery outside of Christ, the salvation of the partakers of the covenant, as well as the veracity of the offer of Christ by means of the gospel to them. In thus observing the truth they are gradually and imperceptibly changed, become obedient to the truth, believe in consequence of knowing the truth, and their heart is purified (1 Peter 1:22). They do not experience much grievous sorrow or ecstatic joy, but find a delight in the truth and there is a sweet approbation of it. This is true in reference to their misery, salvation in Christ, as well as to their receiving of Christ and their trusting in Him. These are generally the most consistent and steadfast Christians.

(5) Some are converted in a very gradual fashion, with much vacillation between sorrow and joy, faith and unbelief, strife and victory, and falling and rising again. This is the common method which the Lord generally pursues in the conversion of most people. When I use the word “gradually,” I am referring to conversion in a comprehensive and broad sense; that is, from the first conviction until one consciously receives Christ. For it is otherwise a certainty that conversion [that is, regeneration] transpires in one moment, for the soul in one moment passes from death unto life. There is no intermediate state between being dead and alive. Since this manner of conversion is the most common, we shall deal with it more comprehensively, considering the beginning, continuation, and conclusion of such a conversion. One will thus be able to examine himself accordingly.

We wish to preface this, however, by stating that no one ought to be concerned about the manner of conversion because the manner of his conversion has not been what he himself would prescribe it to be, nor agrees with the manner in which others are converted. If your conversion is a reality, all is well. Therefore, do not be unsettled as you reflect upon the manner in which your conversion has occurred, even if it is such that you have never read or heard of anything like it. The ways of God are mysterious and even in the common way of conversion the one experiences something with which another is not acquainted. One must, however, frequently reflect upon all the providences and ways whereby God has led us. This will give reason for adoration, for glorifying God, and for confirmation of one’s spiritual state. The Common Manner in Which God Converts Sinners

We will now consider the common manner of conversion. Imagine a group of people who are walking toward a certain destination. While doing so, someone calls out to them, “You are on the wrong way; this way does not lead to the destination of your choice. Do not proceed, for a bit farther you will meet with a group of murderers who will rob and kill you. Come, however, and I shall lead you along a certain and safe way to your desired destination.” Some hear the voice of him who calls, but do not understand what he says. It is not worth their effort to stand still and to ascertain what he has to say, and so they proceed. Others do hear and understand the one who is calling, but ridicule him, thinking that they know the way as well as he does, being assured that they are walking upon the right way. They deem this way to be safe and fear no danger, and so they proceed. Others become concerned as to what they ought to do: to proceed or to return. They then either decide to proceed or they vacillate, first leaning this way and then that way, until they are overtaken by the night. Others immediately respond to the call, and readily return. It does not take long, however, and they begin to have second thoughts, for this way is too difficult; the first way is much more enjoyable. They thus forsake the way on which they have entered and proceed

on the way they were travelling initially. Others contemplate the matter and believe him who is calling, knowing him to be sincere and knowledgeable. They fear the impending danger and perceive that the way in which they are directed leads directly to the place where they desire to be, even though this way appears to be somewhat difficult. They thus completely forsake the way upon which they were initially. Steadfastly they follow their guide, and thus come to the desired destination where the others will not arrive. This is but an allegory, which now must be applied to the matter of conversion. The conversion of man transpires in like fashion. God calls all who are under the ministration of the gospel, warning them of destruction, inviting them to salvation, and revealing to them the way, Jesus Christ. Many pay no attention to this whatsoever, and do not consider it to be applicable to them at all. Others listen for a moment, but then go on as before. Others are convinced and are subject to the common operations of the Holy Spirit. I call them common because the elect and the impenitent are partakers of them. These are common convictions about their state of misery, a conception and impression of salvation and condemnation, fear for the wrath of God, knowledge of the Lord Jesus and the mysteries of the faith; they have esteem for the state of God's children and a wish to be also one of them. There will also be a stirring of oneself to repent, to pray, to read God's Word, to exercise historical faith, to join the godly, to flee from the excessive pollutions of the world, etc.

These matters can be found in both the elect and the impenitent. It is quite likely, however, that the elect, for whom such inner stirrings are preparatory to regeneration, experience these matters to a greater degree. Even then they are dead, however, being no closer to life than when they did not have these stirrings. Such preparations are not initial elements of life, nor do they proceed from man himself, but are divine operations within man himself.

Many of those who are called proceed no further than the trembling of a Felix, the persuasion of an Agrippa, the conversion of a Saul, and the change of a Pharaoh. As a dog they return to their vomit, and as a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. They thus continue in their old way.

Others embrace the truth with joy and grow rapidly. However, they have neither root nor true fruit -- even if all this were accompanied by an appearance of godliness. They will keep company with the godly and practice godliness as long as it is to their benefit. However, when persecution for the Word's sake arises, or, if by forsaking the way of godliness, they will gain more honor or advantage, they will leave this way and at times become its most bitter enemies. The Soul-Exercises of the Elect

(1) In the elect, however, in whom the Holy Spirit works these common motions, it being His objective to convert them, the motions mentioned above remain more steadfast. If they seem to disappear entirely, something nevertheless remains which time and again reappears. Convictions will come with greater frequency, and be of a deeper and more serious nature. With some, the thought of being damned causes their "hair to stand up straight" for terror. Salvation, the forgiveness of sin, reconciliation and peace with God, God's love toward them, and a desire to again know, fear, love, obey, and glorify God are so desirable that they cannot be at peace in their souls without them. If they forget about this for a season due to various circumstances or fleshly lusts, the matter itself nevertheless remains at the bottom of their hearts. Their urgency will redouble and resurface. They find themselves deprived of all salvation, and they must have it no

matter what the cost may be.

(2) Those who are thus troubled and desirous -- be it that they are not properly instructed in the truth, are without appropriate guidance, or follow their natural inclination more than instruction from the Word of God -- will generally give themselves to prayer, weeping, and a restraining from sin. This is not to suggest that these things are evil and ought not to be done; rather, all of this is done without the proper objective, as they are desirous to move God thereby to grant salvation unto them. They are unaware that the initiative must come from God's side rather than from man's side. They also do not perceive that God, due to His holiness and justice, cannot be moved to bestow His gracious gifts, but only be moved to wrath by a sinner who is and remains hateful and abominable in himself. When such sinners, after their initiative to seek God and their praying and earnestly striving against sin, perceive that they continue to sin, stumble, and pervert their way, they will become perplexed and discouraged. They believe God's gracious inclinations toward them, which they had hoped to gain with their good behavior, to have changed again. They thus deal with God as they would deal with a man. They attribute motions to Him as if He were a man, and secretly imagine that the initiative must be theirs, that all depends on their activity. This may continue for some time.

(3) Such individuals, upon receiving a deeper insight into these matters, discover that with all their prayers and good works they can neither move God to help them, nor can they be pleasing to Him. Indeed, they discover that everything is so thoroughly sinful that it merits God's wrath. Upon this they become desperate and begin to think that they will never be able to be saved. At this point Satan initiates his secret attacks. Many unbelieving and wretched thoughts arise in their own hearts as well, such as: It is too late for you; you have squandered the time of grace; you have sinned too long; you have sinned too grievously. If only you would not have committed such and such a sin, there would perhaps be some hope for grace, but now it is without hope; you have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost and there is no forgiveness for this sin. You are probably not elected and then all is in vain. All your effort is in vain and there is no more hope. Is all this true? Are such not human suggestions? Are they not all imaginary? In addition to this there are at times evil thoughts and blasphemous insinuations. By all these things such souls are fearfully oppressed, and begin to be inclined to desist, to sink down in discouragements, and to discontinue their efforts.

(4) Furthermore, they now perceive clearly that they can neither serve God nor receive any benefit in His favor, unless they are reconciled with God. They perceive that they cannot be reconciled with God except through perfect satisfaction of His justice by bearing both temporal and eternal punishment due upon sin. They also perceive that perfect holiness is a constituent element of salvation. They become convinced within their hearts that they can neither do the one nor the other, and that it is thus hopeless from their side. This in turn brings forth new perplexity.

(5) Being thus engaged, they begin to see the necessity of a Surety and learn to take note somewhat more carefully of Jesus Christ (who previously was but a name for them) in His natures, offices, humiliation, and exaltation. They acknowledge Him to be the suitable Surety who by His suffering death is able to reconcile man (who is nothing but sin) with God, and be unto him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and eternal salvation. They consider the happiness of those who may have this Lord Jesus as their Savior to be exceedingly great. Oh, if

only He were willing to be such a Savior for them! They fear the contrary, however. They even think that if Jesus were as willing to accept them as they are willing to have Him as their Savior, they would most certainly be saved.

(6) At times they begin to receive some hope, and occasionally begin to perceive some encouraging stirrings during sermons, the reading of God's Word, prayer, a conversation, the reading of an edifying book, or whatever the occurrence may be. With this hope they again become active. They do so, however, in their own strength, and with the wrong objective: to move God. They make the following resolutions: They will carefully be on the watch for sin, they will persevere in prayer, etc., and then they hope that they will move Christ to have compassion upon them and to accept them. The Lord, however, uncovers to them their total inability, and more than ever reveals to them the spirituality of the law (which they did not perceive prior to this) and their own lack of spirituality. More than ever they become conscious of their own darkness in all spiritual matters. He lets them go their way until they see the abominableness of sin, their own loathsomeness, hatefulness, as well as how intolerable and entirely impotent they are, so that in view of this they become as insignificant as a worm and are in a like frame as was the prodigal son. They thus lose all courage as far as their endeavors are concerned.

(7) Having been brought to such depths, they can only wait for God's gracious intervention. Every good thought, every step they take toward Christ, every occasion of lifting up their eyes to heaven for grace, the least tear which drips down, and the least sigh are acknowledged to be a token of God's goodness, and it grieves them that as yet they perceive so little of this.

(8) Furthermore, there is a gradual increase in knowledge and faith concerning the fact that the Lord Jesus calls everyone who hears the gospel, "Whosoever will let him come." He perceives that he in person is called by the Lord Jesus, with the promise that He will not cast out those that come to Him. This causes hope to revive and become more pure in its focus. They turn to Him, look unto Him, long for Him, and yearn for Him. Since it is all free grace and since they are impotent, they wait with quiet composure upon Him. They do so -- one time with hope and another time with strife and sorrow -- until they receive more liberty, receive Him by faith, without any reservation surrender fully to Him, and thus make Him their full reliance. They thus approach unto God with the holiness and satisfaction of their Surety whom they have received by faith. On the basis of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, they ask, "Is not Christ my Surety? Did not He pay for my sins? Am I not now reconciled with Thee? Wilt not Thou then presently receive me in grace?" And thus, turning to God's promises in His Word, which is as an abiding voice from heaven, they either embrace all the promises of the gospel in general, or a particular Scripture is powerfully applied to their heart. By faith they thus hear the promises as an answer from God, and apply them to their heart as being made to them, since they find within themselves the spiritual frames mentioned in these texts. They thus find themselves justified, their consciences purged from dead works, and as having peace with God through Jesus Christ. They experience this with some clarity or in darkness, with a greater or lesser measure of strife, and with a greater or lesser measure of peace and comfort. They are assured that this is neither imaginary nor the result of selfdeception, but that all this is in very truth, their spiritual frame being in agreement with the Word of God. All this is at times accompanied by the sealing power of the Holy Spirit witnessing with their spirit that they are the children of God. From this motive proceeds love to God and Jesus Christ, and this love in turn begets true holiness, the painstaking avoidance of sin, the denial of the world, their

own lust and their own will, and a careful observance of various virtues in order that in all things they might be pleasing unto the Lord as their reconciled Father. The Repetitive Nature of the Exercise of Faith This application of the satisfaction and holiness of Christ does not occur only once, as if this were a finished matter to be put aside in order that one may then proceed and be diligent in sanctification; rather, this is the daily exercise of believers. In doing so, it is not as if they are without grace again, and as if they receive Christ by faith in the same manner as they did the first time, but it is to live continually in Christ, to receive an ever deeper insight into the way of redemption -- a way which can never be fully comprehended. They may often perceive something which they did not see previously, which stirs them up to give thanks unto, to adore, and to magnify God. Since believers, due to their sins, lose the clear perception of their spiritual state and peace within their conscience, there is an ongoing need to make continual application of Christ unto justification. By the act of receiving Christ, one's spiritual state and inner peace are more and more confirmed. This is not to imply that they repeatedly fall out of the state of grace, although many who are feeble and are beginners in grace, due to the weakness of their faith and due to lengthy periods of spiritual desertion, strife, deadness, powerful resurgence of sin, and other such negative circumstances, do come so far that they reject all previous exercises of faith as if these have never been of the right kind, and as if they had never been in the state of grace and had never been regenerated. Such therefore, so to speak, start from the beginning. Those who are further advanced, however, exercise daily application so that they may continually have free access to God, continually delight themselves in peace with God, be quickened in love flowing out of their union with Christ, and, motivated by love, be stirred up to sanctification. The Relationship Between Faith and Regeneration

Prior to the first act of faith, man is spiritually dead, irrespective of how many preparatory exercises he may have had. When we speak of preparation, we do not understand this to refer to the initial elements of spiritual life. Far be it from us to suggest this. In all preparatory exercises man is and remains dead, however, and his deeds cannot please God, however virtuous they may seem. The soul receives the very first principle of life simultaneously with the first act of faith. In a chronological sense, faith and spiritual life begin simultaneously, but in the order of grace faith precedes as being the origin of life. [Note: This statement should not be interpreted as if à Brakel were teaching here that the exercise of faith precedes regeneration. This is graphically confirmed by the fact that the chapter about regeneration (chapter 31) precedes the chapter about faith (chapter 32). Furthermore, the immediate context of this chapter, chapter 32 in its entirety, as well as the context of this entire work make it evident that à Brakel is here referring to the essence or habitus of faith, i.e., the propensity to believe, which God grants to the soul immediately upon and simultaneously with regeneration. For further clarification, see Rev. G. H. Kersten, *Reformed Dogmatics*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 362.] There is no spiritual life apart from union with Christ, who is the life of the soul. Faith is the means whereby union with Christ comes about. This exposes the foolishness of those who first seek for self-denial and holiness. Such are in extreme danger of never being born again.

If someone were to ask me how he may know the initial moment of regeneration, I would answer: from the initial act of faith. If one were further to ask if he must and can know the moment when he exercised faith for the first time, I would answer that he neither has to know this time nor is able to know this with certainty. If he were to begin with the first serious conviction, in all probability he did

not have faith as yet. If he were to begin with the moment when, for the first time, he exercised faith consciously and in a most heartfelt manner, he would reckon too late, for in all probability he already had faith. I thus maintain that one cannot or rarely can know the precise moment when faith begins and when regeneration occurs. It is also not necessary to know this, and it is sufficient if, upon good grounds from God's Word and from a proper knowledge of one's heart and deeds, one may conclude that he believes and is regenerated. This we shall discuss subsequently.

We must not be of the opinion that each act follows upon the other within the soul in such sequence as we have described it here. We cannot express both acts simultaneously, and therefore we must place the one act after the other. However, all the motions mentioned above are frequently intertwined within the soul. At one time the one act comes to the foreground in the heart, and then again the other. Sometimes they function in one and the same exercise of faith, and thus no one ought to trouble himself about the order in which they occur, either by reflecting upon the manner in which he was exercised or as to the manner in which it began. Although someone is led in a different manner from what I have previously delineated, he ought not be distressed concerning this matter, for there is a wondrous diversity in the Lord's dealings. I have also not recorded all of them here and about some I have purposely been silent, since they are most extraordinary. They are nevertheless by means of, and in accordance with, the Word of God. I myself would hardly have given credence to them if I had not dealt with such souls myself. Those I have mentioned are sufficient; I have stated the latter only to prevent a soul from being disquieted who has been converted in an extraordinary manner. What matters is that it transpired by means of the Word of God. It may be that such a person had a reasonable and discerning knowledge concerning fundamental truths, and it may be that his knowledge is very confused, encompassed by much darkness, is of a general nature, and only the result of either hearing the truth preached or hearing someone speak about it. If he has but heard of Christ and of His suffering and death, I deem such knowledge to have come about by means of the Word, for Christ is revealed in the Word of God alone. Such a person therefore need not have had a specific text of Scripture in view.

The Time of Life when Regeneration Occurs The fifth matter to be noted in reference to regeneration is the time or age at which it occurs. We generally distinguish between four stages of life: childhood, the teenage years, adulthood, and old age. God regenerates souls during each of these stages, and thus no stage is excluded. This is exemplified in the laborers being called to the vineyard, some of whom were called during the first, others at the third, the sixth, the ninth, and the eleventh hour (Matthew 20:1-7).

Some are regenerated in childhood. The difference between the necessity of satisfaction and regeneration is this: The justice of God requires the first, whereas the latter proceeds from the will of God. A child, prior to the use of his intellect, being elect and reconciled with God in Christ, can, by the almighty power of God, be converted and changed without the agency of the Word of God, and have its nature sanctified. John the Baptist leaped in His mother's womb when he heard Mary's salutation (Luke 1:41-42).

Experience teaches that children of three, four, five, and six years of age are regenerated. With little instruction such children can come to the knowledge of Christ, and be wrought upon by the Holy Spirit so that they believe and repent. They manifest that God is the focus of their life and that they fear to sin. If they have sinned, they become fearful, and with an eye upon Christ's suffering, prayerfully seek reconciliation. In a childlike manner they experience strife and at times may

rejoice in God. Some retain a distinct memory of this, which may even last a lifetime. As they grow up, the experience of such children is not always the same. Some sweetly progress, and as they increase in years there is also an increase in light, faith, and sanctification, be it with a greater or lesser degree of strife, darkness, and falling into sin. With others there are great intervals which can be of such duration and of such a serious nature that, as far as the external appearance is concerned, it appears as if they never possessed grace. Such, however, is not true as far as the internal state of grace is concerned, for there continues to be the light of conviction, the troubled conscience, and a resurgence of sorrow due to backsliding. There will also be intermittent periods when the heart is lifted up, when they pray with feeling, are incited to holiness, and shed tears -- all of which may cease again. As the years progress, however, such restorations follow each other with ever shorter intervals. Moreover, those who are called during their teenage years are subject to such intervals and restorations even more than those who are converted in adulthood, since corruption and the lusts of the flesh manifest themselves most strongly during youth. They do not have a special promise to prevent a serious falling into sin anymore than did Lot, David, and Peter.

Question: Does the Holy Spirit dwell in all the elect from the very outset, even though regeneration as such is not operative? Also, do all the elect carry within them the seed of regeneration from the very beginning of life, which will germinate at a specified moment?

Answer: I respond negatively to both questions, for 1) I find no basis for this in the Word of God, and 2) the elect, together with all the unconverted, are in the same state of spiritual death (Ephesians 2:12). Prior to regeneration they are without Christ, without promise, and without God (Ephesians 2:12). They are children of wrath even as others are (Ephesians 2:3), and hateful (Titus 3:3). Those who are in such a state cannot be said to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, and to have the seed of regeneration within them. 3) Wherever the Holy Spirit resides, He cannot be inoperative. If He were in them, He would be operative in them. One observes, however, that many of the elect remain under the dominion of sin and the devil for a long period of time. 4) If this were true, it could not be said of them that they subsequently received the Word by the Spirit, as is evidently true in Scripture.

Objection: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). Since all the elect belong to Christ, however, they necessarily have the Spirit.

Answer (1) The elect children of God have been given by the Father to Christ (John 17:9), and Christ as their Surety has brought about their reconciliation. It is upon this basis that a person is the property of Christ and not by reason of the indwelling of the Spirit. It is by this indwelling of the Spirit that those who come to the years of discretion are exercised with, and manifest the reality of, being a partaker of Christ.

(2) The apostle makes reference to adults rather than children, which is evident in nearly every verse of the entire chapter, particularly in this verse itself, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." "To have the Spirit" is contrasted with being "in the flesh." To be "in the flesh" is to be unconverted; to be "in the Spirit" is to be converted. This is evident from verse 5, where we read, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." If one wishes to conclude from these words that all the elect have the Spirit dwelling in them from the very first moment of their existence, one must conclude that all the elect are converted from their very youth, something which is refuted by experience.

(3) The apostle here identifies a characteristic by which one may deduce whether or not he has been regenerated, and whether or not he is a partaker of Christ, that is, having the Spirit of Christ. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13). The distinguishing marks of grace are intended for adults and not for children -- that is, children prior to birth and prior to the use of their intellect. It is thus very evident that it is not the apostle's objective to state that all the elect have the Holy Spirit prior to regeneration.

(4) Since the possession of the Spirit or the lack of it, proves whether one is regenerated or not, it is clear that children [prior to conversion] as well as all the unconverted (even though they may be elect) do not have the Spirit. If the elect were to have the Spirit already prior to their conversion, having the Spirit could not be an evidence of a person's conversion.

Question: How should one judge spiritual motions within children, such as an inclination to pray, the desire to read God's Word, inquiry after spiritual matters, a manifestation of virtuousness, and other specific motions? Furthermore, how must one judge when this prevails in the teenage years without, however, any right knowledge of the Lord Jesus and without the exercise of faith?

Answer: Such spiritual motions cannot always be considered as the initial manifestation of regeneration. One may not conclude on the basis of this that he has been converted since his youth, for experience teaches that such persons may become the most ungodly and die in their sins. Such spiritual motions can be a consequence of the light of nature, the external illumination by the Word of God, or the education and good example of virtuous parents. Those who have come to years of discretion may not date their conversion prior to the exercise of faith in Christ. All those spiritual motions prior to that are to be considered such as has been stated; or as the preparatory operations of the Spirit toward their conversion, for there is no conversion except by faith in Christ, agreeably to the Word of God. It is also a known fact, however, that children may already have faith, and exercise it prior to being conscious of it and being able to give expression to their knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It therefore does indeed occur that the virtuous behavior of some small children proceeds from faith and regeneration. Such virtuous behavior is therefore no certain evidence. Since the unconverted, due to the common operations of the Holy Spirit, can have the spiritual motions such as the elect have prior to regeneration, it is therefore evident that the Holy Spirit does indeed work in those who, nevertheless, do not have the Spirit.

Some are regenerated during their teenage years. They have had a good education, and since their youth have been externally involved with religion. They have lived civil lives and have practiced religion in an external sense. The Lord has given preparatory convictions to many such persons. There are others who in every way have been like the ungodly, yes, who have belonged to the most ungodly in an internal as well as external sense. This is confirmed by Scripture and experience (1 Corinthians 6:10-11). Such persons can readily speak of their change -- out of what misery they have been drawn, and into what wondrous light and life they have been translated. We cannot limit conversion to a certain age, but experience teaches that in congregations where there has been an effectual ministry during their lifetime, most people are converted between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five. The Lord converts some during adulthood, regardless of whether they are married or unmarried. This is particularly true in those localities where there has been no ministry, or an effectual ministry has been absent, but is now available for the first time, as we generally observe in the Acts of the Apostles. When one of two marriage partners is converted,

and the other is not, the first may expect opposition from his spouse. If someone is converted and yet unmarried, I would not only advise such a person not to be yoked with an unbeliever, but also not with an unconverted professor of religion. Even though the latter is not forbidden, it will nevertheless bring such persons into many temptations. They will meet with much opposition, for fire and water, and life and death can never be compatible. To a considerable extent they will generally rob themselves of the sweetness of marital cohabitation. Two godly persons will mutually support each other, especially if they have similar natures. If such is not the case, however, there can occasionally be conflict. Nevertheless, the root of the matter remains, as well as their mutual judgment of each other's state.

Some are converted at the end of their life. Experience teaches that elderly persons who have lived their entire lives under the ministry of God's Word and have resisted much conviction are rarely converted. It does happen, however. Hope is not cut off for anyone as long as they live, and one may therefore not condemn or judge anyone to be lost. It also happens occasionally, although not often, that young or elderly persons are converted at the end of their lives -- either on their sickbed or deathbed, or when in the hands of justice. We read of the conversion of a thief on the cross, but only of one. No one therefore ought to postpone his conversion. Everyone ought presently to remember his Creator "in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). The Fruits of Regeneration The sixth thing that must be considered in reference to regeneration is the fruits of the new birth. Regeneration affects all the faculties of the soul; that is, intellect, will, and affections, as well as all the members of the body which are appointed to be instruments of righteousness. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Everything is changed. The change is such that it is as if a dead person became alive and arose from the dead, as if a blind person received vision, as if a deaf person received hearing, and as if a crippled person walked. Nothing is changed perfectly, however, for the old nature remains, together with its motions and operations. This results in a battle between the flesh and the Spirit (cf. Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:23).

Question: How is it to be understood that within one person there can simultaneously be an old and a new nature, light and darkness, life and death? Does each occupy or consist of a different portion of this man? Does each protect this part as its own and strive to evict the other from its part?

Answer: They do not each function independently, but are completely intertwined, as is true of light and darkness during dusk, or of cold and heat in lukewarm water. Sometimes the one has the upper hand and then again the other. Such is likewise the case here. Two things which are opposite to each other cannot exist equally to the highest degree within one subject. This is possible, however, when each party is in a mediate position. This will not be a peaceful coexistence, however, for the one will seek to drive out the other. One must thus not deduce his regeneration from the degree of perfection of this new life, nor from the measure in which it manifests itself, but rather from its genuineness. If genuine spiritual life, light, and faith are present, then one is regenerate. Let the old man be as strong as it may be, where there is life it will remain; and wherever there is inner life, it will manifest itself in these and similar fruits.

Since spiritual life originates in heaven, it will always gravitate toward heaven. God is not only the cause of spiritual life, but also the object of its motions. God Himself is all the delight, pleasure, and joy of the regenerate man. He cannot be without God. He wishes for and must enjoy the light of God's countenance, peace with God, and love and communion with God. Due to being united to God, he wishes to be united with His will, and thus to hate and shun what He hates, and to find delight in and in doing whatever God delights in and is pleasing to Him. He perceives at once when he is at a distance from the Lord. This will grieve and trouble him, causing him to lose his liberty, and he will not be able to rest until he is again near to God who is the resting place of his soul. There he finds his life and there he can breathe, as his body breathes the air. "But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:28). As delightful as life is to him, so grievous is deadness.

Secondly, a man who has become spiritually alive lifts up, as a newborn child, the eyes of his understanding and beholds this wondrous light with delight. His eyes will repeatedly turn to that direction; he will take note of that light and by that light will perceive things which he did not see previously. He experiences what the man born blind experienced, who, after receiving light, could not distinguish what he saw, but saw people walking as if they were trees. Nevertheless, this light is precious to him in a most wondrous way. The world and all that is to be found in it -- the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, public office, social status, money, clothing, real estate, honor, and the love of man -- he sees from an entirely different perspective. All of this has lost its glory, luster, respectability, and desirability. He views all these things as unspeakable vanity, deeming all who seek their delight in this as absolute fools, and deeming himself also to have been a fool bereft of his senses. When he interacts with the Word of God, he discerns its spiritual dimension as well as the desirability of the spiritual matters to be found in it. In a word, he sees everything from an entirely different perspective than formerly. That which he formerly esteemed he now despises, and that which he formerly despised he now deems to be incomparably valuable, desirable, and glorious.

Thirdly, as a result of spiritual life he wills differently from what was previously the case. Whatever he previously delighted in, he now hates, and whatever he hated before, he now delights in. Now all his love and desire are focused upon God, Christ, the godly, purity of heart, self-denial, humility, meekness, uprightness, the manifestation of God's image, and a life unto God's glory. He is enamored with this and faints from desire. It grieves him and is his sorrow when he misses this, as well as when he backslides and becomes entangled in the things of this world. This David manifested when he wrote, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength" (Psalms 18:1); "And I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved" (Psalms 119:97); "O how love I thy law!" (Psalms 119:97).

Fourthly, spiritual life brings forth different thoughts and deliberations. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8:5). Formerly, such a person thought and mused upon sin, reflecting on previously committed sins in order to yet find delight in them. He would think upon future sins (or sins never to be committed in the future) in such a fashion as if he were presently committing them, or in order to provide his imagination with sufficient matter to reflect upon. He would devise and formulate means to actually commit such a sin -- be it to commit it in very deed or to merely muse about the manner in which this sin could possibly be committed. For sin, rather than God and His will, was

the object of his contemplations. Upon having become the recipient of spiritual life, however, he will devise means to be delivered from such sinful and vain thoughts, since they very much injure, grieve, and offend the soul. Whatever is deemed to be sinful yields sufficient reason for the soul to abhor it. We do not like to reflect upon that which we abhor. Instead, the soul wishes to think upon God and to reflect upon the way of redemption for poor mankind. Now he will think upon how one may seek God and be able to find Him. Such a person finds delight in spiritual reflection. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord" (Psalms 104:34); "When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches" (Psalms 63:6).

Fifthly, as a result of spiritual life, there will also be a different objective in all his activities. Whatever man did formerly was all for his own benefit, and all ended in himself so that he would have honor, advantage, delight, and love. This propensity functioned in such a proficient manner that he did not even have to stimulate himself to reflect on the objective of his actions, for it of necessity would end in himself, and his ego would motivate him toward this. After conversion, ulterior motives -- seeking of self and his ego -- become most troublesome, rob him of all freedom to do something, and of all comfort if he has performed a good work. He is now determined, however, to do the will of God in all things as a service to God, and to do all that he does of God, through God, for God, and unto God. It is his desire that in all things he would end in God and be enabled to manifest to others what it means to honor, find delight in, fear, obey, and trust God. If this motive has moved him to be active in such a manner, if it enables him to persevere, and if in all simplicity he ends therein, he will then be comforted and well-satisfied, even if the result of his doing so brings injury, contempt, and adversity. "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Sixthly, spiritual life will generate confidence of a different sort. Formerly such a person was puffed up with his own wisdom, strength, and possessions. He would always search for something in the world to gratify his lusts and acquire peace and pleasure. The strength or weakness of his hope was contingent upon whether or not circumstances and/or friends were favorably disposed toward him. Gold was his confidence (Job 31:24), and he put his trust in man, made flesh his arm and strength, and with his heart departed from the Lord (Jeremiah 17:7). Now, however, all things are but vanity and only beget trouble. He renounces all this and turns toward the Lord Jesus Christ. God being his reconciled God, he will rest in His omnipotence, wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, doing so in a general sense as well as in each particular situation, both according to body and soul. He takes refuge in Him as the One who will perfect that which concerneth him and bring it to pass. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (Jeremiah 17:7).

Seventhly, spiritual life will result in deeds which are entirely different from before. Formerly, such a person lived according to the lusts of the flesh, being dictated to by the flesh and his thoughts. Formerly, he was void of wisdom, disobedient, in error, indulging in manifold pleasures and lusts, living in wickedness and envy, as well as being hateful and hating one another. However, now such a person will put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. He will make it his wholehearted business to forsake all ungodliness and worldly pleasures, and to live modestly, righteously, and godly in this present world. The law of God is his rule which he strictly observes in both great and small things. Although he falls into sin more easily in one thing than in the other, he does not permit himself any liberties in either thing. He is committed to the practice of all virtue, humility, meekness,

peacefulness, helpfulness, love, tolerance, moderation, truthfulness in speaking, wisdom, dignity, etc. In this way his godliness becomes manifest to both converted and unconverted alike. The world will hate him and the godly will delight in him. In a word, he has become an entirely different person within and without, in the home and on the street, in company and in solitude, and in silence as well as in speaking. In his dress he will be modest, without being conformed to the world, and thus, without offending anyone, he will endeavor to shine as a light in the world. He will strive to be an example to everyone, conducting himself to the honor of God, so that the unconverted may be exposed and the converted be built up.

Eighthly, spiritual life will result in seeking out different company. Formerly such a person was loved by the world and he loved the world. He formerly loved sinners -- those who were wanton and vain, backbiters, mockers, adulterers, drunkards, and gamblers; he found delight to be in the company of such persons. Now, however, he abhors such people and joins himself to the godly. He is a friend of those who fear the Lord. Such are now most glorious in his eyes; he loves them, keeps company with them, and wishes to fall and rise with them. He chooses rather to suffer affliction with God's people than to live in prosperity with the world and enjoy prestige.

Consider all this together and in doing so examine your heart and your deeds in the presence of an omniscient God, and consider whether you can come to the conclusion whether or not you are converted. A Serious Exhortation to the Unconverted An unconverted person ought to reason as follows:

(1) All men, myself included, are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, separated from God, and subject to the wrath of God. The God of truth thus speaks in His Word, and this is therefore the truth.

(2) Without regeneration no one -- and thus also not I -- will be saved. This is equally true for all, for God says it in His Word.

(3) I am separated from and live in separation from God. I am not united to Him in Christ Jesus -- a union which neither appeals nor is desirable to me. I do not grieve over that which I miss, nor do I seek it. I am satisfied to be without it, as long as I can have my way in the pursuit of worldly things. It is my delight to yield to my lusts and to indulge in the commission of sin. I neither know God nor know of spiritual life with God. It does not appeal to me; I do not love it; it is not my objective; I do not think about it; and I do not occupy my thoughts and considerations therewith. I also do not rest and trust in God, and even if I confess that I do, my heart witnesses that such is not the case. The law is not the rule of my life, but rather self-interest. All that I do is not motivated by love for, fear of, and obedience to God, but I live for the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. All my deeds do not resemble those of the godly, but I am like other people instead, be it in a more or less sinful way. With my entire being (that is, with intellect, will, affections), in joy and sorrow, with eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and feet, I am not engaged in spiritual things but rather in the things of this world. All my religion is nothing more than fleshly activity and external in nature, and I think about the service of God only in general terms. I do not delight in, but despise, the godly. I neither wish nor desire to be in their company, but it is my delight to be in the company of those who do not speak about God and are engaged in the practice of vanity, regardless of whether the sins indulged in are blatant or civil in nature. This I observe, and this my heart must acknowledge. I must thus conclude that I am unconverted. I must further conclude that if I remain unconverted I

neither can nor will be saved. I have frequently recognized this, but it does not move me. I have also at times made a beginning in this respect, but the way was too narrow for me. I neither wanted, nor was able, to live in such a fashion, even if I must go lost. I therefore desisted from doing so with a sigh, returned to my former life, and soothed myself with thinking upon the mercy of God. I thought that if none will be saved but those who live in such a fashion, not many will be saved. This I do not believe, however, and therefore the way cannot be that narrow, and I am thus hopeful that I shall nevertheless be saved. If not, have no fear, for there is just as much hope for me as someone else. In view of all of this, you can readily conclude the following about me: I am unconverted.

Consider once, you who are now convinced of being unconverted, how wretched you are, and how wretched you will eternally remain if you are not converted prior to your death. May it be a means to your conversion.

First, there is a primary promise in the covenant of grace which includes all other promises: I shall be your God. This promise does not pertain to you; God is not your God, and you are thus without God (Ephesians 2:12). There is no rest and safety for you in God; instead He is your enemy. God with His entire being, together with all creatures, is against you and will afflict you with all those terrors which cause a man to be wretched and in pain according to body and soul. God Himself will be a terror unto you and His countenance is against you. Oh, how dreadful it will be for you to fall into the hands of the living God! Where will you hide yourself? Heaven above, hell beneath, your conscience within, and all creatures surrounding you will conspire to bring you into such a condition that your hair will stand up straight if you but consider it. More I cannot say, for it is inexpressible.

Secondly, the Lord Jesus is not your Savior, for he who is in Christ Jesus is a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). You are not a new creature, and thus you are without Christ (Ephesians 2:12). Freely call Him your Savior as long as you wish, but you will experience that you have no part with Him, and His merits are of no benefit to you. His appearance in the day of judgment will be nothing less than the greatest possible terror to you. If you are of the opinion that you will come into heaven upon death, you will find the door closed, and He will say to you, "Depart ... I know you not" (Matthew 25:12).

Thirdly, you know that no one can be saved without faith. You who are unconverted are without faith, and that which you call faith and imagine to possess, is not faith. It will be of no more avail to you than the faith of the devils who also believe that there is a God and that Christ is the Savior; however, they tremble. Yes, your faith will make your condemnation all the heavier since you have not received Him by true faith. "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

Fourthly, you are cursed and accursed of God, and all that is yours and all that you have done is accursed. "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do" (Deuteronomy 28:16-20). If this does not sufficiently terrify you, then also consider Psalms 109:17-19 : "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with

cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually." Who does not tremble upon the pronouncement of these curses? Unconverted sinner, these curses rest upon you as long as you remain unconverted.

Fifthly, if this were all, and the curse were to terminate at the end of this life, you could continue in this way, submit to suffering, and hope that your case would not be the worst. For the unconverted observe that the way of the wicked comes to a prosperous end. What is a curse which is not executed? The greatest evil is, however, reserved for hereafter. An eternity is coming when an end will come to all the long suffering of God. There will be no diversion or comfort for anyone, but rather the curse will eternally have its effect without interruption and without cessation. How dreadful it will be when the devil will carry the soul away to hell, separating it from the body! How dreadful it will be when soul and body will be united on the last day; when the unconverted will find themselves at the left hand of the Judge of heaven and earth; and when both the glory of the Lord Jesus as well as the terrors displayed upon the face of heaven and earth will combine to terrify the sinner! One will then experience what a curse is. Then he will see the godly in glory, who will have utter contempt for him, and after having been fully convinced of all his ungodliness, will hear the dreadful sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). This will be followed by the dreadful execution of the sentence. Heaven will be closed for them to all eternity; hell will be their eternal abode where they will dwell without light and rest. Sensitivity and pain will not be reduced, and within there will be the unbearable worm of conscience. They will be filled with God's wrath, be without grace and hope, and experience an inexpressible despair. "This is the place of him that knoweth not God" (Job 18:21).

Impress these matters upon your heart and do not ignore them. Do not reject these thoughts simply because they are too unpalatable. For if such thoughts are already terrifying, what will the matter itself be? Meditate upon all these matters and apply them to yourself, saying, "This shall eternally be my portion if I continue on in this way and am not converted," so that the terror of the Lord would persuade you to believe, for God does use conviction and impressions of terror as a means unto conversion.

Question: "What must I do to be saved?"

Answer: Do you mean this? Do you say this in truth and in earnest? Would you be willing to miss all that is delightful in the world? Would you be willing to part with your sin which you deem to be so delightful, wellintentioned, advantageous, and enjoyable? Is the idea of being reconciled with God, to love, fear, and serve God in all godliness more desirable to you than anything else? Is it your desire to be acquainted with Him? Do you desire it more than anything else? If you say, "Yes, I mean this in earnest," then I reply, "Repent and believe the gospel." If you reply in turn that you know very well that you will then be saved indeed, take special note that it is an inexpressible mercy and privilege that you can be saved upon faith and repentance. God is not obligated to save you in this way, but it is His sovereign goodness alone that He promises and bestows salvation in this manner. Therefore, repent!

Question: Am I able to? Is this within the realm of my ability?

Answer (1) Be assured that it is your duty, which is a fact of which you approve.

(2) Try it once, and upon beginning you will first of all experience that you are blind, and that you are neither acquainted with God, Christ, the way to Christ, the regenerate state of the soul, nor with the essential nature of true holiness. How will you respond to that with which you are not acquainted? Furthermore, you will experience that, when it comes to the point of engaging yourself, you will find yourself unwilling. Your unwillingness is the initial step toward neglect. Furthermore, the wickedness of your nature is so great, sin is so strong, and the matter so difficult, that you will indeed not be able. Therefore sink down in your misery and inability, and as far as you yourself are concerned, be without hope and in despair.

Question: What counsel do you have? Is there then no hope for me at all? Answer: There is no hope to be found in you, but there is hope with God. There is hope for you since you live under the ministry of the gospel, which is the means -- yes, the only means -- whereby God converts souls. Rejoice, therefore, that you may live under the means and that God grants you conviction and a desire for repentance and salvation. Be diligent in the use of the means, in hearing sermons, and in attending catechism classes. Read God's Word frequently and attentively, or let someone read it to you. Join yourself to the godly and request that you be admitted to their gatherings. Yield to the inclinations to pray and to be godly.

Question: Shall I then be converted and saved if I do all this?

Answer: Your efforts will not move God to grant you repentance, but God will also not exclude you if you do not exclude yourself. You have reason to hope since God has thus far brought you under conviction. Wait therefore for the least movement of the Spirit, respond to it, and be careful that you do not resist it. Be thus consistent in your use of the means and do not relent if time and again you are drawn away by your lusts. A Word to the Regenerate

I now wish to address myself to the truly regenerate. You, who earlier in this chapter have perceived with discernment what the nature of regeneration is, as well as what the various ways are in which God brings about regeneration, compare yourself therefore in the presence of an omniscient God, and consider whether you are in truth a recipient of this life (I am not referring here to the measure of life received). Judge in truth, take note, and do not deny it. If you may possess this life, do not belittle it with a show of humility, as if you had accomplished it and are downplaying your own work. For it is not your work, but rather the work of an omnipotent God. It is a much greater sin to deny grace and to belittle grace in us than it is to boast of grace which one does not possess. Draw the following conclusion therefore by saying, "I am convinced that regeneration is such. I am a partaker of it. I observe it in myself, and my conscience bears witness to this before God. It thus follows that I am regenerate."

Let there not only be such a conclusion, but with the Ethiopian, the jailor, and Lydia, rejoice in this so that you may derive a most certain comfort from it.

(1) Therefore ascend to the fountain from which regeneration has proceeded: the eternal love and election of God. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3); "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called" (Romans 8:30). You have thus eternally been loved and chosen by God, for you are regenerate.

(2) You are a child of God at this present moment, for God has of His own will begotten you with the Word of truth (James 1:18). You are born of God and therefore you are a child of God (John

1:12-13). God is thus your Father and will deal with you as a loving Father, and as a child you may request all things from Him and trust in Him.

(3) Your spiritual state is certain and unchangeable. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). Therefore, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Php 1:6). Therefore rejoice and be not fearful of this good work being rescinded.

(4) By way of your regeneration focus upon eternal felicity as being your certain inheritance, and endeavor to live and rejoice in this expectation and hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

If you are regenerate, part fully with all who are dead, that is, with the unconverted, for they stink as badly as rotting corpses. Instead, join yourself to the living, and be "a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts" (Psalms 119:63). Let all your desire be toward "the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent" (Psalms 16:3). Neither isolate nor separate yourself from the church, for otherwise your light will grow dim and your walk will be contrary to the nature of regeneration. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Be not merely satisfied with being regenerate and a partaker of life, but rather strive for growth and increase, for that is characteristic for whatever possesses life. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2).

Live as a living soul; manifest your life by way of your deeds by the exercise of all virtues, in order that the difference between the dead and the living may thus be apparent. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:13). AMEN.

037. Chapter 32: Concerning Faith

----- CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO ----- Concerning Faith

We place faith following regeneration. This is not to suggest that man is first made alive and regenerated, and then is gifted with faith; on the contrary, faith precedes regeneration. This is not true in a chronological sense, but as far as natural order is concerned, for the Word is the seed of regeneration (1 Peter 1:23), and the Word cannot be efficacious except by faith (Hebrews 4:2). Upon the first act of receiving Jesus and being united with Him, man becomes spiritually alive. It is by faith, however, that one receives Him as such and is united to Him, and by the exercise of faith the life of such a person increases. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith" (Colossians 2:6-7).

Since atheism is presently manifesting itself on the one side, and temporal faith on the other side, it is all the more necessary that we present and consider the nature of faith from all perspectives. We shall first discuss the word "faith," and then consider the matter itself. In our consideration of the word itself we shall deal with 1) its meaning, 2) the diversity of matters represented by the very same word, and 3) other words which are identical in meaning. The Meaning of the Word "Faith"

We shall first consider the meaning of the word. Each language, being unique, cannot be the rule for another language. We are here discussing the word "faith" as it is recorded in the original Hebrew and Greek. We must therefore observe what the essential meaning of this word is in Hebrew and Greek, rather than what it commonly means in our language, as this paves the way for the misinterpretation of Scripture as far as faith is concerned. The Hebrews used the word *hemin*. The word *hemin* has the inherent meaning (approved by linguists): to conduct oneself. In our language this is occasionally translated as to believe. "He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16). In our language the act of believing generally presupposes a promise, or a statement made by another. This, however, is not always true for the Hebrew word. It means to believe, even when neither a declaration nor a promise is involved. "He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword" (Job 15:22). This is also true in Job 19:25 and Lamentations 4:12. Sometimes the same word *hemin* is translated as "to trust," even when there is no reference whatsoever to either a declaration or a promise. "Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity" (Job 15:31); "Behold, he put no trust in his servants" (Job 4:18). This is likewise true in Job 15:15. *Emouna* is derived from this word, which is translated in our language as "faith" (cf. Hosea 2:19; Habakkuk 2:4). It is also referred to as "faithfulness" (Isaiah 25:1; Psalms 89:2; Psalms 119:75), "truth" (Psalms 33:4), and "faithful" (Proverbs 28:20). These various expressions [Note: The variety of expressions in the "Statenbijbel" is much greater than in the KJV. The Dutch words "vastigheid," "waarheid," and "getrouwheid" are all translated by the word "faithfulness" in the KJV.] in our language are expressed by this one word in Hebrew. The Greek words *pistis* and *pisteuo* are occasionally translated as faith and to believe respectively, when they have reference to promises. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Sometimes it is translated as to commit, when there is neither reference to the Word nor to a

promise. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because He knew all men" (John 2:24); "Unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2); "A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me" (1 Corinthians 9:17); "Who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:11). [Note: Also in this instance the diversity of vocabulary is greater in Dutch than in English. The following Dutch words found in the Statenvertaling are all translated as "to commit" in the KJV: betrouwen, toebetrouwen, vertrouwen.]

It is beyond refutation that we must define the essence and nature of the word believe as it is found in the Hebrew and Greek rather than in our language. The verb believe then does not always pertain to promises, and it does not always refer to the act of receiving and the giving of assent to the Word and the promises, but it also means "to trust in," "to commit to," and "to rely upon." Since the word "believe" does not really have this meaning in our language, we would rather use the French or the original Latin word *crediter* or *crediteur*, which means "to believe" in these languages, for these words do not merely have reference to holding someone's words to be true, but they also express the act of entrusting something to someone. The foregoing clearly confirms that one would make serious mistakes if one were to understand the word "believe" only as we customarily do in our language, and if one were to base a description of saving faith upon this meaning. This explains why there is such ignorance concerning the nature of faith in those who merely focus on their own language and pay no attention to the meaning of this word in the original language. Consequently, the word means to trust in (or to entrust to). The second thing to be observed in considering this word is that this one word "faith" refers to a variety of matters which are essentially different.

(1) Sometimes it refers to faithfulness in fulfilling one's promises. "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect" (Romans 3:3).

(2) Sometimes it refers to the doctrine of faith. "Holding faith, and a good conscience" (1 Timothy 1:19).

(3) Occasionally it also refers to the confession of truths which are believed. "... your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Romans 1:8).

(4) At times it also refers to the actual exercise of the soul whereby one believes the truths of Scripture. In reference to such faith Scripture speaks of four kinds: historical faith, miraculous faith, temporal faith, and saving faith. These differ in essence from each other, even though they are called by the same name. This must be clearly noted, lest one be misled by the sound of the word, for we shall here only discuss saving faith.

Historical, Temporal, Miraculous, and Saving Faith

First, historical faith is called such since it pertains to the knowledge of the history of the Word of God (that is, the record of the matters contained in it), and acknowledges and embraces this as truth. Those, however, who have such faith are not exercised with these matters; they have no more effect upon such persons than secular history. It does not stir them within, and sometimes it does not even solicit a confession of the truth. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19); "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest" (Acts 26:27).

Secondly, temporal faith is a knowledge of, and assent to, evangelical truth as being veritable. It generates some natural motions within the affections of the soul, a confession of these truths with the church, and external behavior which is consistent with their confession -- however, all this without being united to Christ unto justification, sanctification, and salvation. The following passages speak of such faith: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended" (Matthew 13:20-21); "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance" (Hebrews 6:4-6); "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (2 Peter 2:20). A bit further on, we shall deal more comprehensively with the difference between temporal and saving faith.

Thirdly, miraculous faith is a heartfelt conviction generated by the immediate operation of God, that a given supernatural act will either occur due to a command given by us, or will be wrought upon us. However, the power for the execution of miracles is not to be found in man, but God executes them by His omnipotent power in response to this faith. This is to be observed in the following passages: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 17:20); "... and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains ..." (1 Corinthians 13:2); "The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked" (Acts 14:9-10). This faith was especially prevalent in the days of Christ and the apostles, its purpose being the confirmation of the doctrine of the gospel. These three types of faith mentioned we shall not discuss in this chapter.

Fourthly, there is saving faith, which is also referred to as justifying faith. Both refer to the objective attained by this faith, which differs from the others in its very essence. This faith we shall subsequently discuss. We have thus eliminated the ambiguity of the word itself.

Additional Biblical Terminology Describing Faith In considering this word, the third thing to be noted is the other vocabulary with which saving faith is denominated in Scripture, and whereby the nature of this faith can be clearly discerned from a variety of perspectives. As the word *heemin* means "to believe," "to commit to," this is likewise true for the word *chasa*. It can mean to put your trust in someone. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Psalms 2:12). It can mean to trust in someone. "... my shield, and He in whom I trust" (Psalms 144:1-2). "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it" (Isaiah 14:32). "... therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings" (Psalms 36:7). [Note: In Dutch à Brakel lists the following expressions found in each of the texts just quoted as found in the Statenvertaling: "betrouwen op iemand," "toevlucht hebben tot iemand," "toevlucht nemen." All these expression are translated in the KJV by the phrase "to trust in."] The meaning of the word "believe" is also expressed by *batach*. This also means to trust. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord" (Psalms 112:7); "And they that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee" (Psalms 9:10-11); "Trust ye not in lying words" (Jeremiah 7:4); "They shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images" (Isaiah

42:17). [Note: Again, the nuances of meaning conveyed by the Dutch are simply not expressed in the KJV. The following expressions are translated with the verb "to trust": "betrouwen," "vertrouwen," "zich vertrouwen op," "zich verlaten op."]

The meaning of the verb "believe" is also expressed by *samach* which means "to lean upon someone." "By Thee have I been holden up from the womb" (Psalms 71:6). [Note: The literal translation of the Statenvertaling reads: "I have leaned upon Thee from the womb."] The Greek words *pistis* and *pisteuo* mean "to believe," "to trust," and "to commit," and this is likewise true for the words *peitho* and *peithomai*, as well as *pepoithesis*, which can mean "to persuade to faith." "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). It can mean "to believe." "And some of them believed" (Acts 17:4). It can mean "to trust in." "He trusted in God" (Matthew 27:43). It can also mean "to put one's trust in someone." "... them that trust in riches" (Mark 10:24); "I will put my trust in Him" (Hebrews 2:13); "And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward" (2 Corinthians 3:4). When one therefore considers all these expressions together, he cannot but be fully convinced that the act of believing does not merely consist in assenting to the truths of the gospel, but is the exercising of a heartfelt trust in God through Christ, entrusting oneself to Him.

We have thus discussed the meaning of the word comprehensively, so that someone who is ignorant as far as languages are concerned may perceive what "to believe" signifies in Hebrew and in Greek. We shall now proceed to consider the matter itself. In doing so we shall consider the following matters individually:

- (1) The existence of faith in the world and the necessity thereof;
- (2) The genus or type of activity which is connected with faith;
- (3) The subject in which faith is present;
- (4) The object concerning which faith is exercised;
- (5) The form or unique essence of faith;
- (6) The moving and secondary causes of faith;
- (7) The objective of faith;
- (8) The additional characteristics of faith;
- (9) The effects or fruits of faith;
- (10) The similarities and differences when compared with other types of faith;
- (11) The opposite of faith;
- (12) The description of faith. The Necessity of Faith

Christians and all who believe the Word of God need no proof that faith is necessary and that without it no one can be saved. This is confirmed by the following texts: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son (that is, who does not believe in the Son) shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36); "He that believeth and is

baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). The Genus of Faith The genus or very nature of faith is that it is a propensity. Propensities complement the functioning of the intellect and the will. Such propensities are either acquired by much exercise, or implanted in the soul of man by God. The latter is true for faith, hope, love, etc. All of man’s activity to obtain faith is not in the least degree sufficient to enable him to acquire faith. God initially gives it, God preserves and increases it, and God finishes it. He who desires to have it must request it from God and expect it from Him. He who may have it must gratefully acknowledge that he has received it from God and prayerfully expect the increase from Him. The Subject of Faith The subject or seat of faith is man, more particularly the soul, and most particularly the will. Man is the subject of faith; however, this is not true of all men, but of the elect only. “For all men have not faith” (2 Thessalonians 3:2); “... according to the faith of God’s elect” (Titus 1:1); “And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

Question: Do infants in baptism receive the essence of faith? Do baptized infants exercise faith?

Answer: We answer negatively. 1) This is nowhere stated in Scripture, and therefore it ought to be rejected and is not to be believed. 2) Infants do not use their intellect. Rationality is innate, but the act of reasoning does not begin until later. The act of reasoning is essential in the exercise of faith. 3) Children, prior to the age of reason, have no knowledge of anything. How then will they be able to believe, since knowledge of divine truths is a necessity for this? 4) Small children prior to the age of reason do not actually commit either good or evil (Romans 9:11), [Note: The actual reference in Romans 9:11 is to unborn children.] and thus they also do not exercise faith, this being a virtue. 5) Faith is by hearing (Romans 10:17), and thus infants are not able to believe, for they cannot yet hear the Word of God.

Objection #1: “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me ...” (Matthew 18:6).

Answer: The text refers to those who have the use of their intellect, for they are capable of being offended. Christ does not refer to the child whom he used as an example (vss. 2-3), but rather to those who are in spiritual infancy.

Objection #2: “Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14).

Answer (1) It cannot be proven that these children were so small that they were not able to exercise their intellect as yet. This would have to be clearly proven in order to use this as a proof text. The opposite is probable, for children of two or three years old are able to believe.

(2) Theirs is the kingdom of heaven by reason of the satisfaction of Christ which God has imputed to them, and thus not due to the exercise of faith; however, not all children are entitled to salvation, but only those who are elect.

Objection #3: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength” (Psalms 8:2).

Answer: This does not suggest that small children and infants are able to speak (if this were so, then the objection would be nullified), but they rather magnify God in an objective sense, that is, they give adults reason to magnify God in His works, as the heavens and the firmament do day

and night (Psalms 19:2-3).

Objection #4: There are examples of small children who had faith, such as Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5).

Answer (1) The text speaks of God's foreknowledge according to election and of being sanctified or set apart for the prophetic office according to the counsel of God.

(2) It is one thing to be sanctified by God's Spirit (which God is capable of doing), and it is a different matter actually to exercise faith. Man's nature can be sanctified without being actually exercised as far as holiness itself is concerned. This can also be in the absence of faith.

Additional Objection: We have the example of Timothy. "And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

Answer: The text does not refer to Timothy prior to the age of reason, but to the time when he was capable of being instructed in the Word of God by his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice. This therefore does not prove the exercise of faith prior to the age of reason.

Additional Objection: We have the example of John the Baptist (Luke 1:41).

Answer (1) We do not read that he believed, but rather that he leaped upon the salutation of Mary to his mother Elizabeth.

(2) We neither know what the omnipotence of God wrought in him, nor what caused him to leap. One may not use the extraordinary to draw a conclusion for the ordinary.

(3) John was neither circumcised nor baptized. Thus his leaping was not due to the efficacy of baptism -- this being the matter we wish to prove. Additional

Question: Do all the elect from the moment of their conception have the seed of faith in them, even though they do not actually exercise faith?

Answer: We answer negatively, for first of all, Scripture does not speak anywhere of the seed of faith or of faith in seminal form. It is therefore rather bold to maintain this and to establish an entire doctrine on this. Scripture does speak of the seed of regeneration, which is the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). This, however, is not to be found in children, but in the Lord's time is a means unto their conversion. If the seed of faith were to be the beginning of faith, they would actually possess it already.

Secondly, men (and thus also the elect), prior to regeneration, are spiritually dead, children of wrath, without Christ, without promise, without God, and thus also without faith (Ephesians 2:2-3; Ephesians 2:12). The Father, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit did watch over them as Father, Savior, and Sanctifier, from the moment they came into existence. In and of themselves, however, they were in the same spiritual state as all others.

Thirdly, no one receives faith except by hearing (cf. Romans 10:17; Galatians 3:2). Man is thereby transformed from an unbeliever into a believer. Man cannot be said to have received faith, to become a believer, and to receive faith by the preaching of the gospel if he already had the

essence of faith prior to this, and thus already was a believer.

Objection #1: The elect children are in the covenant and therefore must also have had faith at the very beginning, for none can be in the covenant without faith.

Answer (1) All elect children are not in the covenant, for thousands are converted whose parents were heathens. Or do only children of partakers of the covenant have the seed of faith and not other elect children? What proof do we have for such a distinction among elect children?

(2) To be in the covenant as children does not presuppose that there is anything in these children, or else one would have to conclude that in actuality they have faith and are regenerated. Since this cannot be concluded, this objection is also not true.

Objection #2: Theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:14).

Answer: See prior comments.

Objection #3: Such was true for Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Timothy.

Answer: See prior comments.

Objection #4: Natural righteousness would have been perpetuated if Adam had not sinned. Why then can this not be true for supernatural regeneration in the seed of partakers of the covenant?

Answer (1) We know that God would have been able to do this, but we also know that we may not draw a logical conclusion from possibility to reality.

(2) The question "Why not?" cannot be used to confirm something. God is not accountable for any of His deeds, and we are not capable of advancing reasons for God's work and actions. We therefore may not maintain or deny something simply because we can or cannot give a reason, but we must rather turn to the Word of God to observe what has or has not been revealed there.

(3) Experience teaches that the seed of faith is not to be found in all elect children of God-fearing partakers of the covenant. Some are among the most ungodly until the end of their life, a fact which contradicts their possession of the seed of faith. For to have the seed of faith is truly to have faith itself, be it in its beginning stage. Many children of the heathen are also among the elect who, however, would not have the seed of faith. It then would follow that God converts the children of the heathen in a different manner from the elect children of partakers of the covenant. The latter would then repent due to the germination of this seed which is in them, whereas faith would be given to the former without the presence of such seed.

Objection #5: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Answer: See prior comments.

Objection #6: They have the Spirit of faith, for otherwise they would not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9).

Answer: See prior comments in chapter 31. It thus remains certain that the elect do not possess the seed of faith from the moment of their conception. The text refers to adults.

Knowledge of the Truth: An Essential Element of the Exercise of Faith

Since the elect therefore are the subject of faith, we must thus investigate more carefully where in man faith is seated. Faith is not seated in the body, although it manifests its operation by way of the body in confessing the truth and in the practice of good works. Rather, the real seat of faith is the soul. "For with the heart man believeth" (Romans 10:10). The soul has its faculties whereby it is operative: intellect, will, and affections. The existence of these can be intelligently deduced and considered individually. They are thus distinct from each other. The intellect is neither the will nor the affections. The will is neither the intellect nor the affections. Likewise, the inclinations are neither of these two. They are distinct in their operations. The intellect has the elements of comprehension, judgment (which is speculative as well as applicatory), and conscience. The will lovingly embraces those matters which are desirable and is repulsed by any matter which it perceives to be hateful. The affections are the soul's desires or yearnings for fulfillment. The soul can neither be its own fulfillment nor find delight and satisfaction within itself, but must find its fulfillment in something outside of itself. However, even though one can deduce the existence of each by means of our intellect and consider them individually (which we must do if we, in an intelligent manner, wish to be conscious of our deeds and their nature), they are nevertheless not fully distinguished when man is operative. If we make too much of a distinction in the operation of these faculties in man, we shall engender as much perplexity and confusion as when we intermix them. Applying this to faith, this means that the believing soul is engaged in understanding, willing, and desiring. When a man believes, all his faculties function simultaneously.

Question: In order to believe, must one know the truths he believes, or is a mere blind assent satisfactory, so that faith could best be described as a lack of knowledge?

Answer: Papists deny the first proposition and affirm the second. We maintain that assent is not sufficient, but that knowledge is absolutely essential for faith. I am not referring to a perfect knowledge of the truth whereby one would be able to comprehend and perceive with clarity and discernment the intricate interrelationships between the matters believed. For then there are very many matters (which neither can nor may be doubted), which we would not believe. Take, for example, the doctrines concerning God's essence, His eternity, His infinity, and the union of the two natures in Christ. Which of these revealed mysteries would one then believe? Rather, we are referring to a knowledge whereby the acquaintance with revealed truth is such that one comprehends and has a proper and true understanding of the truth, be it with more or less light. By maintaining that knowledge is an element of faith, we are not saying that faith is equivalent to knowledge. We are also not saying that one believes a truth merely because he knows and perceives it. Neither are we saying that knowledge and faith are one and the same matter. We are saying, however, that knowledge of both the doctrines and the revelation of these doctrines in the Word of God is a requisite for believing these truths. It is evident that knowledge is a requisite for the exercise of faith for the following reasons:

First, this is evident from texts which expressly state this. "By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11). The Hebrew word *bedaéto* means in or by means of His knowledge. On account of this word, it can refer to either the knowledge which Christ has, or to the knowledge which man has of Christ. The context of this text indicates, however, that it refers to the knowledge which one has of Christ, for Christ does not

justify anyone by His own knowledge, but rather by His suffering and obedience (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:10; Romans 5:17-19). Man from his side is justified by faith (Romans 5:1). Whatever is attributed to faith there (Romans 5:1) is attributed to knowledge here (Isaiah 53:11). It is neither suggested that faith and knowledge are one and the same thing, nor that knowledge alone, without assent and trust, would justify a man, for there are many who have knowledge who nevertheless do not have true faith. Justification is here attributed to knowledge, however, since the reference here is to faith in a comprehensive sense and in the totality of its exercise, of which knowledge is the initial element, being requisite for faith. Salvation is therefore promised upon the basis of the fruits of faith, such as confessing the truth, being poor in spirit, mourning, being meek, being godly, etc. These in and of themselves cannot be pleasing to God, unless they proceed from faith as its fruits. It thus follows that knowledge is a requisite for faith.

Furthermore, consider John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Christ is not referring to beholding God in heaven, which is placed in contradistinction to faith in 2 Corinthians 5:7. Rather, He refers to that which transpires here upon earth, being the way to heaven and the immediate beholding of God. Faith functions upon earth, and eternal life is promised upon this faith rather than upon bare knowledge. The text thus refers to faith in the totality of its exercise, knowledge being an element of this exercise both initially as well as in its progression. For this reason knowledge and faith are joined together. "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life" (John 6:40).

Secondly, the fact that knowledge is a requisite for faith is also evident from the means by which faith is wrought: the hearing of the Word. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17); "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" (John 6:45). It is an obvious fact, however, that the Word can be of no benefit, and that none can obtain faith by the hearing of the Word, unless one understands it. "... but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Thirdly, since every believer is obligated to confess Christ (Matthew 10:32), to give an account of his faith (1 Peter 3:15), it is therefore absolutely necessary that he have knowledge of those matters which he believes. He can neither confess nor give an account of that which he does not know.

Objection #1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Faith therefore excludes knowledge.

Answer: The apostle does not say that faith is without knowledge and is blind. To the contrary, he says that faith proves something and establishes the certainty of something -- which is the essential meaning of the word *elenchos*. However, without knowledge of the matter in question, one can neither demonstrate nor prove anything. "Things not seen" are those things which can neither be observed by the physical eye, nor can the natural intellect find out or uncover. Such is true for the mysteries of Christ. God, however, reveals those things to His own by His Word and Spirit, and faith embraces them as undoubted truth. Therefore this text even proves most clearly that faith consists of knowledge and light.

Objection #2: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Since all imaginations must be cast down, and all thoughts must be brought into captivity, it follows that all knowledge is excluded from faith.

Answer: The apostle here speaks of imaginations and thoughts which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God and the obedience of Christ, thus proceeding from the corrupt, natural mind which is enmity against God (Romans 8:7). These the apostle opposes, and he overcomes them by means of divinely revealed truths, thus bringing man to the true knowledge of God and to the obedience of Christ, which is faith. This is evident from John 3:36 where faith and disobedience are contrasted with each other.

Assent: An Additional Element of the Exercise of Faith

Having observed that knowledge is requisite to faith, of necessity there must, in addition to this knowledge, also be assent; that is, the validation of the veracity, not only of all that God has spoken in His Word, but specifically of all that which God has revealed concerning His Son and the salvation merited by Him. For if one is to trust, rest, and rely upon something, he must first be convinced that its foundation is true and steadfast. Refer to Hebrews 11:1 where the apostle calls faith "the substance of things hoped for," a being sure of a truth placed in opposition to fabrication, a foundation, a most certain matter which is so certain, true, and steadfast as if one saw it with his own eyes and touched it with one's own hands (1 John 1:1). For this reason the apostle attributes plerophorian, that is, full assurance, to faith (Hebrews 10:22). The necessity of assent is also evident in the following passages: "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (John 3:33); "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John 5:9-10); "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).

We have thus demonstrated that knowledge and assent are requisite to faith. This raises a question.

Question: Is the essential nature of saving faith seated in the intellect or in the will? In other words, does faith in its essence consist of knowledge and assent, which both are to be attributed to the intellect, or does saving faith consist in trusting in God through Jesus Christ in order to be justified, sanctified, and glorified, which trusting is to be attributed to the will?

Answer: It consists of trusting, and thus is to be attributed to the will. This question will be understood more clearly when we deal with this in discussing the essence of faith. The Object of Faith

Having considered the subject or seat of faith, we will now proceed to consider the object upon which faith focuses itself in its exercise. The object of faith is first of all the Word of God in general, that is, all that God has revealed in His Word in both Old and New Testaments. This is particularly true for all that God has revealed and promised in the gospel, which contains all the promises pertaining to reconciliation, forgiveness of sins, peace, holiness and salvation. All of this in both Testaments is offered and promised to believers. "Believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15); "So then faith

cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17); "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith" (Galatians 3:2; cf. Romans 1:16; John 3:16). Since the Word of God is truth (John 17:17) and since God is the God of truth (Isaiah 65:16), God can do no other than present truth to man and command him to believe the truth. Therefore, whenever commands, promises, or threats are presented in the Word of God which do not harmonize with the final outcome, they must be understood as being of a contingent nature. They thus continue to be the truth and are believed as such.

Secondly, faith does not focus on the Word alone, but proceeds by means of the Word to Christ, the Surety and the Mediator. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36); "Believe also in Me" (John 14:1); "... that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Thirdly, faith does not only focus on Christ as Mediator, but proceeds through Christ to God. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25); "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life" (John 5:24); "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). There is a distinction between believing God and believing in God. To believe God consists in a focusing upon the truth of God's promises. This not only gives man liberty to come to God through Christ and to believe in Him, but he will also, while presently believing God, strengthen himself, both as far as his confidence and his expectation are concerned. However, in believing in God and in Christ, the focus is upon God and Christ Himself, not only as a promising and a true God, but also as a God who is omnipotent, faithful, wise, and good, so that man puts His trust in Him, entrusting soul and body to Him in order to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. The Unique Essence of Faith From the object of faith, we now proceed to the form or the unique essence and nature of faith. The essence of a matter is that which defines the matter to be what it is. The essence of a matter identifies it and distinguishes it from all others. A matter can have but one essence. If there are two, there are also two matters. Faith likewise has an essence which is unique to faith alone.

Here we must note wherein the essential nature of faith does not consist, and then wherein the essential nature of faith does consist.

First, faith does not consist in love, which is what papists and the Arminians maintain. Love is not the essence of faith, for

1) faith and love are two distinct virtues. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13:13). It is rather obvious that one virtue cannot be the essence of another virtue.

2) Love is the fruit of faith. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). Faith, therefore, does not derive its efficacy from love, but rather faith is efficacious toward the operation of love, as well as the practice of all virtuousness by way of love. Consider also the thrust of the word *energeo* (cf. Romans 7:5; Colossians 1:29). The result of something cannot be its essence. Secondly, faith does not consist in obedience to and observance of God's commandments, which is something the above mentioned parties maintain. For faith is expressly distinguished from works (1

Corinthians 13:13). "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (1 Timothy 1:5). Yes, in the matter of justification, works and faith are contrasted with each other. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28); "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works" (James 2:18).

True faith is the fountain of good works. Good works are fruits of faith and characteristic of it, and it is thus evident that where good works are absent, true faith is also absent. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). You can be certain that the body is dead if breathing has ceased. You may likewise know that faith is dead, that is, that true faith is not present, when it does not manifest itself.

Even though we maintain that love and the observance of the commandments is not the form or essential nature of faith, far be it from us to maintain that faith can exist without love. When man is made a believer, he not only receives enlightened eyes of understanding and to some degree is acquainted with the Mediator and the benefits of the covenant, but he also becomes enamored thereby. He rejoices in the fact that there is salvation, forgiveness of sins, and a Spirit to sanctify him. He rejoices in the fact that there is a Christ and that Christ is offered to him. He has love for the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Having now received Christ by faith and being united to Him by faith, his love toward God and Christ is ignited and with all willingness he desires to be obedient. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Thirdly, the very essence of faith does not consist in trusting that Christ is my Savior. For,

(1) Christ did not die for all men. Everyone would thus need solid grounds upon which he would be able to conclude that Christ died for Him and is His Savior.

(2) God has indeed commanded all who hear His word to believe, but He has not commanded all to believe that

Christ is their Savior. There is not one text in the Bible in support of this, so that it is sheer imagination to maintain that everyone must believe that Christ is his Savior. He would believe a lie and go to hell when adhering to such an illusion.

(3) To believe that Christ is my Savior belongs to assurance. This is a fruit of faith, which can vary in degree and can be entirely absent. True faith, however, abides and he who possesses it remains a true believer.

(4) Many temporal believers are fully assured within themselves and do not have the least doubt that Christ is their Savior and has died for them. They nevertheless do not have true faith and will find themselves to be deceived. It thus follows that true faith does not consist in trusting that Christ has died for me.

Fourthly, the essence of faith does not consist in being desirous to have Jesus as one's Savior. To be desirous or willing can be considered as an internal act. One perceives the truth, necessity, and desirability of having Jesus as his Savior, and is thus desirous to have Him as such. This internal desire focuses on the matter itself, but not on the attending circumstances -- such as that one must forsake his worldly life, must seek Christ in truth (frequently doing so), must in truth enter into covenant with Christ, and find his delight in Him alone. He must also have the world as his enemy,

bear witness against it, engage in battle against it, and be willing for Christ's sake to endure all poverty, nakedness, persecutions, and ridicule. This, however, does not suit such persons, and therefore they leave Christ for what He is and yield to their lusts. Their desire is therefore nothing more than the desire of a Balaam. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (Numbers 23:10).

Such a desire can also be of an outgoing nature; that is, the outgoing being toward Christ, whereby one declares and demonstrates to the Lord Jesus his upright desire for Him and His benefits, with the forsaking of all else. Since his heart does not condemn him, this gives him freedom to go to Christ and to receive Him by faith as His Savior. "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). Thus, having the desire does not precede the exercise of faith, as far as the nature of the matter is concerned, although wherever there is such an outgoing desire, there is also true faith.

Fifthly, the essence of faith does not consist in an assent to the truth of the gospel. Someone may have a very clear comprehension of all the mysteries of the faith, both as far as the truths and their desirability are concerned. Let him assent with full assurance to these truths as truths and to their desirability -- it is nevertheless not true faith. It is indeed true that believers also have knowledge and assent, but they cannot rest in this. They know and experience that this does not cause them to be partakers of Christ, and therefore they go beyond this and appropriate Christ. They rest in Him, entrusting their soul and body to Him in order that He would justify them, etc. Therefore, if someone has no more than knowledge and assent, he must be assured that he has merely historical or temporal faith. If someone perceives within himself the true exercise of trusting in Christ and considers it as a fruit of his assent (deeming this to be the essential act of faith), he does have true faith. He is, however, in error by considering knowledge to be the essential nature of faith. This we shall further illustrate in the following question. The unique essence or form of faith does not consist in these six matters mentioned above.

We must now consider wherein the unique and essential act of faith does consist. Question: Does the essential act of faith consist in assenting to the divine truths and promises of the gospel, or does it consist in a heartfelt trust in Christ to be justified, sanctified, and to be led to felicity by Him? Answer: Before we answer, we wish to state that:

(1) We do not understand this trusting to be equivalent to assurance -- the confidence that one personally is a partaker of Christ and all His promises, or the resulting peace and quietude within the soul. For these are fruits of faith, which are more evident in the one and less in the other. Rather, we understand by trusting the outgoing act of the heart whereby one, in surrendering to Christ and receiving Him, entrusts soul and body to Him in order that He would save him. This can be compared to a creditor who entrusts his money to someone by giving it to him. It can also be compared to someone placing himself upon the shoulders of a strong man to be carried through water, entrusting himself to, and leaning and relying upon, him and thus allowing himself to be carried to a designated location.

(2) We maintain that a knowledge of gospel truths and assent thereto are necessary prerequisites for such confidence. We maintain that afterward faith is also continually focused upon and activated by the promises. Having said this by way of preface, we shall now answer the question. The Exercise of Faith: An Act of the Will

True saving faith does not consist in assenting to the promises of the gospel, but it consists in a heartfelt trust to be brought to salvation by Christ -- this on the basis of His free offer and the promises made to those who trust in Him. We therefore immediately establish that faith is not seated in the intellect, but in the will. If it does not consist in the assent to the truth, it can also not be seated in the intellect; and if it consists of trust, it follows that it is seated in the will. The truth of the foregoing is evident from the following reasons: First, it is evident from the name itself. What we refer to as "believing" Scripture refers to as "trusting," "entrusting to," and "having confidence in." This is true even when there are no promises at all to which this relates. We have clearly and irrefutably demonstrated this in the foregoing. We know, however, that in dealing with divine things revealed in the Word of God only, we must not focus on our language alone, for this causes many to err.

Rather, we must interpret and speak according to the characteristics and nature of the Hebrew and Greek languages in which the Word of God was written. Since, in our language, the word "believing" implies the acceptance of promises and incidents related to us on the basis of someone else's testimony, one must therefore not focus on our language only but on the thrust of meaning expressed in the original languages. The words *heemin*, *pisteuo*, *chasa*, *batach*, *samach*, should therefore not only be translated as "to believe," but rather as "to trust," "to entrust," "to rely upon," and "to lean upon" -- also when there is no relation to the words or promises of someone else. In the exercise of this trust, however, these play a role, not as being the nature of this trust, but to enable one thereby to rely upon Christ Himself and to entrust himself to Him.

Secondly, Scripture attributes faith to the heart. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10); "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). The heart or the will is exercised in entrusting itself to Him and to believe in Him.

Evasive Argument: The heart can also refer to the intellect.

Answer: This is rarely the case. Even when this is so, it is not expressly limited to the intellect only, but generally signifies the will; or it is a comprehensive reference to the soul in all its operations. We thus hold to the general meaning and understand it as referring to the will, especially since believing signifies an act of the will.

Thirdly, if the essential act of faith consisted in assenting to the truth of the promises:

(1) It would be possible to believe in a saving manner without receiving Christ and trusting in Him. Feel free to know, acknowledge, and assent to the fact that Christ is the Savior as long as you wish; but what union and communion do you then have with Christ? The receiving of Christ and the act of leaning upon and trusting in Christ would then merely be fruits and consequences of faith. However, a consequence does not perfect the essence of a matter -- a matter already perfect prior to the occurrence of the consequence.

(2) The nature of saving faith would not differ from the nature of historical faith. Both would be the same, for historical faith also consists in assenting to the veracity of the promises. The devils, as well as the unconverted, also do this in exercising temporal faith. This is abundantly evident from Scripture and is also common knowledge.

Evasive Argument: Knowledge and assent are spiritual in the one person and not in the other.

Answer (1) It is true that the knowledge of the unconverted is of a different nature than that of the converted (not as far as preparatory knowledge is concerned); nevertheless the matter itself, however differently it may be perceived, is the same. The knowledge of both pertains to historical truth, and when anyone assents to this truth, this faith is historical in the one as well as in the other.

(2) Scripture never defines the difference between saving faith and historical faith as being the spirituality of the knowledge of and the assenting to historical truths.

(3) It is furthermore a certainty that if someone is not converted and does not put his trust in Christ (which is saving faith), the knowledge of such faith is not spiritual. One would then never be able to deduce from faith itself whether one truly believed or not, except by the fruits. This is an entirely erroneous view.

Fourthly, saving faith believes in God, that is, in Christ. It does not focus only on the Word of God, and its nature is not perfected in and by assenting to the truth only, but it rather proceeds through the Word to the Person of Christ and trusts in Him. "... them also which shall believe on Me through their word" (John 17:20). It is here that faith accomplishes its objective, gives expression to its nature, and finds its fulfillment. Saving faith is therefore generally expressed in Scripture as believing in God, that is, in Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). To believe in Christ is faith itself, and not a fruit of faith, which would have to be true if faith were to consist in knowledge and assent.

Evasive Argument: Assent to the truth by the unconverted is also expressed at times as believing in Christ (cf. John 8:30-31; John 12:42; Exodus 14:31). It therefore cannot be inferred from the expression believing in Christ that saving faith consists in trust.

Answer (1) We draw our conclusion not merely by considering this manner of speech independently, but by considering this manner of speech in relation to the matter at hand, considering the text in its context. This is true, for instance, for the quoted text, John 17:20. A clear distinction is obviously made between the Word of God and the Person of Christ, and between embracing this testimony and believing in the Person of Christ. Faith in Christ by means of the Word (which faith, prior to this, has accepted as truth), is therefore not the acceptance of His testimony, but a trusting of the soul in Him.

(2) If merely receiving Christ's testimony is expressed as being equivalent to believing in Him (which is rarely the case), it is recorded in such a manner, and the context is such it can clearly be perceived that the reference is not to saving faith, but to the reception of Christ's testimony by the unconverted who are without saving faith. Such persons are referred to in John 12:42, which is very likely the case as well in John 8:30-31.

(3) He whose views are contrary to this will neither be able nor dare to say that each reference to believing in God and in Christ merely means "to believe God" and to believe that either God or Christ speaks the truth. They must thus be convinced themselves that believing in Christ is to put one's trust in Christ.

(4) As far as Exodus 14:31 is concerned, it is common knowledge that when a word is prefaced by the letter beth, it means “on” as well as “in,” and that it must be understood and translated in accordance with the matter to which it is affixed. Therefore our translators have translated this excellently by stating, “And the people ... believed (in) the Lord, and (on) His servant Moses.” [Note: The rendering of the Statenvertaling is as follows: “And the people believed in the Lord and on Moses His servant.”]

Fifthly, faith itself unites the soul with Christ, appropriates the promises as being made to the soul, satisfies the conscience, and gives liberty to approach unto God and to address Him as Father (cf. Ephesians 2:17; John 3:36; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 3:12). Assenting to the truth of the promises does not engender this, however, but rather the putting of one’s trust in Christ. You may assent as long and with as much clarity as you wish, but not one promise pertains to you, nor does it unite your heart to Christ or satisfy your soul. It does not give freedom to cry out “Abba, Father.” It thus follows that assent is not saving faith.

Evasive Argument: The objective of assent is to receive Christ, to put one’s trust in Him, and in this manner to receive what is stated in the foregoing. All of this, therefore, proceeds from assenting to the truth.

Answer (1) One thing is certain: The act of assenting by itself cannot accomplish anything, but rather the fruits of this assent do so. The assent must in the first place engender the acts of receiving and trusting. Assent is therefore not the essence of faith. Scripture states furthermore that faith itself and not its fruits accomplishes this.

(2) By way of the same argument, as knowledge is the very beginning of all that pertains to faith, we would then consider that the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel brings forth the same matters: union with Christ, being a partaker of the promises, and peace and liberty. Since this is an absurdity, however, it is likewise absurd to maintain that this is brought about by assent. It thus remains certain that trust rather than assent is the essence of saving faith.

Sixthly, the opposite of saving faith is not the rejection of the truths of the gospel, but a doubting, that is, not trusting in, relying upon, and leaning upon Christ. “He that believeth on the Son ... he that believeth not the Son” (John 3:36); “Let not your heart be troubled: ... believe also in Me” (John 14:1); “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt” (Matthew 14:31); “... Where is your faith” (Luke 8:25). Faith is here contrasted with “trembling for fear.” True faith therefore does not consist in assenting but in trusting. From all this, it is evident that the actual act of faith does not consist in assenting to the truths and promises of the gospel, but in trusting in Jesus, and in entrusting oneself to Him. A Response to Those who Object to Faith Being the Exercise of One’s Will We shall now consider the objections which could be advanced against this.

Objection #1: The entire world understands the act of believing to mean nothing else than the acceptance of someone’s testimony, and to hold it for true.

Answer (1) The entire world expresses itself in the same manner as we do in the Dutch language, rather than in harmony with the Hebrew and Greek languages; in them alone the mysteries of faith are revealed. One must therefore conform himself to the nature of these languages in which (as shown above) “to believe” means “to trust.”

(2) The entire world understands the word “faith” to refer to historical faith. This we do likewise, but not in reference to saving faith. The word is the same, but they differ in the very essence of the matter. When two different matters are referred to by the same word (which is frequently the case), even an uneducated person will know that one ought not to conclude that whatever is characteristic for the one is also characteristic for the other. For example, “light” can be an antonym for “heavy” and for “dark.” The word is one and the same, but the matters themselves have nothing in common. He who therefore wishes to deal wisely must not be prejudiced by the sound of the word “to believe,” thereby allowing himself to be misled.

Objection #2: This trust which is characterized by a believing reception is the fruit of faith, that is, an assent of gospel mysteries and promises relative to the truth. Faith does therefore not consist in trusting but in assenting.

Answer: (1) This returns us to where we started, for this is the very difference.

(2) We admit that there can be no confidence without a prior assent and acceptance of the matter as truth; however, it therefore does not follow that assent is saving faith.

(3) If saving faith does not consist in trust (due to assent being a prerequisite), assent would also not constitute saving faith since assent is a consequence of knowledge which is a prerequisite for assent. By the same logical argument, therefore, faith then would consist in the knowledge of gospel truths.

Objection #3: True faith is that faith upon which eternal life is promised. However, eternal life is promised upon assenting to gospel truths which is evident in the following passages: “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony. He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true” (John 3:12; John 3:15; John 3:32-33); “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world” (John 11:25-27).

Answer: We can deal with John 3:12; John 3:15; John 3:32-33 as it were with one word. Verse 12 speaks of historical faith; verse 15 is not conjoined to verse 12 as if verse 15 pertains to the same as is stated in verse 12, that is, as if eternal life is promised upon the faith mentioned in verse 12. Instead, it is promised to those who believe in Him. Verses 32 and 33 are also not conjoined to verse 12. Historical believers and temporal believers, as well as true believers, set to their seal that God is true by the reception of His testimony. In John 11:25-27 eternal life is not promised to Martha in consequence of believing that whoever believes in Christ shall live. Many believe this who will never be saved. Salvation is not even promised here to Martha. She is only asked whether she believed Christ’s words to be true.

Additional Objection: Eternal life is promised upon assent to the truth, and assent is therefore saving faith. “He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life” (John 5:24); “... brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

Answer: (1) When Scripture speaks of saving faith, it does not always give expression to the formal act of faith, but either makes mention of that which precedes saving faith or of that which follows. In doing so, Scripture considers it in its full ramification and promises salvation upon this. We therefore read, "By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many" (Isaiah 53:11); "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee ... and Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). Salvation is thus promised upon the fruits of faith (cf. Matthew 5:3-16). This is also stated in Acts 16:31, where we read, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Therefore, to believe in God is to believe as God has commanded us to believe. When faith is called a belief of the truth, this does not pertain to the formal act of faith, but it indicates that faith is founded upon truth. With this we fully agree.

(2) Such manner of speech does not exclude trust, but rather includes it; for otherwise temporal believers would have saving faith, yes, sometimes to a much stronger degree than true believers who are often in darkness in this respect and experience much strife.

Objection #4: Faith is expressly distinguished from trust. "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Ephesians 3:12). Consequently, faith does not consist in trust.

Answer (1) The word "trust" is viewed in a twofold sense in Scripture. It can be used in the sense of "to entrust to," that is, to entrust oneself to someone. This is faith itself, and the word *pistis* is frequently translated as such. (Refer to the foregoing where it has been shown that faith consists in trusting.) "Trust" can also mean peace, liberty, fearlessness, boldness, or assurance, which flows out of trusting as out of its cause. (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:3; Galatians 5:10; Php 1:6; 2 Corinthians 3:4). It is to such a confidence the text refers, which implies liberty, assurance, and peace.

(2) He who entrusts himself to Jesus then becomes a partaker of Him and all His benefits; he is then partaker of all the promises and an heir of the promises. The believer is then capable of being active with the promises, and is indeed active with them. He thereby receives strength, peace, and liberty to approach unto God *en pepoithesei*, that is, with full assurance and conviction, and to address Him as Father.

Objection #5: That faith by which a man is justified is truly saving faith. Man, however, is justified only by assenting to the veracity of the promises of God. Assent is therefore faith. This is evident in the justification of Abraham. In Genesis 15:5 God promised Abraham the multiplication of his seed. This is followed by verse 6, where we read, "And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Add to this Romans 4:3 and James 2:23 where the same words are quoted.

Answer (1) It is certain that Abraham was already justified and was a believer prior to this. The reference is therefore not to the act of faith whereby Abraham initially became a believer, but rather to that act which he performed as a believer.

(2) Abraham's faith did not consist in an assenting to the veracity of God's promises, but rather in trusting. The text states that "he believed in the Lord." This can clearly be observed in Romans 4:1-25, where we read, "Who against hope believed in hope, ... and being not weak in faith ... but was strong in faith, ... being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (vss. 18-21). This is indicative of being at peace and of a heartfelt reliance upon the

promises, even though everything was to the contrary. He was plerophoretheis, fully persuaded, that is, he trusted in an extraordinary measure. He had full confidence in them; that is, it was more than an esteeming the promises to be true; he trusted in them. Furthermore, this full persuasion did not only relate to the promises, but also to God's omnipotence. His faith was thus a trusting in God as being true, omnipotent, and faithful. This trust in God was so strong that it engendered a full assurance and rest in his heart. This faith was accounted unto him for righteousness. "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:22). It is thus evident that the stated objection effectively refutes itself, and it is clearly demonstrated that faith consists in trust.

(3) Consider also what has been stated above, for sometimes the reference is to an act of faith when in fact faith in its full signification is to be understood by it. Furthermore, faith is conversely also not always named after its formal act.

(4) We have also shown previously that a believer whose faith is exercised is continually active with and through the promises, encouraging himself in them. These same answers are applicable to James 2:23.

Objection #6: That faith by which man is entitled to the use of the sacraments (which are the seals of the righteousness of faith) is true saving faith. One is entitled, however, to use the sacraments by assenting to the veracity of the promises, and thus assent is faith. This is evident in Acts 8:36-38, where we read, "And the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God ... and he baptized him."

Answer (1) A minister, when baptizing, does not have the assurance that a person is either truly converted or a believer. Rather, he does so on the basis of a good confession which is consistent with a person's life. By asking him whether he believed with all his heart, Philip had appealed to the conscience of the eunuch. With his confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God he confessed, "Yes, I believe with all my heart." Thus, we do not have the least proof here that assenting to divine truths constitutes the essential and formal act of faith.

(2) Even when faith is mentioned in reference to one of its essential elements, it must (as we have shown above) frequently be understood in a comprehensive sense. To believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God includes everything which is required unto faith. It does not exclude trust, but includes it. Otherwise all temporal believers would be entitled to use the sacraments, for they make the same confession and believe the same truths. With this answer we have also dealt with all the texts in which faith is mentioned in reference to one of its necessary requirements, even though the essential act of faith itself is not expressed (cf. Romans 10:6-10).

We have thus demonstrated that the essential, formal act of faith does not consist in assenting to gospel truths, but in a heartfelt trust in Christ to thus be justified, sanctified, and brought to the state of felicity by Him. Since trust neither stands nor acts alone but is accompanied by several other acts, it will therefore be useful to furnish a comprehensive description of faith. A Comprehensive Description of Saving Faith

First, prior to believing, it is through the preaching of the Word that there is engendered in man a conviction of his miserable condition in himself, and a dissatisfaction and perplexity concerning his condition in reference to both his sinfulness and his guilt. This transpires with more or less

emotion, in either a legal or an evangelical manner. He perceives himself to be separated from God, and understands that his salvation consists of being united to Him and in the enjoyment of His favor. He finds solution neither within himself nor with any other creature as to how he will satisfy the justice of God and acquire a perfect righteousness. He hears mention made of Jesus Christ as Surety, and begins to become acquainted with Him in His natures, offices, humiliation, and exaltation, becoming desirous to have Him as his Surety.

Secondly, he becomes acquainted with the offer of Christ in a general sense, but also in a specific sense; that is, that Christ is also offered to him, for he hears the gospel in which He is offered to everyone. No one is excluded, for whoever will may come, and to this the promise is annexed that whoever comes will in no wise be cast out. He believes all of this to be infallibly true, and rejoices that God has designed such a way of salvation, as well as that this way is made known to him. He approves of this way with his entire heart, and wishes to be saved in that way and in none other, there being no other way. With Peter he says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69).

Thirdly, he becomes hungry and thirsty. He becomes very desirous to become a partaker of Christ and all His benefits, to be reconciled to God through Him, and to walk with Him in peace, love, humility, and obedience. His desire is: Oh, that I had Christ, that I had reconciliation, and that I had Spirit and life! Thus, Christ is precious to Him (1 Peter 2:7). He is encouraged by the promise, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

Fourthly, he turns to Christ, and takes refuge in Him, albeit from afar as the publican did (Luke 18:13). At times he either dares not, is in darkness, or is discouraged by a view of his sins, and yet his heart will nevertheless quietly turn to Him again. At times he cannot speak a word, and at another time he will say, "I so much desire to have Him." Such is his condition and he knows not where to turn. He yearns, he waits, and he longs for light, grace, the Spirit, and strength, often doing so quietly and with tears in his eyes. "Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation" (Micah 7:7); he thus tarries for the Lord (Habakkuk 2:3); "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:" (Isaiah 45:22); "How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings" (Psalms 36:7).

Fifthly, as he thus wrestles, he receives liberty to receive Him by faith. He knows himself to be destitute, and he perceives Jesus as suitable, fully sufficient, willing, truthful, offering Himself, and promising that no one will be cast out who comes to Him. He receives Him, accepts His offer and invitation, and with all his heart he gives Him his hand, heart -- yes, everything. He ponders at times whether the Lord Jesus would be as willing to accept him as he is willing to have Him, for then he would certainly be saved. "Yes," he continues, "Jesus is willing, yes, more willing than I am, for He Himself takes the initiative, presents Himself, invites me, and He Himself draws me." While thus wrestling he surrenders himself. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Colossians 2:6); "Yield yourselves unto the Lord" (2 Chronicles 30:8).

Sixthly, he entrusts his body, soul, and salvation to Christ. He relies upon Him, allows himself to be borne by Christ, leaning and resting upon Him. And even if He has no peace or assurance as yet,

and is tossed to and fro by fear, being confronted with strife, he nevertheless betakes himself to Him. He relies upon Him, exercises trust in Him, and entrusts himself to Him. "He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16); "... the remnant of Israel ... shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth" (Isaiah 10:20); "For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel" (Isaiah 48:2); "Who is among you that feareth the Lord ... let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah 50:10); "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Psalms 2:12).

Seventhly, this engenders the assurance and the confidence that Christ is His Savior. While he exercises faith, prays and wrestles, he comes to a conclusion about his spiritual state, doing so one time by considering the acts of faith of which his soul becomes conscious, then by considering the fulness of Jesus, and then again by considering the promises and their certainty. On this basis he concludes: Jesus is mine and I am His (Song of Solomon 2:16). At times the Holy Spirit very powerfully puts His seal upon this (Ephesians 4:30). This in turn engenders quietness, peace, joy, and delight, which we shall subsequently discuss when considering the fruits of faith. The fruits of assurance, peace, etc, are, however, not always experienced by the soul. He is frequently hindered in this; one time this will be due to the weakness of his faith, and then again due to strife.

Eighthly, this engenders holiness. "... purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9); "... faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). Consider also James 2:17.

We have presented these acts to you in a sequential order. This is not to suggest that when someone exercises faith these acts are always identifiable, following each other in this manner. They are intertwined, and at one time the soul is more active in one respect, and then again in another respect. We cannot present them all simultaneously, and therefore to present them in a clear fashion and to make them clearly understood, we need to deal with each of them individually.

The Cause of Faith

We now come to the cause of faith. Man of himself is blind and cannot understand the very essence of those matters which he must believe. He has an evil heart and does not concern himself therewith. He does not know God in His veracity, and therefore has an unbelieving heart. In order for man to believe, it must be given to him. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Php 1:29); "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). The Holy Spirit gives even historical faith, that is, the conviction that the Word of God is truth, and that Christ is the Savior. "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6); "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

He is therefore called the Spirit of faith (2 Corinthians 4:13). Yes, both the origin and continuation of faith are of the Lord. "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32); "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:5). The increase of faith is likewise of the Lord, and therefore the disciples prayed, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). All of this must be wrought by the same almighty power of God. "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe" (Ephesians 1:19). God therefore not only reveals the mysteries of the gospel, as well as encouraging and stirring man up to believe, but God Himself molds the heart and by His immediate operation causes man to believe, not compelling him against his will, but inclining him and working in him both to will and to do (Php 2:13).

Due to His almighty power, God needs no means to impart faith to someone, but it is His wisdom to do so. The fact that God works all things by means is much more of a mystery than we are aware of. It is His goodness that He works faith by means of His Word, be it 1) in written or printed form, 2) through the preaching of divinely sent ministers, 3) by statements made by individuals, or 4) by one's own reading. Since knowledge of a revealed matter is a requisite unto faith (and thus also the act of assenting and holding for true), it is therefore necessary that the matter which one must know and assent to be revealed to us. Furthermore, if by way of this knowledge and assent, one is led to rest upon Christ, to entrust himself to Him, and to trust Him, it is likewise necessary that the believing soul have promises whereby he, now being a believer, actively seeks justification, sanctification, and comfort. Since these matters are such as I have stated them to be, it must be deemed as an extraordinary manifestation of God's goodness that He does not speak to us in passing, but that He has caused His revelations to be recorded for us. This is of a permanent nature -- as if God is continually speaking unto us. This Word is the means whereby God works and strengthens faith. "... the gospel of Christ ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16); "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:14; Romans 10:17). The Objective of Faith

We must now consider the objective of faith. In exercising faith one glorifies God in all His perfections, as they shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord ..." (2 Corinthians 3:18); "For God ... hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). In exercising faith one magnifies:

(1) the justice of God, which is so pure that no sin can remain unpunished. "To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness" (Romans 3:26);

(2) His love for humanity, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16);

(3) His grace, "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6);

(4) His wisdom to devise such a means whereby, simultaneously, the justice of God is satisfied and man is saved, "We preach ... Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23-24); "... the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10);

(5) His omnipotence, "But was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20-21);

(6) His truth, "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (John 3:33). See also 1 John 5:9-11;

(7) His faithfulness, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Romans 4:16);

(8) His all-sufficiency, "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Colossians 1:19); "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16; cf. Hebrews

7:25). Thus, by believing in Christ, God is glorified by believers. He who therefore wishes to render honor and glory unto God, let him believe in His Son. From man's side, the objective of faith is justification, peace, adoption, sanctification (which we shall subsequently discuss when considering the fruits), and hereafter eternal felicity. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:9). He who desires all these things, let him exercise faith. The Additional Characteristics of Faith The characteristics which belong to faith are various and differ in degree. This is true in reference to different believers, some of whom are children, others are young men, and again others are men in Christ. This is also true for the same persons at various times, since faith is at times stronger and more active, and at other times is weaker.

These characteristics are:

- (1) Holiness, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith" (Jude 1:20);
- (2) Sincerity, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee" (2 Timothy 1:5);
- (3) Activity, "... faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6);
- (4) Durability, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32); "Who are kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Peter 1:5).
- (5) Salvific, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). The Effects or Fruits of Faith The effects or fruits of true and saving faith are very glorious and desirable. They are the following:

- (1) Justification, as it pertains to both guilt and punishment, as well as to the right unto eternal life, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference. ... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:21-22; Romans 3:28);
- (2) Peace with God, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1);
- (3) Boldness to approach unto God, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Romans 5:2); "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Ephesians 3:12);
- (4) Union with Christ, and through Him with God, "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17); "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:17); "... that they also may be one in us" (John 17:21);
- (5) The adoption to children, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name" (John 1:12); "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26);
- (6) The purification of heart, "purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9);
- (7) Victory over the devil, "Whom resist stedfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:9);

(8) Victory over the world, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4);

(9) Love, "... faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6);

(10) All manner of good works, "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). In a word, faith is that whereby the soul lives, is suitable unto all things (both temporal and spiritual), and must always be exercised if one wishes to run his course well and with joy.

Saving Faith Compared with Temporal Faith

We shall now consider the similarities and the differences between saving faith and temporal faith. There is some similarity between historical and temporal faith. The object of both is the Word of God. Knowledge of divine truths is requisite for both, and an assent to the veracity of the Word is essential.

There is, however, a great difference between saving faith and temporal faith, both of which include historical faith.

First of all, there is a difference as far as the intellect is concerned. Temporal faith observes and knows the truth only in the letter, as it were by a false light. However, it does not perceive truth in its essential nature. True believers, on the contrary, have enlightened eyes of understanding (Ephesians 1:18), have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), and are taught of Him, as the truth is in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, temporal believers do not have a good heart, but it is and remains a rock which is not fit to bear fruit (Luke 8:13). Such a heart is contrasted with an honest and good heart (vs. 15). Man by nature has a stony heart. This is removed in regeneration and God gives a heart of flesh in its place (Ezekiel 36:26). The stony heart remains in temporal believers and is not changed. Whatever they are and do apart from conversion is but natural and their heart is not purified by obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22). True believers, however, have a new heart, a heart of flesh, and a heart purified by faith (Acts 15:9). The one is truly dead and the other is truly alive.

Thirdly, temporal believers know of no union with Christ by faith.

They do not believe in Christ, do not set their hearts upon Him, and do not entrust their souls to Jesus to be justified and sanctified. They know of no perplexity concerning this, do not desire it, and do not have it in view. It suffices for them to hold to a general opinion that they will be saved, doing so without strife, without examination of their heart, and neither with any love for, nor having in view those things in which salvation consists. They repeatedly assure themselves that they will indeed arrive in heaven. They are thus like the foolish virgins who had no oil in their lamps, and came too late, desiring to gain entrance (Matthew 25:1-46). When they find themselves deceived by their illusion, they lead themselves to believe that they ought to have been admitted, saying, "We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence" (Luke 13:26); "Have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works" (Matthew 7:22).

True believers, however, observing the benefits of the covenant with supernatural light, receiving the witness of the true God as being infallibly true, being overcome with a great desire to be partakers of these benefits, and knowing that no one will be a partaker of these things except through the Lord Jesus Christ, are assured that Christ in calling and inviting them to come to Him, offers Himself to this end. They thus receive Christ to that end (John 1:12), surrender themselves to Him (2 Corinthians 8:5), put their trust in Him (Psalms 2:12), rely on Him, lean upon Him, and entrust themselves to Him (Psalms 9:11; Psalms 71:6; Jeremiah 17:7).

Fourthly, temporal believers have a joy without root. "When they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root" (Luke 8:13). As the physical eye delights itself in light, likewise the intellect delights itself in the acquisition of knowledge. The more hidden and excellent a subject matter may be, the more the intellect will delight itself. When temporal believers therefore hear and understand the mysteries of the gospel, they consider these to be beautiful and have a desire to reflect upon them. To have the forgiveness of sins and the friendship and favor of God, to have Christ as a Savior, to be among the godly and in church, and hereafter to enter into heaven, are to them most excellent matters. To have an understanding of the Word of God, to be able to speak of it, to gain esteem by means of this, to be loved by the godly, are most desirable to them and they find a sweet delight in it. Since they imagine themselves to be partakers of these, they consequently rejoice. They have no root, however, since they have a natural and stony heart. The Word of God can therefore not penetrate and bear root downward in the heart. All their activity is therefore only of a superficial nature. In true believers, however, there is depth of earth. The heart, due to many concerns, sorrows, and much strife is plowed by the Word; the Word thus falls into this fleshly, soft, and pliable heart. It consequently bears root downward into Christ (Colossians 2:7), after which the believer increases in Him. This in turn brings forth joy in various degrees; that is, a joy in the Lord and a delighting in Him, which in turn engenders a tender heart inclined towards obedience.

Fifthly, the temporal and true believer also differ as far as fruit-bearing is concerned. "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the Word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23). Since temporal believers have no root and dry up, they do not bring forth fruit, and all apparent fruits are in essence nothing but evil fruits coming from an evil tree.

Since a correct understanding of this distinction is of the greatest importance for the conviction of the unconverted and the comfort of the converted, we shall deal with this distinction more comprehensively in the next chapter.

Unbelief: The Opposite of True Faith

Lastly, we must consider the direct opposite of true faith. Those who are of such a disposition are either outside or within the church. To those persons who possess the contrary of true faith outside the church belong all who reject the true doctrine of faith, such as divers heathens, the Mohammedans, the Jews, the Socinians, and various Anabaptists. Among the papists, Lutherans, and Arminians -- although they seriously err in many doctrinal points -- temporal believers, yes, even true believers, can be found, since Christ is preached there, albeit not purely.

There are also unbelievers within the church, either entirely ignorant or merely able to mention the name of Christ -- but not knowing Him in His natures, offices, states of humiliation and exaltation, indispensability, nor how and to what purpose they must make use of Him. They run their course carelessly, having little or no impression of heaven or hell. If spoken to concerning this and asked how they think they will be saved, they have a ready answer: God is merciful. They hope upon His grace, they will pray and do their best. They are not permitted to be in doubt about their salvation; that would be a grievous thing. A great multitude is thus on their way to hell, and those ministers and elders who allow them to go on so peacefully in their ignorance, and permit them to come to the holy table, will be responsible for their condemnation. An Urgent Exhortation to Believe in Christ

We have thus dealt with faith from all perspectives. From all that has been said we can readily arrive at the following definition of faith: Faith is a heartfelt trust in Christ--and through Him in God--in order to be justified, sanctified, and glorified, leaning upon Christ's voluntary offer of Himself and upon His promises that He will perform this to all who receive Him and rely upon Him to that end.

Therefore come, whoever you may be, pause for a moment and let me persuade you to believe. Since I shall deal with a variety of readers and hearers, I shall first seek to make them acquainted with themselves and then endeavor to bring them to Christ.

(1) Some people have no knowledge of self, nor of Christ, spiritual life, heaven, or hell. That impression, which they naturally have concerning God and eternity, they deaden by not reflecting upon it. Thus concerning spiritual things, they therefore live as if they were irrational animals. They either do not hear the sermons or do not listen to them, but are entertaining other thoughts during the sermon. If they do listen, they do not understand it, or only understand when blatant sins are rebuked and when known and common virtues are recommended. Faith in Christ, however, as well as the life of faith, are and remain hidden to them. Thus they perish in their ignorance. "It is a people of no understanding: therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will shew them no favour" (Isaiah 27:11). Know assuredly that you are not able to believe. Without faith, however, you will not be able to be saved, but must be eternally damned, for "how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard" (Romans 10:14). Therefore, from this moment on endeavor to acquire knowledge and to be of such a disposition that my exhortation may persuade you to believe.

(2) Some, albeit they are in the same state of ignorance, although having a knowledge of the letter, are so attached to the things of this world -- to riches, prestige, and the lusts of the flesh -- that they cannot focus their thoughts upon spiritual matters. If they do, they reject them, and it is as if they say, "I have no desire." They thus willingly and knowingly turn themselves away from Christ, depart from Him, and return to their lusts. To them this is applicable, "And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). Reflect frequently upon the following text: "Because I have called, and ye refused. ... Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord" (Proverbs 1:24; Proverbs 1:28-29). Some will say to themselves, "I know it very well, but I nevertheless do not desire to depart from my way in order to be united to Christ; and if there be no other way, so be it." Oh man, if you were truly to perceive what this means, you would not speak in

this fashion! Therefore, let the terror of the Lord persuade you to believe.

(3) Some are so overtaken with labor, difficulties, and sorrow, that they must slave from early morning to late evening. The husband must earn a living and the wife must provide for all her children; thus there remains no time to reflect upon these matters. If they occasionally come under some conviction, all their business will quench such good inner motions. I regret that such is the case. If your heart were truly fixed upon spiritual things, however, you would certainly be able to find time. It is therefore an indication that you esteem earthly things higher than eternal things; be assured that God will not excuse you. Therefore, you also ought to allow yourself to be persuaded to believe, for without faith you will not be saved.

(4) Some imagine that they already are believers, for they have a clear perception of faith. They are baptized, partake of the Lord's Supper, diligently frequent church, read God's Word, offer their prayers, give alms, live in a manner which is beyond reproach, and upon sinning grieve over it, etc. But this, poor man, is not faith (as is evident from the preceding), and upon this way you will most certainly perish. But you may say, "Let this not trouble you, but let this be my business." I say to you, however, that you ought to take heed and not deceive yourself. Do not harden yourself by resisting the Word of God, but rather allow yourself to be persuaded to believe, for the way upon which you are leads to destruction.

(5) Some are not far from the kingdom of heaven, but they nevertheless do not enter; they remain who they are. After many years there is no change. They have some perception of their misery, and eternity is at times greatly bound upon their heart. They are acquainted with Christ, do desire to have Him, and do desire to live differently; nevertheless, nothing comes of all this. They thus remain focused on self through unbelief: they are too great a sinner; Christ would not be willing to have them; they are not sufficiently brokenhearted in their estimation; they do not know whether they truly desire it; and then again they spoil everything through sin. The true cause, however, is a lack of concern; they are lazy, have a divided heart, and are not steadfast.

Oh, become concerned and permit yourself to be persuaded to believe! Do not maintain such an intermediate position, for you will thus perish.

(6) Some are so accustomed to spiritual matters by either hearing or speaking about them, that all impressions made thereby are lost entirely. This explains why scholars who are duty-bound to deal with spiritual matters are so rarely converted, for they treat these matters as a blacksmith deals with his iron. We also address you. Examine yourself and become as children. Do not overlook this, but search your own heart and examine yourself as to whether those matters which you hold before others are truly to be found in you; whether you are enamored with them. Stir up a concern within yourself to consider if, while leading others to salvation, you yourself will go lost.

Come, all whom I have named and also those to whom I have not alluded; come murderers, adulterers, fornicators, unjust persons, thieves, drunkards, you who revel in sin, gamblers, dancers, you criminals who have been given over to yourself, liars, backbiters, perjurers; come whoever you may be and whatever your circumstances may be; come to Jesus, believe in Him, and you will be saved. If someone objects that I am making the way too wide, I respond by saying that I am not maintaining that they are saved or will be saved, but rather that Christ also calls such ones, and that among such there are also those who will become partakers of Christ (cf. 1

Corinthians 6:11). None are to lose courage, for there is such a fullness of grace in Christ. It must be presupposed, however, that such persons are weary of sin, grieve over their former abominations, and with all their heart are desirous for reconciliation with God and for a holy life. Unless a person is in such a frame, he will not be desirous to come. Motives unto Faith

Let everyone therefore come. Allow yourself to be persuaded to believe and consider the following reasons: First, your spiritual state is as wretched as can possibly be imagined -- yes, more wretched than anyone can comprehend. Oh consider, can anything be more dreadful than to be without God, to be confronted with God as an angry Judge, to be eternally outside of heaven, to have all that is desirable and sought after here to be hostile toward you, and hereafter to be forever condemned in the pool of fire? Even if this does not now move you, you are nevertheless such a one, and this will eternally come upon you. If you still remain insensitive and continue in this way, there is no hope that you will escape eternal condemnation, and with sorrow we must observe that you are on your way to hell. You who are at the very edge of hell, however, if you would once awaken and quietly consider your danger, if fear would come upon you regarding this future declaration, "Depart from Me, ye cursed," and if you then would begin to be desirous for salvation, for reconciliation, for the Spirit, and for a holy life, I may say to you that there is still hope and you can still be saved. There is still a way, but there is only one way and that way is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is due to the unsearchable goodness of God that He has yet provided such a way. How blessed you are that you may hear of this way, that you may come to Him! Therefore seek the Lord while He may be found. Give diligence to become acquainted with the Lord Jesus, and with sincerity and desire, seek Him to be your Surety for redemption and salvation. Humbly surrender yourself to Him, rest upon Him, entrust yourself to Him to that end, and thus believe in Him and you will be saved.

Outside of Christ, there is nothing but restlessness and hostility. This causes the soul to be shaken and tossed to and fro as a ship in a violent storm. Rest and support are nowhere to be found. The dove which was let out of the ark found no rest for the sole of its foot, as there was only water everywhere. Such is the condition of a soul outside of Christ. Neither riches, friends, nor one's own wisdom or strength can give rest to the soul. They are all broken reeds which not only provide no support, but which moreover cause the one who leans upon them to fall and be injured. Therefore no longer seek refuge there, but forsake it all.

Christ: An All-Sufficient, Suitable, and Able Savior

Secondly, in Christ there is a fullness to meet all your needs and fulfill all your desires. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Colossians 1:19). In Him there is a complete fullness:

(1) to remove all your sins. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7);

(2) to reconcile us with God. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10); "... but by His own blood He ... obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12);

(3) to deliver us from the eternal wrath of God and from condemnation. "... which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10); "There is therefore now no condemnation to them

which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1);

(4) in Him there is a fullness of the Spirit. "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3:34);

(5) of light, "A light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32);

(6) of life, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear" (Colossians 3:4);

(7) of peace, "For He is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14);

(8) and of a full salvation, "And I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:28); "He that is our God is the God of salvation" (Psalms 68:20).

(9) All these are to be found in Him only, and outside of Him none of these are to be sought or to be found. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6); "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12).

(10) All this, and whatever you could imagine or desire, is to be found in Christ. Why then do you continue to focus upon yourself, since nothing but corruption is to be found there? Why then would you look to people and things which are of the earth, in whom and in which no salvation is to be found, and which will forsake you in the day of evil? I beseech you, turn away from everything, and turn to this Savior to receive grace for grace out of His fullness.

(11) Christ is, furthermore, omnipotent to make you a partaker of all these benefits, for all power is given unto Him to soften the hardest heart, to incline the most wicked heart, to sanctify the most sinful heart, to cause the most unbelieving heart to believe, and to preserve in the faith those who come to Him. No creature can move or stir without His will. The devil could not enter into the swine without His approval. Esau must kiss him whom he came to kill; a wrathful Laban could only speak friendly words; the ravens must bring bread and flesh, and the flour and the oil neither wasted nor failed -- yes, and the oil increased until the poor widow had a sufficient supply. The dead were resurrected, the blind received their sight, the deaf their hearing, the dumb their speech, and the crippled received the ability to walk. In one word, nothing is too wonderful for Him. Believe this truth in a lively manner and believe in Him as the omnipotent One.

(12) The Lord Jesus is inexpressibly good. Even though He is the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, He nevertheless takes note of all who betake themselves to Him, and is of tender mercy toward wretched ones. He is good to the soul who seeks Him. He delights in mercy and it is His joy to comfort those that mourn, to counsel those who are at wits' end, to teach and guide the ignorant, to strengthen the weak, to deliver those who are assaulted out of the hand of the mighty, and to bring back those who have gone astray -- doing all this with unquestionable friendliness and longsuffering. A simultaneous consideration of His power and goodness yields a perfect foundation upon which to trust without fear.

(13) The Lord Jesus is faithful and He will not forsake the works of His hands. He will finish the good work which He has begun in someone, and He does not cast away those who fall down, but strengthens their hands. He does not allow those who stray to continue, but instead He brings them back again. He is the Good Shepherd and the faithful High Priest. One may therefore entrust himself to Him, and abide peacefully in Him as in a safe hiding place, saying, "The Lord shall finish

it for me.” The Personal Nature of Christ’s Offer of Salvation to All Who Hear the Gospel

Thirdly, Christ offers you this complete fullness of salvation. This is a great matter transcending all adoration. The Lord does not do this to all men, and very few nations have this privilege. This is concealed from nearly the entire world. To you, however, it is revealed, and particularly to you who may live under the ministry of the gospel, may hear the Word of God preached, and may read His Word. As a sent servant of Christ and on His behalf I declare to all who read or hear this read, “Come; for all things are now ready” (Luke 14:17); “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17); “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Come therefore, you, the chief of sinners, or whoever you may be, and in whatever sin you may have lived until now, and ask me, “Does Christ also call me? May I come? Would Christ also be willing to accept and save me?” I answer you in Christ’s Name, “Yes, He calls you and promises you that if you come and believe in Him, He will save you.” In order that you might be further convinced, read what we have already said concerning this in chapter 30.

You are now convinced (which indeed you ought to be) that the Lord Jesus offers you grace and salvation, and calls you. I do not say to the unconverted, ungodly, and worldly-minded that Christ is your Savior and that you will be saved. On the contrary, I declare to you that He will eternally condemn you if you proceed in this way and die in such a state. I do say, however, that He invites you in a most congenial manner, and therefore you ought to rejoice in this great privilege of yours. You ought therefore to be the more earnest to go outside of yourself, forsake your ungodly life, turn to the Lord Jesus, receive Him by faith, surrender yourself to Him, and entrust yourself to Him, in order that He may convert you, reconcile you with God, sanctify you by His Spirit, and thus save you. Then I say, then will He accept you and grant you the desire of your soul. Therefore, if your heart has been somewhat moved, neither tarry nor delay but go to Him as the prodigal son did. Act not as Lot’s wife by turning back again to the world.

Fourthly, as Christ calls all of you, He likewise promises to all that He will neither send anyone away (whoever he or she may be), nor refuse His grace, who comes to Him to that end, but that He will receive them all. Hear and believe His express testimony, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37); “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36). Search the entire Bible and take note whether He has ever refused grace to anyone or sent any away who came to Him in truth to be reconciled, sanctified, and saved. Then He will likewise also not reject you. Therefore, come!

Fifthly, He does not only call and invite you by the promise of salvation, but He also issues you a command. God, who has a right to issue you a command, says, “Hear Him” (Matthew 17:5). Christ says to you, “Repent and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). In like manner the apostle speaks in His Name, “And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23). It is therefore no optional matter, but you are under obligation. When you come and believe, you are obedient; and if you do not, you are disobedient to the Son, and woe unto that man who is disobedient to the voice of Christ! The Exceeding Wickedness of not Believing in Christ

Sixthly, if you do not come and believe in Christ, you commit the most abominable of all sins, with the exception of the sin against the Holy Ghost and the express act of blasphemy towards God, for the following reasons:

(1) You deem the true God to be a liar. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John 5:10). No one is so foolish that he would not desire his well-being and life itself. Man will seek this, even if it is in the things of this world. God, however, testifies that life and salvation are in His Son. Therefore not to avail yourself of the Son, and to seek your rest, joy, and delight in something else, is to say, "It is not true that life is to be found in the Son, that is, in Christ, but it is in the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life." Take note that in doing so you expressly accuse God of being a liar.

(2) You thereby despise Christ in His friendly invitation and offer relative to all that pertains to salvation. To despise someone who comes to help us is inhumane. To be evil because someone else is good is contrary to all civility. Think for a moment how intolerable it is for Christ to be despised by a sinner, especially when considering that He comes to help in a most friendly manner.

(3) You are despising all true and heavenly benefits, and all that pertains to your salvation both here and forever. To kick with your feet against those benefits which alone are rich, genuine, glorious, delightful, satisfying, and eternal, is the work of one who is bereft of his senses and who is the most wicked person imaginable. You cannot but be convinced now that you must come and believe in Christ. If you refuse, be assured that you are guilty of a most abominable sin.

Know therefore that you will also bear the greatest of all punishments and will endure a most dreadful hell. Therefore hear your sentence, you who will neither repent nor believe: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36); "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of (that is, who do not believe in) our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Seventhly, it is an extraordinary honor for the Lord Jesus to be so completely trusted by someone to receive wretched ones, to safely protect those who, persecuted by enemies, take refuge in Him, to satisfy the hungry one, and to bear those that are weak. Abraham conducted himself in this fashion. He "was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans 4:20).

Obstacles in Coming to Christ Identified and Removed At this moment consider all these motives together, reflect upon them attentively, keep still, and permit the strength of these motives to affect your heart. May it please the Lord to translate you from the power of Satan and of darkness into His kingdom -- yes, to bring you to Himself in order that here and forever you may live in communion with Him. What other reasons can be advanced to persuade a man? What hinders you, who at this moment are inwardly moved, to come to Christ? Is it ignorance? Then be most diligent to become acquainted with Him. You have the means available to you; use them. Is it unwillingness? Well, go on then, but it will be your own fault if you perish. Reflect upon the following passage and apply it to yourself; more dealings I shall not have with you. "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones" (Psalms 109:17-18). Is it fear? Do you not dare? Examine yourself whether

this is true and whether "I dare not" is not really "I will not" and is thus laziness. This is as much as if someone lying in the water and in danger of drowning would not dare to accept an outstretched hand because the person was of too high a rank. Come, examine yourself as to what makes you fearful. Are you too sinful? Can someone also be too filthy to be cleansed? You must know that in the salvation of man God intends to display His grace in such a magnificent manner that angels and man will be eternally amazed, and this adoration will constitute a portion of their salvation. The greater a sinner someone may be who in dismay comes to Christ, surrendering himself to Him for cleansing, relying upon and entrusting himself to Him, the more he honors God for His infinite grace and Christ for the perfection of His merits. Therefore, delight yourself in magnifying God. May God's objective in saving a sinner move you to be desirous of being saved. Attentively reflect upon the following texts: "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6); "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32); "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). Do you now see that you must not stay away because of the multitude and greatness of your sins, but must be moved to come? "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). Do you not dare because your broken-heartedness is insufficient? Do you imagine within yourself that you must have a certain degree of humility and must thus be sore broken, sensibly convicted, have a clear knowledge of Christ, and must hunger and thirst to such and such a degree before you may come to Christ?

Then I answer, "Away with such imaginations, for this is not according to God's Word." The prerequisites upon which one may or may not come are not to be brokenhearted, to be desirous, to have knowledge, and to hunger and thirst; rather, these are only necessary because one neither will nor can come without them. If you then have been moved to such a degree that you would be willing to surrender yourself for the reasons mentioned -- to be justified, sanctified, and saved -- come forward with boldness, receive Him, and surrender yourself to Him. If you were to lie upon your deathbed and have a lively sense of the seriousness of your situation, you would not ask, "May I," but you would rather go forward and say, "I must have Him or else I perish."

Question: May one, upon being convicted and being desirous for Christ, immediately go to Christ at the very outset?

Answer: Yes, you may go at once, for apart from Him you will neither become better nor more suitable to believe in Him, but you will be in danger that your conviction will pass. A Final Word to True Believers

True believers, you who may have the root of faith within you, I yet wish to exhort you with a word or two. It grieves me that you make so little progress in faith, and trust so little in Christ. It grieves me that when trusting you are so little exercised with the promises and are so infrequently engaged in reflecting upon God's perfections in Christ.

Many are slow of heart to believe and frequently neglect the exercises of faith. Intermissions are frequent and of long duration, albeit that faith is not entirely absent, for faith does not cease. Sometimes it occurs that the godly are overwhelmed and are swept away by the lusts of the flesh, laziness, or lack of desire. Sometimes it is due to discouragement, fearing that they will prove to be no partakers of Christ, or at times due to the violent assaults of Satan. It can also be due to

ignorance concerning the nature of faith, they being of the opinion that faith consists in the assurance of being a child of God and in the sensible enjoyment of the mercies of God. Such, when they come to the right place again, are continually tampering with their spiritual state, and some are peevish, being continually engaged in seeking for evidence that they are without grace, as if they had obtained a great victory by excluding themselves from grace and from Christ. Be it known to all, however, that you sin very grievously and stand in your own way as far as running your course with joy and holiness is concerned. This is the cause of your self-inflicted melancholy; this is the reason you remain so entangled in material things and that you neither glorify God privately nor in the presence of others.

Therefore, believers, you have stumbled along for too great a length of time, and you have learned to your own detriment that you are making no progress in this way.

(1) Give diligence to increase in faith. To that end read and reread what we have stated above concerning the nature of faith, so that you may have a clear conception of it as consisting in: setting your heart upon Jesus; giving yourself and your salvation into the hands of Jesus; entrusting yourself to Him and relying upon Him; resting and leaning upon Him; allowing yourself to be borne by Him; and letting Him care for you in all things in order that He may justify, sanctify, and save your soul, since He is omnipotent, faithful, true, and wise. What can be more appropriate, safer, and Christ-glorifying than that? Reflect upon what we have stated concerning the objective of faith. In doing so, you will perceive how God and Christ are glorified and how, in believing, one gives glory to Him for His righteousness, love for humanity, grace, wisdom, omnipotence, truth, faithfulness, efficacious atonement, and allsufficiency.

Reflect also upon what we have said previously concerning the fruits of faith -- how that faith when in exercise engenders peace and joy within the soul, gives boldness to approach unto God, causes the soul to live in continual union with God, translates and preserves him in the state of spiritual childhood, purifies the heart, conquers the world and the devil, and brings forth a diversity of good works as well as gratitude. When attentively reflecting upon these matters, it cannot but be that the soul in which the root of faith is to be found will receive wings to take refuge under the shadow of Christ's wings, and there entrust herself to Him. Proceed therefore, entrusting everything to Him, and from this moment forward be neither anxious nor fearful for the future and about the outcome of specific cases, for He cares for you and will make all things well. It is all in the hand of an omnipotent, faithful, good, and wise Jesus. It is a particular delight to Him if one thus puts his trust in Him, casts all upon Him, and may rest in doing so.

(2) While believing in Christ, make continual use of the promises of which you have become an heir, which are all yea and amen in Christ. In whatever situations you may be, according to either soul or body, seek for a promise which is applicable to such a situation and acknowledge it as infallible truth. Then apply it to yourself as having been made to you, encourage your heart with it, rejoice in it, and with assurance await its fulfillment. You will thus glorify God and with courage endure all tribulations. By faith go to God Himself so that you may continually live in His communion and in reflecting upon His attributes, the view of which constitutes eternal felicity. In doing so, however, do not think that in having become a partaker of Christ by faith, you may now bypass Him and consider this as something that has passed. This also must not be understood as if from now on one should exercise immediate fellowship with God and only be engaged in the

work of sanctification, and not imagine that this would be a higher state of a Christian. No, this is by no means the case. It is true that the soul does not always need to begin from the beginning in his dealings with Christ; he must nevertheless continually make use of Christ. He must not only do so when he has sinned and thereby receive peace and reconciliation again through Him, but also when reflecting upon the attributes of God. This is spiritual growth, and the highest degree of perfection consists in an increased beholding of the attributes of God in both Christ and in His work of redemption relative to a sinner. This the apostle teaches in the following passages: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18), "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). Thus believing and living by that faith, one will go forth from strength to strength until he will enter into glory. There he will no longer live by faith but will be occupied with beholding. There, faith and hope will be done away, and perfect love will endure. Amen.

038. Chapter 33: Distinguishing Marks of Saving Faith

----- CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE ----- Distinguishing Marks of Saving Faith

Faith is the soul of Christianity; whoever is in error here, errs unto his eternal damnation. Many, having a false notion concerning this, perish with a false peace; others spend their days in sorrow, being fearful that they do not possess true faith, whereas, being true believers, they have reason to go on their way rejoicing. It is therefore necessary to distinguish in the clearest possible manner between true and temporal faith. May the Lord grant me grace and ability to do so.

We have done so briefly in the previous chapter, as much as the explanation of the nature of faith necessitated this. For the purpose of self-examination, however, further explanation and application are necessary. Thus we promised to treat this subject more extensively in this chapter.

One should not imagine that true faith and temporal faith resemble each other so closely that they can scarcely be distinguished from each other, merely differing in degree and duration. They differ from each other in their essential nature. The difference between them is comparable to the difference between death and life, light and darkness. The difficulty in distinguishing between them is to be found in man, however, and in the manner in which he discriminates in applying this to himself. A true believer, having received light to distinguish between various matters, can be more readily convinced that he possesses true faith than a temporal believer of the contrary. For the temporal believer is ignorant of the true essence and unique nature of saving faith, even though he is able to discourse about it on the basis of God's Word, as well as by means of what he has read and heard from God's children who have spoken or written about it.

We wish to pursue this further and demonstrate, 1) the necessity of self-examination; 2) the various types of people to be considered in reference to self-examination; 3) several false foundations upon which some put themselves at ease, but who will perish forever; 4) the fundamental nature of true faith in its origin, essence, and fruit. The Necessity of Self-Examination

Whoever you are, as you read or hear this read, I ask you -- give your answer to an omniscient God -- what do you say about yourself? Are you a true believer or not? Come, search yourself closely and examine yourself, for:

First, you are at this present moment either a child of God or a child of Satan; you cannot be both at once nor can you be neutral, as there is no third option. Impress this upon your heart, regardless of how prominent or despised you are, or how blessed or wretched you are. Is it not worth the effort to examine yourself as to who you are? Should one be careless in such a weighty matter? For such is the practice of foolish virgins, upon whose end we should reflect.

Secondly, not those who are baptized, and not all who attend church and partake of the Lord's Supper are true believers. Yes, only a few, and by far the smallest number of them are true believers on the way to eternal felicity. Think of a multitude as you would find in the marketplace where people can be seen mingling together as ants -- or as you would find gathered in a filled

church. While doing so consider the following: Simon the sorcerer was baptized (Acts 8:13); the guest without the wedding garment sat at the table (Matthew 22:11); half of the virgins were foolish (Matthew 25:2). Only few are chosen (Matthew 20:16). Only few find the narrow way and enter through the narrow gate, while there are many who are on the broad way who, through the wide gate, run to their damnation (Matthew 7:13-14). And thus our focus is upon you -- and should you not ask yourself what hope you are entertaining about yourself? "Lord, is it I" (Matthew 26:22); "Master, is it I" (Matthew 26:25).

Thirdly, it is most detrimental to neglect self-examination and the searching of one's heart. Such neglect holds man captive in the sleep of carelessness. It causes him to waste time. It renders the means of grace useless and impotent. It hardens his heart against all the threatenings and judgments of God. It holds him captive to the world and to sin; yes, it is the key whereby he closes heaven and opens hell for himself.

Fourthly, self-examination is very beneficial. It causes one to become conscious of the evils which dwell in the heart. It causes one to become acquainted with the avenging justice of God. It causes one to become concerned, frightened, and perplexed. It causes one to flee to Jesus for justification and sanctification. It causes one to become serious in heart. And if one may perceive grace, light, life, and faith, it cannot be expressed what joy this generates in the heart and what a strengthening effect this has! It repeatedly provides a person with new courage; he receives more liberty in prayer and he becomes acquainted with the ways in which God deals with souls. It gladdens his heart and it has a sanctifying influence upon all his actions. "And every man that has this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

Fifthly, to neglect this self-examination due to laziness, discouragement, or despair, robs a person of all comfort and joy, obstructs his growth, and denies God His honor. Therefore, examine yourself frequently, and often give answer to the question, "Simon, lovest thou Me" (John 21:17).

It is also God's express command; whoever neglects this, not surrendering to His will, is disobedient toward God. How can such a person prosper? "Let us search and try our ways" (Lamentations 3:40); "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired" (Zephaniah 2:1). [Note: A literal rendering of Statenvertaling reads, "Search yourself closely, yea closely, O nation void of desire."] "Let a man examine himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28); "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Submit to the counsel and command of God, and you will prosper. Sixthly, it is possible for one to come to the knowledge of his spiritual state -- whether one is in the covenant of grace with God, and whether or not one is a believer. To imagine that such is impossible causes a decline in serious concern about spiritual matters and therefore I wish to state that it is possible for one to know this. The bride knew that Jesus was hers: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16). "For I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25); "... and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob" (Isaiah 60:16). "For I am persuaded," etc. (Romans 8:38). "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live" (Galatians 2:20).

Thus it should be noted that it is possible for a person to be assured. Therefore, strive to attain to such assurance. It is also possible, however, for a natural man to be convinced that he is still in an unregenerate state.

Seventhly, even though it is possible to come to this realization by the grace of the Holy Spirit, not every one does. Many thousands will go to hell who imagine that they will enter heaven. There will also be many, however, who will enter heaven who feared that they would not arrive there. And even those who at times may stand strong, can readily become weak and come into darkness. "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by Thy favor Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled" (Psalms 30:6-7). In some true partakers of the covenant of grace there is still much darkness, so that they do not have a clear perception of what constitutes sufficient light and life. Although they know this when considering it divorced from themselves, and would be capable of stating this clearly to others, they nevertheless lack sufficient light to observe these graces in themselves. Moreover, so much of the old man yet remains in them -- a fact upon which they focus to such an extent that they question whether this can coexist with grace -- that they live between hope and fear. Hence they are poor, even though they possess much that is good. Others have good opinions of themselves, but they deceive themselves miserably. "There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Proverbs 30:12). Consider, therefore, how necessary it is that we scrutinize our hearts and examine ourselves as to who and how we are.

Various Forms of Self-Deceit Identified and False Foundations Exposed To be of assistance in this matter, I shall describe several spiritual frames, so that you may examine yourself as to what sort of person you are.

First, there are people who neither have knowledge, nor desire, nor do they meditate upon or have discussions about God, heaven, hell, the soul, the covenant, the Mediator, faith, or conversion. Their thoughts do not transcend this earth and do not penetrate beyond that which is visible; of invisible things they cannot speak a word. Is the soul immortal? Is there a heaven and a hell? This they will discover after their death; in the meantime they passively wait for where God will send them. They leave the matter to God, as it is not for them to search this out. They who have the privilege to go to heaven will then be well off; the others necessarily entertain a good hope about themselves. What fools you are!

Secondly, others know very well that they are ungodly, worldly, and unregenerate; they admit freely that if they continue in this manner, they cannot be saved. Yet there is no evidence of emotion or sorrow, neither is there an earnest determination to forsake their sinful life and to be converted; they are bewitched and possessed of Satan. They do not wish to focus upon their heart and spiritual condition, knowing quite well what the results would be. This could cause them to be distraught and fearful, which is something they do not desire. They do not wish to hear about sorrow, nor do they wish to hear the "jabbering" of ministers who, either from the pulpit or in private, uncover their sins; they do not wish to have the lid removed from this pot. They hate those who rebuke them, as in Isaiah 30:9-11, "This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." Such have already

condemned themselves, and they will be judged by that which proceeds from their heart and mouth.

Thirdly, others are not as ungodly; they are good-natured, have a meek character, and are externally religious. Nevertheless they are aware that they do not possess spiritual life, are not indwelt by the Spirit, have no communion with God, nor have faith, but are living for that which is visible. They are fully convinced that they are without grace, but it does not trouble their heart very much. There is no earnest concern, no anxiety; and even if occasionally there is an inclination truly to repent, a bosom sin will hinder them, and they will depart from this inclination with a sigh, choosing the things of this world as the young ruler, of whom it is written, "He went away sorrowful" (Matthew 19:22).

Fourthly, others come even a step closer, having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus (2 Peter 2:20). They join the fellowship of the godly, and are active in many things, as Herod in Mark 6:20. However, they do not come to an ultimate conclusion concerning their spiritual state. They leave this unresolved as they do not know what it is. Yes, they complain much about their spiritual poverty to the God-fearing, and speak of a great fear that they have not been regenerated. Their secret objective is to gain the respect, love, and pity of the godly, however; for if someone ventures to deal faithfully with them, declaring to them that they still appear to be in a natural state, rather than being regenerate, they become offended and change their manner of expression in an effort to defend themselves. The outcome often reveals that they have deceived others and have kept themselves from being genuinely concerned. Among such there are, however, also those who are very concerned and fearful, living in anxiety with this conviction during their entire lifetime. They nevertheless remain who they are -- without Spirit and life.

Fifthly, there are others who have great thoughts about the state of their heart. They "know" that all is well with them as far as their relationship with God is concerned; they will most certainly be saved. There is no doubt in their mind about this. Even if all ministers would unite, they would not succeed in taking away this faith and assurance from them. However, what foundation do these people have? Some have no foundation at all; others rest upon false foundations. Others appear to rest upon a true foundation, but they appropriate it to themselves unjustly, thereby deceiving themselves. Such we now wish to identify, while simultaneously demonstrating to the true partakers of the covenant of grace that their case is different from these.

Sixthly, others claim assurance without any foundation. These are generally ignorant people who neither have knowledge of God, the Mediator, the Spirit, nor of spiritual life. They comprehend that hell is a terrible place and they have no desire to be there. They reason that such a reality would cause them to be too ill at ease. Because it appears too melancholy to them, they imagine within themselves that it will not be necessary for them to come there. Since after death they wish to be in their imagined or so-called heaven, they are of the opinion that they will arrive there. Being confident of this, they continue their life upon earth. Such people are sleeping at the very edge of hell and are often not awakened until, too late, they open their eyes in hell (cf. Luke 16:23).

It is indeed true that many godly persons whose knowledge is limited are assured by the Spirit of God in their hearts, and yet cannot relate the basis for their assurance. They have a basis, however, even though they cannot relate it to others. They are able to perceive and experience

what others are able to express, for they know that during the enjoyment of their assurance they have communion with God in Christ. Such persons we shall describe more particularly in the conclusion of this chapter.

Seventhly, others assure themselves upon false foundations, living in the state of nature and for that which is visible. They quiet their conscience, or prevent themselves from becoming uneasy referring to many self-defined and self-made marks of grace. Among those marks the following are most prominent:

(1) God is gracious and merciful, and how could He bring Himself to punish His creatures so severely, especially if they plead with Him for mercy? He who prays will receive; he who knocks, to him it will be opened.

Answer: Know that "God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart" (Psalms 73:1); "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (Psalms 34:16); the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to God; and in John 9:31 it is recorded, "God heareth not sinners"; "Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isaiah 1:15). The foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-46 knocked and also called, but were not given entrance. In Proverbs 1:28 it is stated, "Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer." God's grace does not consist in allowing sin to go unpunished, but in the gift of a Surety, as well as in granting a person faith and repentance.

(2) Christ has died for us all; if we have sin, we are again reconciled in Him.

Answer: This is not true; Christ gives eternal life to His sheep; however, there are those who do not belong to His sheep (John 10:26-27). "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). If the foregoing presupposition were true, how is it possible that the goats on His left hand will be condemned?

(3) I do not live such an ungodly life; I have been baptized; I partake of the Lord's Supper; I diligently go to church; I am upright in my conversation; I do not curse; I do not party; I am not boastful; I read God's Word; I say my prayers. What more can you ask of me? If one cannot be saved in this manner, who then can be saved? Then many will remain outside of heaven.

Answer: Why not add to this: I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess; or: Oh God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are (Luke 18:12; Luke 18:11). I declare to you that such individuals are in hell by the thousands, and that such will still arrive there by the thousands, and that you who build on this foundation will also go there. Therefore, repent, before it is too late. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20); "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10); "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10).

(4) God blesses me very abundantly, which I consider as a sign that He loves me.

Answer: "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power" (Job 21:7). "Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places" (Psalms 73:18); "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Proverbs 1:32). Did not the rich man receive that which is good in this life? Nevertheless his end was in hell (Luke 16:25).

(5) God chastises me, and I have much sorrow and adversity in my life. I believe that God chastises those whom He loves. I must suffer so much here in order that I need not suffer in the hereafter.

Answer: God chastises His children in order that they may become partakers of His holiness, but He punishes the ungodly in His wrath. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isaiah 57:21). The miseries of the ungodly are often the beginning of eternal damnation. Far be it from us, therefore, that we should deduce God's love from external tribulations. Thus, you can see that all these things are not a basis upon which one may conclude what his spiritual state is, and imagine salvation for himself. If you have been resting on these foundations, you have deceived yourself. Therefore, awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.

Eighthly, others deceive themselves, who, even though they hold to proper and sound marks of grace, appropriate them unjustly to themselves, even though these matters are not to be found in them. The marks of grace which they generally posit are as follows: sorrow over sin and the birth pangs of regeneration; faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the joy of the Spirit ensuing from this, as well as repentance and a sanctified walk of life.

Initially we may say of such individuals:

(1) They do not sincerely examine themselves. They do not unpretentiously come into the presence of God, being concerned with self-deception, praying with David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24). Rather, the determination of their own spiritual state passes quickly from their minds, as they do not dare to suspect themselves. In response to a glimmer of that which appears to be good, they entertain good thoughts about themselves, however, and they speak with a liberty which transcends the true condition of their heart. They are accustomed to focus upon matters in a manner divorced from their own condition, discussing them passionately without any reflection upon their own heart. The upright in heart, on the contrary, must generally cope with much internal anxiety.

(2) The foundations upon which they build, consistent with the manner in which they determine their spiritual state, are only superficial and spurious. Their sorrow, faith, and sanctification do not proceed from the heart, but only from a general intellectual notion, manifesting themselves only externally, being merely the fruit of a natural disposition. Their case does not go beyond the surface, neither do their concerns, sorrows, and desires; they maintain themselves by thinking and speaking of the matters themselves such as faith, hope, and love, and the essential nature of each. They will also speak about the condition of the church, complaining of the lack of spirituality, as well as failures to be discerned in others, etc. In these matters, which relate to all that is external, they are generally first to express themselves most vehemently. The subject matter being spiritual in nature, they delight to speak seriously about these things.

However, the objective of true believers is to discern and experience these matters in their hearts. Their desires are after God, and their eyes and hearts are focused upon Him. Spiritual matters lead them to God; and if such is not the case, true believers do not find delight in them. They cannot be content with these matters as such.

(3) Temporal believers do not examine themselves sincerely; they also do not wish to be exposed by others. When the marks of grace are presented from the pulpit, they do not apply them to themselves. They do not give heed or do so only for the purpose of learning, in order that they may be able to present these matters to others, and thus be esteemed for their wisdom, spirituality, and experience. When they do pay careful attention, they have others in mind, thinking that this applies to such and such an individual and that he should take this to heart. Hence, they become more and more established in this frame of mind, and this in turn makes them all the more careless. If, however, someone deals with such temporal believers in an earnest and most personal manner, exposing them in such a manner that they cannot remain concealed, they become unpleasant, defend themselves most vehemently, and seek to take away from the love and esteem such upright individuals may enjoy. Whereas such temporal believers were able to maintain a reputation for godliness while traversing upon the broad way, thereby creating the distinct impression of being wise, they will now readily depart from the right way as such people are very much motivated by the objective of having the love and esteem of others.

Those who truly fear God, however, are very desirous to be uncovered. The uncovering of their failures and the sinful condition of their soul is something most valuable to them. It causes them to rejoice within, even though at times they perceive that their flesh initially resists such discovery. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil" (Psalms 141:5). And if such discovery makes them conscious that God has glorified His grace in them, they not only rejoice over this, but it draws them in a sweet manner to God. They perceive within themselves a revival of faith and love as well as a sincere resolution to live a more godly life. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself" (1 John 3:3).

Having stated this generally by way of introduction, let us now focus in particular upon each spiritual foundation, so that we may discern more clearly between temporal and true believers.

Temporal and True Believers Distinguished in Their Sorrow over Sin The first matter is sorrow over sin. The temporal believer reasons as follows: "Scripture states, "Blessed are they that mourn" (Matthew 5:4). God dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit and will revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isaiah 57:15). Well, I am sorrowful, and I am disturbed when I have sinned; I have experienced much strife and anxiety. Therefore I consider myself to be a child of God, to be included in the covenant of grace, and to be a believer." My response is that not all sorrow within man proceeds from spiritual light and life, and therefore not all sorrow is of the right sort -- the sort to which the promise of salvation and comfort is attached. Paul speaks of a godly sorrow and a sorrow of the world (2 Corinthians 7:10). Consider Saul for instance: "... Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil ... the Lord reward thee good" (1 Samuel 24:16-17; 1 Samuel 24:19); "Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm" (1 Samuel 26:21). Notice that he accuses himself, he confesses his crime, he weeps, and he wishes God's blessing upon the one who rebuked him -- nevertheless he remained Saul. Consider also Ahab: "And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly" (1 Kings 21:27).

See how he displayed sorrow to the greatest degree, appeared to succumb to this sorrow, and fasted. And did not Esau seek the place of repentance with sorrow when he heard that he had lost his blessing? He sought to persuade his father by means of tears to rescind the blessing, and to bless him instead (Hebrews 12:17). And was not Judas remorseful? (Matthew 27:3). Are you of the opinion that these were external and in appearance only? I am of the opinion that it was most definitely heartfelt. Are you of the opinion that you may have comfort and peace in your soul because you once wept and prayed? Saul also wept. The natural man who lives under the ministry of the gospel -- however ungodly he may be -- will in times of perplexity and anxiety within his conscience also weep and pray. Upon weeping he will feel some relief, for weeping physically relieves inner anxiety. Papists experience a wonderful peace after they have been to confession, because they believe they have received complete absolution. Such is also the case with an individual who in his sorrow has humbled himself, and has confessed his sins; he believes that they are forgiven, thinking that God has seen his tears and heard his prayers. Or if by means of other pretenses, he has pacified himself so that he has become much more peaceful, he hopes that all will now be well. From the foregoing you should therefore be convinced that sorrow and weeping cannot be the basis upon which to determine your spiritual state. The crucial issue is the cause of this sorrow, the manner in which this sorrow is experienced, as well as the spiritual frame of the soul associated with this sorrow. The causes of sorrow in unregenerate persons are as follows: Some are sorrowful as a result of depression and are naturally inclined toward melancholy. Regardless of the origin of their depression, these individuals will be sorrowful and despondent while dealing with spiritual matters such as salvation and sin. These individuals are identifiable by the fact that they cannot give a reason for, nor do they strive to be delivered from, this sorrow; they always remain the same unless their melancholy mood lifts temporarily. Then, without reason, they vacillate too far to the other extreme, talking excessively in a state of exhilaration, being joyous for no apparent reason. Such will assure themselves of their salvation, even though most often they live in fear.

Some are sorrowful for fear of damnation. Their conscience becomes active, focusing upon their sinful life, the justice of God, and the dreadfulness of damnation. This anxiety will not allow them to sleep, but causes them to complain, weep, and cry. At that moment such will not assure themselves; however, after the experience passes, some will take this for evidence that they have experienced the birth pangs of regeneration, that they are converted, that they have won the battle, and this then gives them peace. But to such we say, that if this did not result in true repentance and faith, then your fear and trembling were no better than that of Felix (Acts 24:25). Then you have trembled as the devil does (James 2:19), and you would thus deceive yourself if such were the basis upon which you determine your spiritual state.

Some are moved, and cry, only because they are affected by the dramatic motions and the manner of exhortation utilized by the minister, as well as the fact that others are stirred. They also become heavy-hearted, which causes them to weep as well. Such was the case in the days of Nehemiah: "For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law" (Nehemiah 8:9).

Some are sorrowful, because in committing sin they have brought themselves into disgrace with the people, they have suffered loss so that they come in a condition of poverty and trouble, or they fear the retribution of the government. This causes much inner anxiety, and such a situation can generate melancholy thoughts pertaining to salvation.

Some are sorrowful over sin in view of its magnitude. It was committed against the light of nature, in spite of a tender conscience, contrary to a good upbringing -- all of which troubles them. If it involves another person, they feel sorrow for the trouble they have caused that person. Such would be the case with someone who has murdered his father, and who would always feel remorse. This could also be experienced with sins of a lesser nature. To make a conclusion on the basis of such sorrow that one is in the state of grace is also erroneous, for even the heathen experience sorrow and are pricked in their conscience (Romans 2:14-15).

You who gauge your spiritual state by the degree or intensity of your perplexity and sorrow, consider if your experience is consistent with what has just been stated about this matter. I urge you to awake, for you are deceiving yourself, as has now been demonstrated. To convince you even further, while simultaneously communicating to the mourners in Zion about the grace which they possess, let us now consider the causes and characteristics of sorrow which are to be found only in the children of God. I preface this by stating that what has been said about sorrow in the above, can also be found in those who truly fear God. In addition to this, however, they experience also different matters and spiritual frames.

First, true sorrow pertains to sin as sin; that is, the godly see beyond the deed itself. They bring themselves into the presence of God and mourn before His countenance. They perceive that they have sinned against the goodness and holiness of God, having violated the relationship which existed between the creature and the Creator. They perceive that they have acted contrary to the fear, love, and obedience to which they were obliged before God. Even if in their sorrow they are not able to distinguish these matters so clearly, this reality is nevertheless to be found in their heart. This grieves them and makes them tenderhearted. Even if at times they cannot believe with assurance that they have been accepted as children, there is nevertheless a secret yearning for God. It burdens them to have sinned against God. They acquiesce in the justice of God if it would please Him to punish them. Their sentence is experienced in their heart as a heavy chastisement: Behold, "against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Psalms 51:4).

Secondly, true sorrow does not only concern itself with sinful deeds and greater sins, but also with lesser sins, neglect of duty, absence of holy motives in the exercise of duty, and with indecent, vain, and sinful thoughts which are even contrary to their will. Yes, it pertains to our sinful nature, wickedness, instability, and thus our impotence to make any improvements in the future. At the occasion of sin committed one considers himself entirely sinful within and without, and in view of this exclaims with perplexity and sorrow, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5); "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. ... O wretched man that I am!" (Romans 7:18; Romans 7:24 a).

Thirdly, true sorrow is related to the absence of communion with God and to a yearning for this communion. The believer's sorrow is indeed caused by sin, but it reaches beyond this. Even if the soul is not conscious of a particular sin, she is often sorrowful, and if you would ask the question, "Woman, why weepest thou" (John 20:15), the heart would be ready to answer: Because the Lord is absent. It is because I am so estranged from God and because the Lord hides Himself from me. In such a condition I cannot live; it is so dark within, and I am so sinful. Oh, that I were as in former days! Why does the Lord hide His countenance from me, while He perceives that it causes me to

languish? Oh, that my heart would be more steadfast toward Him, that I would be more diligent and persevering in prayer, that I would fear Him more tenderly. "Oh when wilt Thou come unto me" (Psalms 101:2). "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me" (Lamentations 1:16); "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Psalms 42:2).

Fourthly, true sorrow tends to become more intense and spiritual in nature. The sorrow of the temporal believer will readily disappear, since it is only related to various deeds or some moments of anxiety. The temporal believer seeks to evade this sorrow, either by means of diversion, or by countering it with appropriate words of Scripture, or it is worn away by time. True believers, on the contrary, complain often, and mourn over the hardness and insensitivity of their heart. If only they could be truly contrite, perceive the wickedness of sin and God's wrath toward them, and thus be truly humbled in the dust. Such is their wish. If they do not perceive such motions within, they become sorrowful and complain, "O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our heart from Thy fear" (Isaiah 63:17). They are, however, not satisfied merely to have a sorrow of this nature, but they desire spiritual improvement from it, namely, that they may find themselves before the countenance of the Lord with their filthy garments (Zechariah 3:3). They desire to be filled with shame before the Lord's countenance, so that they do not dare to lift up their eyes, or draw near. Standing afar off with the publican in Luke 18:13, they confess what is expressed in Ezra 9:6, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." They wish to sink away, with the prodigal son, in their unworthiness before the countenance of the Lord (Luke 15:19). They desire an evangelical sorrow; that is, a melting away in tears of love, in a sorrow over sin which proceeds from this love. They desire to justify God, and thus to silently submit themselves to the chastising hand of the Lord, saying, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Micah 7:9). They desire to mourn as a child rather than as a slave and to trust in His grace. They will not and cannot cease to mourn until they may perceive some hope of reconciliation with God and some peace of conscience in Christ.

Fifthly, true sorrow works repentance. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Corinthians 7:10). This does not mean that true believers are immediately victorious over sin, and will never fall into the same sin again, but by virtue of this sorrow there comes an ever-increasing hatred against sin. They make sincere resolutions against sin in the presence of God and continually resume the battle against it; they receive a holy disposition of soul.

If these matters are not truly found in you, be assured that your sorrow is not of the right kind. You have never experienced the birth pangs of regeneration. Do not view such false sorrow as evidence of your renewed state, but be assured that you are still in the state of nature. If these things are truly found in you, be careful not to deny or minimize this grace. Even if at the present time you do not possess the matters mentioned before to such a degree as you may have in the past, or as others possess them, or as you wished you possessed them, you may have some assurance that God has granted life to you. Wherever this true sorrow is to be found, however, the two subsequent experienced marks of grace will also be found.

Temporal and True Believers Distinguished in the Exercise of Faith The second mark of a true believer and partaker of the covenant of grace, in contrast to a temporal believer and presumptuous partaker of the covenant, is derived from faith itself. Faith is a sure mark of him who is a true partaker of the covenant and an heir of salvation. However, not all who think they have faith are possessors of true saving faith. In order to examine everyone in this regard, we must first describe the spiritual frame of a temporal believer, and then present the spiritual frame of a true believer.

I now address myself to those who feel assured within themselves that they are possessors of true faith, and not to those who are doubtful and concerned. I ask you: Is it in truth? Are you possibly deceiving yourself? Consider seriously in your heart that people can sadly deceive themselves in this matter, for not all that bears the name of faith is true faith. We read that Agrippa believed the prophets and was nevertheless a heathen (Acts 26:27). The devils themselves believe (James 2:19). Simon the sorcerer also believed, and yet he had neither part nor lot in the matter of salvation (Acts 8:13; Acts 8:21; Acts 8:23). Those which were sown upon stony ground are called believers; however, their faith was only for a time (Luke 8:13). Thus, we see how dangerous it is to pacify oneself with something which bears the name of faith. For this reason one must examine himself closely whether he possess a true faith or one that is false and presumptuous.

First, those who only have a presumptuous, historical, or temporal faith, have some measure of knowledge of God, Christ, Scripture, and spiritual matters. However, with this knowledge they contemplate these things in an outward manner, divorced from any heart-acquaintance. These matters have never become reality within their hearts, nor have they made an impression upon their hearts. The truth of Scripture is not true within their hearts. Their thoughts, concerns, desires, and activities are not governed by a desire to have those contemplated matters in their hearts. They have no desire to be changed into that image (2 Corinthians 3:18). They view these matters as some would view the extravagant palace and gardens of a prince. They forget themselves and delight themselves in the contemplation of it, meanwhile having no thoughts, concerns, desires -- nor expending any energy -- to make it their possession. Whether it is their possession is neither their concern, nor the focus of their thinking at the moment.

Secondly, those who only have a presumptuous faith are assured -- the one less and the other more -- of the spiritual truths that there is a God, that Christ is the Savior, that salvation is to be obtained in Him, and that outside of Him condemnation must be expected. Being conscious of these truths, they believe them. There are those who are only somewhat assured of these and similar truths, who nevertheless speak boastfully and with much liberty. Others are so assured of the reality of these truths that they would die for them. By frequent contemplation upon and discussion of these things, they condition themselves to believe that they are partakers of them, since they are so firmly assured of these matters. However, they again bypass their heart. There are no earnest and straightforward transactions with God and with Christ to receive Him by faith, seek for His indwelling in the heart, and truly and unconditionally surrender oneself to Him. Their hearts remain hearts of stone (Matthew 13:20). Since they believe these truths externally, however, as well as by reason of being assured of this, they conclude and imagine that these truths are an internal reality and that they are true believers.

Thirdly, a temporal believer is certainly conscious of a witness in his heart that he is a believer, and he does possess gladness and joy. However, it is his own spirit or an evil spirit which testifies to him that he believes. Either his joy is of his own making, or the excellency of the spiritual matter upon which he has meditated has made him joyful.

He rarely reflects upon himself, being concerned with the external. Due to his perception of and belief in the truth, even if he does reflect upon himself, he yet does not dare to be suspicious of himself and does not examine himself. He is of the opinion that he would sin if he were to doubt his spiritual state. He perceives in one moment that all is well with him; that is, that he is a true believer. He considers these matters and their preciousness, and believes them. Should not he desire to embrace them? Thus he reasons. He considers the promises, but fails to consider the qualifications of those to whom the promises are made. Thus, his own spirit witnesses that he is a child of God.

How deceitfully Satan operates at times, stimulating the imagination to such a degree that it appears to the temporal believer that he experiences the joy of heaven in his heart! Yet it is nothing but a sensory stimulation, void of substance and communion with God. Humbleness of heart and love toward God are absent. At best there is some contemplation about spiritual mysteries and the riches of God's children, as was the case with the Queen of the South who nearly fainted when she observed the wisdom and riches of Solomon -- riches of which she was not a partaker. With courage the temporal believer journeys on; he has no strife or wrestlings to believe and remain steadfast. He is assured, although he does not wish to hear his conscience which occasionally confronts him with the truth, and therefore he silences it.

Thus, temporal believers possess a faith which is but a waking dream, an imagination, a gazing upon the truth and preciousness of spiritual matters, a rejoicing in promises which were not made to them. There is no searching of the heart; neither are there sincere and earnest transactions with God and Christ. Temporal faith is an intellectual whim, a figment of the imagination, superficial and presumptuous in nature, without uprightness of heart, and without these truths having taken root downward in the heart. This does not mean that everything which temporal believers see, think, and do, is hypocritical in nature and is done against better knowledge. In fact, they are of the opinion that it is truth within, and that their spiritual state is certainly well. They deceive themselves. They dream and are of the opinion that they are awake, but they are in a condition from which they cannot be aroused. Concerning this condition of temporal believers we read, "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself" (Matthew 13:20-21). "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance" (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Let us now compare to this the spiritual frame of the true believer for the purpose of fully identifying true as well as temporal believers -- for the one in reference to the genuineness of saving grace, and for the other in reference to his imagined attainment. In true believers the following matters manifest themselves:

First, by faith true believers frequently receive the Lord Jesus with their heart. They receive Jesus by faith rather than indulging themselves in speculating about doctrinal issues and saving benefits.

They go to the fountain itself and are engaged in transactions with God and Christ Himself. To Him they turn, Him they desire, for Him they long, Him they receive, upon Him they rely, to Him they surrender themselves, to Him they desire to be united -- all by faith. How they desire to be exercised in the acts of faith which we described in the previous chapter, and thus remain consciously united to Him! God and Christ are the focus of their spiritual activity, be it sometimes weaker and at other times stronger. Such is also the testimony of Holy Writ, "As many as received Him" (John 1:12); "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1).

They receive the Lord Jesus with their heart. Their activity is neither external nor intellectual in nature, but proceeds from within. Their heart mourns, longs, believes, surrenders, and is conscious of what is lacking within. They examine the condition of their heart, and in such a frame of mind, they engage in seeking to have the Lord Jesus in their heart. All that does not proceed from the heart they consider of no value; it grieves them and they can find no delight in it. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10); "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:17).

They frequently, if not a thousand times, receive the Lord Jesus by faith. They always believe that their reception of Him has not been as unreserved as it ought to have been and that it has not been with sufficient clarity and sincerity; it was not as wholehearted as it ought to have been. This receiving of Him is their daily food and very therefore they repeat it over and over, not so much with the objective to be included in the covenant of grace, but with the objective to be more and more intimately united with Christ. They are motivated by their daily failures to do so, as they perceive that without Him they cannot approach unto God. The desire for rest and inner peace continually drives them out to Him, who alone is their Peace. All this, however, is superseded by love, which also continually drives them out to Him. They are also subject to many periods of darkness, spiritual desertions, strife, and infirmities of faith. Since there is no restoration outside of Christ, they time and again return and cleave to Him, repeatedly renewing the exercise of faith. Since the believer's spiritual life is dependent upon continually receiving Christ (who is his life), and just as a person will succumb when he is not able to breathe, so the believer will succumb if by faith he is not able to bring Christ into his heart or his heart to Christ. This constant repetition of believing and receiving may be observed especially in the Psalms and in the Song of Solomon.

Behold, such is the clear distinction between a temporal and a true believer. The one functions outside the realm of his heart and does not move beyond speculating about these matters. He proceeds in an external fashion, having experienced only an imaginary change. The true believer engages himself with his heart; he has dealings with Jesus and finds strength and life in the continual receiving of Him.

Secondly, true believers perceive and acknowledge Christ as being very precious to them. They perceive not only the excellency of the benefits which one receives through Christ -- to be delivered from all evil and to become partakers of salvation in the fullest sense of the word -- but also that which is precious in all daughters of Zion, as well as the blessed portion of all who are partakers of Jesus. They can say, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance" (Psalms 33:12). Temporal believers are also capable of perceiving this, albeit with a different estimation than true believers. To the true believers Christ is precious, however, and they desire to enjoy Him experientially. "Unto you

therefore which believe He is precious" (1 Peter 2:7). It is an absolute necessity for them to have Him as their Surety and Mediator by personal application. They perceive so much of the wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and truth in the fact that God would save them in Christ, that they desire no other way, but embrace this way with their whole heart. Christ is to them so lofty, so glorious, so desirable, and to enjoy Him is so sweet and precious, that in comparison to Him all else is of no value. Even if they do not know whether they are partakers of Him, how precious He nevertheless is to them! How their soul would live if they would have Him and if He would be pleased to be their portion! The preciousness of Jesus draws eyes, heart, and hands to Him. Once they may enjoy Him, they know how precious a treasure they have found; their concern becomes that they may not lose Him, and thus they cling to Him and cannot let Him go. The magnificence and preciousness of Jesus is the subject of their discussions, and if they meet someone to whom Jesus also is precious, they treasure such a person with all their heart. Such persons are precious to them since they esteem Jesus to be so precious.

Thirdly, true believers wholeheartedly and unreservedly receive Jesus by faith, surrendering themselves unconditionally to Him, in order to be brought to God by Him in such a way as pleases Him.

Temporal believers, being strangers of genuine, heartfelt transactions with Jesus, do not desire a full and complete Jesus. They do desire to have Him as their High Priest to reconcile them with God, to pray for them, and to save them. However, they do not desire Him as their prophet -- to be internally taught of Him, to be humbled by the uncovered filth of their heart, and to learn to despise all that is of the world and that which is desirable to the

326 eye. Even though they have an external desire for the knowledge of Scripture, and for knowledge itself, they do not desire to be taught by God in order that they might draw near to Him and that their soul might be transformed into the image of God. To them all knowledge is desirable in order that they may also be honored as enlightened and knowledgeable individuals. Temporal believers are filled with self-love and hence desire to seek self.

They also do not desire to have Him as their King, to be ruled by Him according to His will in their thoughts, motives, and actions. They intimate that such is the case, something which they even express in their prayers, but these consist of nothing but empty phrases. Their hearts remain untouched. They desire Him to be King over the multitude to which they join themselves. It is their desire to perceive that He dwells with them, protects and honors them, in order that they may in this manner appear to share in the glory of His church. And thus they do not surrender themselves to Him with the heart.

However, true believers wholeheartedly receive Him as their Prophet, Priest, and King. They cannot determine in which office they desire Him most. Even though at one time one office, and then again another, comes to the fore in their particular situation, they cannot separate these offices. They know that all three are necessary unto their salvation, and therefore one cannot be separated from the others. Their prayer is, "Teach me" (Psalms 25:5); "Open Thou mine eyes" (Psalms 119:18). They desire to "be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ" (Php 3:9). It is their wish that the blood of Jesus Christ may cleanse them from all their sins (1 John 1:7), and that He would intercede for them (Romans 8:34). It is their desire that He be King over their heart, defeating and removing all

that rebels against Him and bringing everything in subjection to Himself. They receive Him by faith, as He has been made unto them of God, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

True believers receive Christ alone as their only and all-sufficient portion, while willingly, joyously, and unconditionally relinquishing all that would oppose them in this; Christ must be all in all. They know that He alone is sufficient for them, even if presently they do not sensibly experience this. It grieves them to rely upon something else, and in order to be delivered from this they flee to Jesus. Concerning their sincere and heartfelt inclinations, they may say with Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psalms 73:25).

They also join Paul in Php 3:8, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

Without reservation they also surrender themselves to Jesus to endure with Him, for the sake of His cause, both sweet and bitter, sorrow and joy, light and darkness, so that He will lead, enable, and strengthen them. They fully surrender themselves to His leadership, not only to be brought to Mount Tabor, but also by Him to be brought to Golgotha. It is their wish that He might take away all that would cause them to find joy in the things of the world; that He would bring upon them all that is bitter, as long as He is not far from them; and that they may be near to Him in solitude and quietness. If, however, it would please Him to remove His sensible presence from them, and should such also be to His honor, then they will surrender themselves to this -- albeit with tears in their eyes -- even if He were to pass by them, yes, and through hell lead them to heaven. It is thus that a true believer receives Jesus, thereby fully surrendering himself to Him again.

Fourthly, true believers are not satisfied merely to have received the Lord Jesus by faith for such a purpose and in the aforesaid manner. Their hearts remain focused on Jesus, and they cannot experience any happiness until they may in actuality partake of and enjoy communion with God in Christ. Their joys and sorrows are proportionate to whether they are far from or near to Him. A temporal believer concerns himself only with the doctrines themselves. As long as he is able to discern, speculate, and discuss them, so that he may be esteemed and cherished among the godly, and the fellowship to which he has joined himself prospers, the temporal believer is joyous. Then he has the preeminence and is especially esteemed. True believers, however, have their focus upon God. The Lord is their treasure, and therefore their hearts are also there. They soon learn to discern whether the Lord is near or at a distance. When the Lord hides His countenance, the soul is bereft of its joy; she mourns, languishes, is restless, troubled, and overwhelmed, as we can observe in the saints. "My Beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him" (Song of Solomon 5:4); "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me" (Psalms 42:6); "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies" (Psalms 77:7-10); "Hide not Thy face from me. ... My heart is smitten and withered like grass ... I am like a pelican of the wilderness ... I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping" (Psalms 102:2;Psalms 102:4;Psalms 102:6-7;Psalms 102:9).

They are as Moses who, when the Lord indicated His presence would be withheld, could not be satisfied. When the Lord addressed him about this matter by saying, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest," Moses responded, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Exodus 33:14-15). When the Lord is at a distance, true believers long for His presence. This separation causes them to be fainthearted and to languish. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth" (Song of Solomon 1:2); "My soul fainteth for Thy salvation: but I hope in Thy Word. Mine eyes fail for Thy Word, saying, When wilt Thou comfort me" (Psalms 119:81-82). When the Lord is distant, they nevertheless cannot fail to persevere. Even if at times they become discouraged, they will resume the struggle. They cannot cease to seek, even if they are only able to lift their eyes upward with Hezekiah, "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me" (Isaiah 38:14). They concur with the prophet. "Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens" (Psalms 123:1). The bride did likewise. "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now ... I will seek Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not" (Song of Solomon 3:1-2). When it pleases the Lord to permit Himself to be found of true believers, when the Lord causes the dark clouds to pass by, reveals His love to them, speaks kindly to their heart, calling them by their name, all sorrow is forgotten. But then they are troubled that they have been so unbelieving, so despondent, and so rebellious. They then delight themselves with the bride: "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:3-4).

Then they are satisfied and can rest in sweet quietness, confessing, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him" (Lamentations 3:24); "But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Thy works" (Psalms 73:28). Then they are fully satisfied as to how the Lord may lead them in the future, and with quiet confidence they may surrender themselves to Him, saying, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalms 73:24). Thus, they may rejoice in the Lord, and the joy of the Lord is their strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Even if they may not enter into sensible communion, their faith is strong; they may rejoice: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). This joy is very different from the faint glimmers experienced by temporal believers, whom we have previously identified. True joy is:

(1) in God and in the soul's union with Him, being in the presence of the Lord as her reconciled God. "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:47); "Rejoice in the Lord alway" (Php 4:4);

(2) humbleness of soul in the presence of the Lord. "He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden" (Luke 1:48). Mary stated this immediately after expressing her joy;

(3) in the uniting of the soul more intimately with God in love. When David confessed in his joy, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust," he also stated, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength." (Psalms 18:2; Psalms 18:1); "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications" (Psalms 116:1);

(4) in causing the soul to increase in holiness, drawing it away from all that is not God, making it willing and lively to do the will of God, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psalms 119:32). This holiness we now wish to consider as a third mark of grace.

Temporal and True Believers Distinguished in Their Practice of Holiness

Faith cannot exist without holiness for faith purifies the heart, is active in love, and is lively in the performance of good works. Therefore, he who does not manifest holiness is not a true believer. It also follows that all men who are still in the state of nature, who live an ungodly life manifesting itself in haughtiness, pride, rioting, drunkenness, immorality, unrighteousness, lying and deception, hatred and envy, truly do not possess faith. They may object as much as they wish, but we declare to them, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Romans 8:13). Listen to Paul as he addresses such individuals: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Php 3:18-19). Such individuals we shall address no more.

Temporal believers, however, who refrain themselves from such excessive sins, deceive themselves in the realm of holiness. They consider themselves to be regenerated and sanctified, and from this they come to a conclusion concerning their spiritual state, even though their holiness is not genuine in nature. On the contrary, those truly sanctified, being conscious of their sins, are very concerned whether they are true believers and partakers of the covenant of grace, for they fear that they have not been sanctified. In order to identify both, we shall first consider counterfeit holiness and then true holiness. First, temporal believers can conduct themselves in such a fashion that they are beyond reproach. They can shun those who practice ungodliness in public, as well as the sins in which worldly people indulge themselves. Between them and the world there is a very clear and significant external difference, which would prompt one to say, "Such a person is not worldly." "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (2 Peter 2:20). Yes, Abimelech the heathen remained standing where David fell (cf. Genesis 20:3; 2 Samuel 11:10).

Secondly, not only are they capable of refraining themselves from vice, but they stand out for the practice of various virtues, such as: diligence and devotion in the realm of religion; meticulous Sabbath observance; frequent discussion of spiritual matters with zeal and fervor; a prayer life accompanied with tears generated by the passion and weakness of their emotional constitution -- this is especially the case when they pray in the company of saints. They join themselves to the godly as Ananias, Sapphira, and Judas did; they love powerful preachers as was the case with Herod and Simon the sorcerer. They are modest in dress and willing to be of service to others; they are patient in adversity, forbearing when treated unjustly, generous and helpful, moderate in food and drink, manifesting love toward men of virtue. In a word, they are capable of refraining from all sin from which the godly refrain themselves, and practicing all virtues which the godly practice. Such was the case with the Pharisees. "Concerning zeal ... which is in the law, blameless" (Php 3:6) This is evident from the description of life among the heathen as well as among the Quakers.

Thirdly, temporal believers are not only capable of practicing holiness externally, but may also turn within and evaluate the thoughts and motions of the soul, being careful that they are not deviant, but virtuous and honest. Thus, their actions are not motivated by hypocrisy, but proceed from the heart -- a heart which internally is such that it is consistent with the manner in which they conduct themselves externally. Paul declares how from his forefathers (the time prior to his conversion) he served God with a pure conscience (2 Timothy 1:3). The Quakers give evidence of this and the heathen bear witness to this in their writings. There was a heathen individual who, at the end of every day, would in solitude contemplate upon the day which had passed, and say, "What evil have you rectified today? Which sins have you resisted? To what extent are you now better than was previously the case?"

Another secular author states: "He who does not give heed to the motions of his own heart, shall not prosper." Someone else states, "Did you know that a virtuous man does nothing for appearance only, but is motivated by that which is good? What advantage then does his activity yield to him? Can you think of a better advantage for a virtuous man than the virtue and honesty of the deeds themselves?" Someone else states, "God is near to you, with you and in you; therefore I say, `the Holy Spirit is within us, giving heed to our good and evil days; He treats us in accordance with the manner in which we treat Him." Live before man as if God sees you."

All this temporal believers may do, motivated by love for virtue and a desire to do God service. An old rhyme states: *Oderunt peccare*, etc.; that is "The virtuous hate sin because they love virtue, but evil persons hate sin for fear of punishment." In Acts 26:9 Paul said of himself, prior to his conversion, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." "Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). Is not this the opinion of all idolaters in their religious activity? From all this we may perceive that the natural man may make much progress in refraining from sin, as well as in the practice of virtue. Therefore, one may not assure himself from what has been stated before that he is a believer, a partaker of the covenant of grace, as well as regenerate.

We must realize, however, that although a person can proceed this far in the state of nature and by means of external illumination, very few have progressed to that degree. Even if there were only one example -- yes, even if in the absence of an example the mere possibility existed -- this provides no proof that one could consider himself converted. The temporal believer is generally motivated by a desire for his own honor, a desire to be seen of men, and other motives which are not pure. We are convinced of the opinion that temporal believers generally do not proceed this far.

God will send a judgment upon them because they disobey His truth with which they are acquainted. They are ambitious individuals who seek honor, esteem, love, and sympathy, which some will obtain by way of magnanimity, and others by humility, depending on where they view themselves as more proficient. At first their conscience warns them that their actions are not proper; however, they convince themselves that their intentions are correct. Possibly they have viewed their behavior so long from one perspective that they are of the opinion it is proper. Thus, they quiet their consciences, and without consideration of their initial motive and objective, they say, "See my zeal for the Lord" (2 Kings 10:16). Temporal believers are also generally not comfortable with a close walk of life, and if they can accomplish their objective with a much more

liberal approach, they will turn around and depart from the way of internal holiness, especially if it yields them more glory and honor as well as more pleasure and less anxiety. Yes, when godliness becomes a matter of shame, when the godly are despised and persecuted, temporal believers will part ways with them and will become oppressors as well -- often of the severest sort. A Dutch proverb states, "Every apostate hates his prior association." The Lord testifies of this in Matthew 13:21, "For when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended." At this point the thought may perhaps arise for the reader: "If heathens, Quakers, and temporal believers can proceed so far and nevertheless be lost, who then can be saved? What more can you expect from an individual? What do true believers possess above and beyond all this?" My response to this is that if you were only to consider that which is of an external nature, the godly would be excelled by others in many things. There is something within the godly, however, which incomparably exceeds that which is most impressive in the temporal believer. If you ask, "What is this," I respond, "Spirit and life." Is not a living dog better than a dead lion? Is not a deformed but living person to be preferred over a beautiful person which consists of fine, molten gold, and is but a sculpture? Are not the most insignificant motions of life to be preferred to the noise and rattle of the internal workings of a clock? Obviously, the answer is "yes." Such is the case also here. Temporal believers are void of both Spirit and life; however, true believers possess both. This is the reason that all activity of the temporal believer misses the mark, whereas the activity of the believer does not. Spirit and life must be present, or else all is in vain. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13); "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). The difference is as follows: temporal believers are motivated by reason, honesty, the desirability of religion, their character, upbringing, a fear of punishment, a desire to be seen of men -- in order to openly or subtly obtain honor, love, esteem, admiration, and possessions. They are, however, neither motivated by the Spirit nor the principle of spiritual life. The godly, on the contrary, are motivated by the Spirit and the internal principle of spiritual life. In order to understand this with clarity, let us consider the following matters: First, the sanctification of true believers proceeds from faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

(1) Faith functions as follows: It receives Jesus unto justification and sanctification, whereby the soul is united to the Lord Jesus and becomes one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). Jesus dwells in the heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17). Jesus and the soul having thus been united, spiritual life now proceeds from the Head, Christ, to His members. By virtue of this union, and the influence of this life, the soul functions in harmony with the essence of this life, which is Christ. Paul testifies of this, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for Me" (Galatians 2:20). The soul does not always perceive this union and its influence; however, it will be the experience of the believer that as he goes about he will often lift his heart on high, longing for this influence and desiring to receive strength and spirituality from Him in his daily walk. This confirms that his activity proceeds from Christ who strengthens him. If, however, he does not discern such a spiritual frame either habitually or in actuality, he cannot be pleased with his walk even though it is satisfactory in every other respect.

(2) By faith, the true believer believes, enjoys, or hopes for reconciliation with God and the adoption as a child. He appropriates or seeks to appropriate God as a reconciled Father in Christ, and thus he walks, or seeks to walk, as a child and partaker of the covenant of grace. According to

the measure in which he may walk with a childlike heart, he may rejoice in this, even though in other respects he perceives deficiencies in his walk. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1); "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:14-15).

(3) The true believer believes and in so doing perceives in God and in communion with God such holiness, glory, and desirability that he considers all that is outside of God to be of no value. He views sin as foul, despicable, and hateful. And as he desires and hopes by this faith to obtain as well as live out of this salvation, he despises that which is despicable, hates that which is hateful, and thus overcomes the world by faith (1 John 5:4). In this way the heart is purified by faith (Acts 15:9 b).

These three matters will manifest themselves in true believers, be it in various measures and at one time more than other times. This is the principle of spiritual life, and from this source proceeds the strength necessary to die to sin and to practice virtue. Examine yourself whether these spiritual frames are the foundation of your walk. If not -- that is, if you cannot speak of such frames and if they are not to be found in you in truth -- your entire walk misses the mark, even though you are esteemed to be a great saint. If, however, you truly perceive this frame in your walk, be it in refraining from and conquering a sin, or in the practice of virtue -- even if it is in a small measure -- then there is life; and your walk, however flawed and however great the power of corruption attending it may be, proceeds from this principle of life.

Secondly, the practice of true sanctification transpires in a heart which knows itself to be in the presence of God -- not of God in a general sense, but as our God in Christ. This is true for those who consider themselves, believe, hope, or strive to be in such a relationship to God. In these activities of the soul they walk before God both in doing or refraining. God required this in Genesis 17:1, "Walk before Me." Enoch did so, as is recorded in Genesis 5:24, "And Enoch walked with God." Nehemiah was praying to God while he was speaking with the king (Nehemiah 2:4-5). In Psalms 16:8 it is recorded, "I have set the Lord always before me."

Thirdly, true sanctification proceeds from love toward God. Although a true believer does not always -- and some never -- experience this love in a very sensible measure, this love is nevertheless to be found on the bottom of his heart and manifests itself in sorrow over the absence of and a desire for the presence of God. This love also manifests itself in seeking after God as well as in a high esteem for God, desiring that God Himself would be the objective of his walk. It manifests itself in joy when God is acknowledged, exalted, feared and served, as well as in the inclination also to glorify Him. Out of all this proceeds the motivation to refrain from sin, since sin exalts itself against God's supremacy, majesty, etc. From this motive proceeds the practice of virtue. Please tell me, can you be satisfied with your walk as such? Certainly not! Are you refreshed if in your walk your heart was not inclined toward God? Certainly not! Do you walk with a heart that desires and seeks to live unto God because He is worthy to be served by you? Do you seek to walk with a heart that is inclined toward God, with a heart that seeks sweet union with God, even though it might not be immediately experienced? Would such a frame cause you to rejoice in your walk? Behold, such is love, and with such a heart the godly seek to regulate their entire walk. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words" (John 14:23); "For this is the love of God, that we keep

His commandments" (1 John 5:3).

All activity which does not proceed from love misses the mark (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). Fourthly, true sanctification proceeds from the fear of God. Since the true believer unites himself by faith to God in Christ, conducts himself as in the presence of God, and begins to love God, it follows that he also begins to revere the majesty and holiness of God. He dares not neglect what God commands him to do, and he dares not do what God forbids him to do. Whenever the opportunity presents itself, this childlike reverence will manifest itself within true believers, whether it be that the fear of God prevents them from doing what they otherwise would have done, or whether the fear of God motivates them to do what they otherwise would have neglected to do. When the fear of God is before their eyes as they engage in any given duty, it delights them when this true fear makes them careful in doing so. It saddens them, however, if they did not perceive the fear of God in their heart, even though they may have performed the duty well. Since the fear of God governs God's children, they are described as God-fearing, "There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout [Dutch: God-fearing]" (Luke 2:25). The fear of God prevented Joseph from sinning (Genesis 39:9). When he wished to convince his brothers of his faithfulness, he said to them, "I fear God" (Genesis 42:18). The fear of God moved Obadiah, the steward, to hide the prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 18:3-4). The fear of God was continually before Job's eyes. "Destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of His highness I could not endure" (Job 31:23).

Fifthly, true sanctification is practiced in obedience to God. For true believers God's will is their law, as well as the inducement which motivates them toward action; God's will is their desire. They either refrain from doing, or do something else because it is the will of God. They view the majesty of God with delight, exalting Him above all. They place themselves beneath that majesty and acknowledge with delight their subjection as well as the obligation which rests upon them before God. In addition to this, there is the bond of love resulting from being in the covenant of grace, so that they do not consider God as a stranger, but as their God. Thus, they are motivated to do battle against sin and to practice virtue, as we may observe from Scripture: "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Psalms 40:8); "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22).

Bringing these five concepts together, we must observe that they cannot be separated from each other. The last four are rooted in the first one; where the one is truly present, the others will manifest themselves as well. This establishes the essential difference between temporal believers and true believers, between true and counterfeit holiness.

Examine yourself by this, for if these spiritual frames, motions, and considerations are not to be found in your heart, and if the motives mentioned earlier do not stir you up to refrain from evil or perform that which is good, you have not been regenerated. Your sanctification is not in truth but is counterfeit. Oh, that God would grant you to be truly convinced of this; and that it would result in your conversion, so that you would no longer make the practice of virtue the basis for your assurance! If, however, you may perceive that these five matters are in you, be it in ever so small a measure; if your soul is pleased or displeased with your walk according as these matters manifest themselves in your walk; and if you have these matters in view, being exercised to maintain your walk on this basis, you may rejoice and you may make your calling and election sure

on the basis of your good works. You will always find reason to be ashamed and humbled concerning your best works, and rightly so. However, do not therefore deny the grace of God which has been given to you, as this principle of spiritual life will grow and never die.

Thus, we have endeavored to describe for you, as clearly as the Lord has graciously enabled us to do, the disposition of a temporal as well as of a true believer. Even if this matter had, however, been presented as clearly as possible, without the special operation of the Holy Spirit, no one, neither temporal believers nor true believers would be inwardly convinced of this. This would be true for the first due to prejudice, blindness, and wickedness, and true for the latter due to spiritual indisposition, bondage, and fear. The Lord is mighty to apply it to the heart, however, convincing the one for the purpose of awakening and conversion, and the other for the purpose of consolation and sanctification.

Encouragement for True Believers who Fear They Are Temporal Believers An unregenerate person and a temporal believer may read about these marks of grace and approve of them; and in the absence of a cautious search of his heart, he may consider his condition to be in harmony with what has been written about a true believer. In reading about these marks of grace, another temporal believer may perhaps be convinced within that all his props are removed. This may cause him to be so perturbed that he casts away this book in anger and disgust. Another person, having his state of misery uncovered to him, may possibly by virtue of the singular grace of God become concerned and thus be brought to Christ. Oh, that it would please the Lord to do so! A true believer, reading about these marks of grace, could become more disconcerted, not being able to find all these things within himself. It could be that he is not able to distinguish between grace itself and a greater measure of that grace which he believes to be requisite before he believes that he is a partaker of it. It is also possible that he is only comparing himself with a temporal believer, perceiving how much he yet has in common with him, as the disposition and activities of the old Adam still manifest themselves. This prevents him from considering whether he does not possess more than this, and thus have the disposition of a true believer. It may also be that he is in a condition marked by perplexity, unbelief, despair, despondency, or a disagreeable disposition. In such a state of mind he is not capable of examining himself; he should only concern himself with receiving Jesus by faith, waiting upon the Lord to grant more inner tranquility, light, and spirit in order to discern those things which the Lord has granted him. I hope, however, that others will be able to perceive their grace, be strengthened in their faith, rejoice in God's goodness, and be revived in the way of sanctification.

Perhaps there are others who may have some hope as they perceive that grace is to be found in them but who are not fully at liberty to determine their spiritual state, however, for fear that they will deceive themselves. They have several concerns pertaining to this:

First, "It is such a great matter to be a true believer; I dare not imagine such great things for myself. If I were to determine my spiritual state on the basis of those evidences which I dare not deny, and it were not so, how dreadfully I would deceive myself." My response is:

(1) It may be too great a matter for you to receive it, but it is not too great a matter for God to give it. For other believers it is also a matter too great and they have nevertheless received it. God desires to exhibit and reveal His infinite goodness; and therefore He seeks that which is lost and receives those who are despised.

(2) There is a most certain mark of grace by which one may perceive whether he deceives himself in self-examination. If a person, having determined his spiritual state after self-examination, remains focused upon himself and thereby has peace of mind and becomes careless; and while relying upon this imaginary grace, proceeds to live for the things of this world, this is evidence that he has deceived himself. However, if a person, having perceived his grace, determines his spiritual state, and consequently becomes more lively in the exercise of faith, in approaching God, in love, godly fear, and obedience; then such is an indication that he has not deceived himself, for this examination of his spiritual state engenders the manifestation of grace. This is the fruit of true hope. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself" (1 John 3:3).

Let me address myself to your fear. Let us assume that you would have unjustly appropriated this grace to yourself, and by means of this were brought to true faith and repentance. Would you not have made a happy mistake? All counterfeit religion will keep us from coming to Christ for justification and sanctification. Now if therefore this hope makes you more lively in spiritual life, do not be disquieted by groundless fear.

Secondly, "I fear that I am only viewing these things intellectually, and that I consider them to be the truth by virtue of my acquaintance with spiritual matters and frames." My response is:

(1) Man is a rational creature, and God works in him in a manner agreeable to his nature. God grants to man the motions of sorrow and joy by means of his intellect, and therefore it should not concern you if these matters were clearly distinguished in your mind; however, if they reside in your mind without affecting your will, you must fear.

(2) Take notice whether your will has not been affected. Do you mourn, do you weep, do you pray, do you long, do you yearn, do you exercise faith, do you surrender? Are you engaged in these exercises -- first one and then the other? Then you must perceive that these matters are not merely lodged in your intellect, but are touching your heart. If now you may have discerned that such exercises are in truth, this concern should not trouble you.

Thirdly, "I perceive such a lack of serious-mindedness. I am so half-hearted and my spiritual sorrow is too weak for me to perceive. My faith is as a lame hand which can be placed upon an object, while nevertheless being unable to pull the object to myself. My sanctification is so dull and without zeal. In addition to this I do not possess any assurance within myself, nor joy concerning that which I may experience." My response is:

(1) Some Christians cling too much to their emotional impulses and affections, which in themselves are desirable and should not be dismissed. They should know, however, that the weakness or strength of their spiritual life should not be measured by the weakness or strength of their affections. Some, by virtue of their natural disposition, are much less given to emotion and are temperate in their joy and sorrow. They are therefore not less active in mind and will, however, and generally they are likewise engaged in spiritual matters. If it pleases the Lord to lead someone in such a manner, he should not think that his spiritual life is of inferior quality, but with all his heart should proceed prudently in the strength of the Lord Jehovah. His error is in his judgment and not in the matter itself. If many were to consider and accept this, they would make much more progress.

(2) If you are truly in a listless and barren condition, however, I pity you and must say to you that you cannot expect many consolations as long as you remain thus.

(3) However, this ought not to prompt you to condemn yourself as far as your spiritual state is concerned, nor to be in doubt about it. You perceive spiritual life but complain about the measure of it. Faith can be present in the absence of assurance and comfort which are fruits of a strong faith, but do not belong to the essence of faith. Wrestle to be delivered from this condition. Be diligent and do not yield to laziness, which is why so many remain so listless. The Lord desires to be found by those who seek Him. Do not desire to be led in a way which is contrary to the Lord's will. Do not be resistant and rebellious, but be as pliable as clay in the hand of the Lord. Comfort others and exhort others in simplicity, with uprightness of heart. May the Spirit of the Lord revive you.

Fourthly, "I am very perplexed about my lack of sanctification. I perceive within me a body of sin; I fall into great sin and am very unstable. With all my heart I pray for strength, and while engaged in prayer, I appear to be much strengthened. No sooner do I turn around, however, and I again fall into sin, often without having an opportunity to improve my walk. How can such a condition coexist with grace? I am often so fearful that it is not in truth with me." My response is:

(1) There are children, young men, and men in Christ. There are times of gracious visitation and of spiritual desertion. One should therefore not judge by the measure of grace, but by the genuineness of the matter at hand.

(2) God generally brings special dispensations upon His children to keep them small and to teach them that they will be saved by grace through Christ, without merit -- yes, contrary to that which they deserve. God permits some to wrestle more with sin because through them He wishes to magnify His grace in a special manner. It is therefore prudent to be content under such a dispensation, meanwhile maintaining a hatred toward sin and doing battle with it, while stimulating a desire for holiness.

(3) If it is truth within, your aversion to, displeasure in, and uncomfortable disposition toward sin, as well as your desire for godliness, will not always remain at the bottom of your heart, but will surface whenever you reflect upon your condition. You will then be motivated to bring these spiritual frames before the Lord, be encouraged to request that God in this matter would give you the desire of your heart and be assured that if it would please the Lord to do so, you would be delivered from sin, and there would be improvement in your spiritual life and in sanctification. You will then experience that your heartfelt resolutions against sin will be of a more composed and sincere nature, and that you will struggle not only against sinful deeds, but against your innermost thoughts. You will experience that the Lord will consistently, yes frequently, give you strength to prevail against sin, so that you will not always be defeated unless it be during a time of unusual spiritual desertion. From all this you will be able to discern the sincerity of your heart, even though you daily offend in many things. Thus, the imperfection of your sanctification ought not be a reason why you should be disturbed or deprived of the joy of heart concerning your happy condition; that is, if you may discern within yourself the spiritual frame relative to sanctification as described above.

039. Chapter 34: Justification

----- CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR -----

Justification

Having discussed calling, regeneration, and faith, we shall now proceed to justification, which is the soul of Christianity and the fountainhead of all true comfort and sanctification. He who errs in this doctrine errs to his eternal destruction. The devil is therefore continually engaged in denying, perverting, and obscuring the truth expressed in this chapter and, if he does not accomplish this, to prevent exercise concerning this truth. When new errors appear on the horizon, even when they initially do not pertain to justification at all, they in time will eventually culminate in affecting this doctrine. One must therefore be all the more earnest to properly understand, defend, and meditate upon this doctrine. In our consideration of this doctrine we shall first speak of the term, considering what is expressed by the words "righteousness," "righteous," and "justification." [Note: In the Dutch there is a harmonious, verbal relationship between all three words, for the Dutch word for "justification" is "rechtvaardigmaking," which literally means "to make righteous."] Then we shall present the matter itself by considering the description, nature, moving cause (that is, why justification either does or does not transpire), and mediate cause of justification, as well as the time when it occurs. The Terms "Righteousness," "Righteous," and "Justification" Defined

Concerning the term it should first of all be noted that the word righteousness expresses conformity to the law. Since there are civil and divine laws, there is likewise civil righteousness (which is acceptable to man and not under discussion here), as well as divine righteousness.

It is the latter which we shall discuss here; this can be either the righteousness of the law or the righteousness of the gospel. The righteousness of the law pertains to man's perfect conformity to the divinely ordained law as far as his disposition, deeds, objectives, and manners are concerned. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Romans 10:5). The righteousness of the gospel pertains to perfect conformity to the law which becomes man's portion by righteous, divine imputation. The Surety Jesus Christ has merited this righteousness in the believer's stead by bearing the punishment and fulfilling the law. This righteousness, upon being offered in the gospel, is embraced by faith. This righteousness will be as valid in the righteous judgment of God as the righteousness of the law. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:21-22). This righteousness is generally referred to as the righteousness of faith, it being a righteousness received in response to it being offered (cf. Romans 4:11; Romans 10:6). Both law and gospel righteousness have in common that they fully conform to the law. They differ however, in that the first requires perfection from man himself, and the latter is merited by the Surety, becoming man's portion by imputation and acceptance. They are mentioned together in Php 3:9, where we read, "... not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by

faith.”

Secondly, a person who fully conforms to the law is considered righteous, this being true either in himself or in the Surety. After the fall no one can be righteous before God by the righteousness of the law. “... that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight ... for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:19-20; Romans 3:23). Although no one can personally be righteous before God, one can nevertheless be innocent in a matter whereof he is accused by man, so that in this respect he can say, “Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me” (Psalms 7:8). Therefore in order for someone to be righteous before God, he must be righteous by way of the righteousness of the gospel; this is true for believers. “... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We shall next consider the words to justify, or “to make righteous.” The meaning of these words must be derived from the original text. In Hebrew we have *hitsdiq*, in Greek *dikaion*, and in Latin *justificare*, all of which are translated into our language as to justify or “to make righteous.” The Latin and Dutch words could be interpreted to mean, “to change someone,” that is, to change him from a sinful to a virtuous person. This resembles the words *sanctificare*, that is, to sanctify or “to make holy,” [Note: This is the literal meaning of the Dutch word “*heiligmaken*.”] and *glorificare*, that is, to glorify or “to make glorious.” [Note: The Dutch word is “*heerlijkmaken*.”] However, the words in the original text never refer to the infusion of righteousness, that is, the transformation of someone from being ungodly to being virtuous. Instead, its meaning is of a legal nature, and it is therefore frequently translated as “to justify.” [Note: à Brakel here uses the word “*rechtvaardigen*” which is the equivalent of the English word “to justify.”] It would have been good if it had been translated as such at every occurrence. It would better express the meaning of the original text and avoid all ambiguity. The act of justification is at times attributed to man and at times to God. Man justifies:

(1) God when he knows and acknowledges Him for what He is, praising and glorifying Him accordingly. “... that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest” (Psalms 51:4); “And all the people ... justified God” (Luke 7:29);

(2) himself when he considers and declares himself righteous. He wants to be esteemed and acknowledged as such, either without being compared to others, “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men” (Luke 16:15); or when someone, though he is ungodly, behaves himself in such a manner that when compared to others who excel him in ungodliness, he appears to be virtuous and is esteemed as such. “And the Lord said unto me, the backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah” (Jeremiah 3:11);

(3) other people, when he is used as a means to bring other people to Christ, and to faith in Him, by which they are justified. “And they that be wise [Note: In the Statenbijbel the word “*leeraars*” is used. This word is frequently used to denote ministers in the Dutch Scriptures.] shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).

Justification: Not Infusion of Holiness, but a Divine, Judicial Act The act of justification is attributed to God. As Judge, He either acquits or condemns man. This raises the following question:

Question: Does the word “to justify,” when being attributed to God, ever mean “to repent,” “to sanctify,” or “to infuse holiness?”

Answer: The Papists answer in the affirmative and we answer in the negative. They will admit that “to justify” occasionally means “to acquit” and is the antonym of “to condemn.” However, they deny that this applies to the doctrine of justification. They maintain that “to justify” refers to the act of transforming a man from being ungodly to being virtuous and thus refers to the infusion of righteousness. They make a distinction between a first and second justification. The first would occur at man’s translation from his fallen state in Adam to a regenerate state, and the second pertains to the progression in godliness, which is sanctification. We maintain, however, that nowhere in Scripture does the infinitive “to justify” have this meaning. Rather, it always pertains to the act of a judge and is the antonym of “to condemn.” It thus means “to acquit,” or “to declare righteous.” This is first of all evident from the essential meaning of the word itself, which is “to acquit” and has as its antonym “to condemn.” This is to be observed, for instance, in the following texts: “If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked” (Deuteronomy 25:1); “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 17:15). Here it can be observed that it is irrefutably true that “to justify” and “to condemn” are antonyms, pertaining to the act of a judge and not referring to either transforming or making godly. This very contradistinction is used when the word “to justify” is used in reference to God, the Judge of heaven and earth. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth” (Romans 8:33-34). Condemnation is associated with acquittal and not with sanctification. “To condemn” is the antonym of “to acquit” and not of “to transform.”

Secondly, consider furthermore Romans 3:19-28, and the entire fourth chapter. The apostle does not demonstrate here whether man, either by the law or by faith, is converted and has holiness infused into him; rather, he states how man will exist in the righteous judgment of God, how he will be acquitted, and how he will obtain a right to eternal life. He speaks of man as subject to guilt and condemnation (Romans 3:19), and of those who do not work, but who believe (Romans 4:6). He shows that man cannot be delivered from condemnation by means of the law (Romans 3:20), but that this transpires by way of the redemption which is in Christ, received by faith (Romans 3:24-25; Romans 3:28), and becomes man’s portion by way of imputation, since Christ has fully accomplished this as Surety (Romans 4:6-8). One therefore neither receives forgiveness of sins nor a right to eternal life by way of sanctification, but by way of acquittal and imputation of righteousness whereby he is thus declared righteous. Therefore justification does not consist in being sanctified, but in being declared righteous, that is, in being acquitted.

Add to this the texts which speak of sins not being imputed and being covered (Psalms 32:1-2), not being remembered (Isaiah 43:25), and being forgiven (Jeremiah 31:34). This manner of speech which is so common in Scripture never refers to the infusion of holiness, but always conveys the removal of guilt and punishment.

Thirdly, this is also evident from all the texts in which a very clear distinction is made between justification and sanctification. Consider, for instance, 1 Corinthians 6:11, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." There is no room here for the distinction between first and second justification. For, aside from the fact that this distinction is fabricated and contrary to God's Word, the apostle mentions three matters: to be washed, to be justified, to be sanctified; and thus justification is something other than being washed and being sanctified. Add to this, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Fourthly, consider also that if justification consisted in the infusion of holiness, every person would be perfect, which is contrary to Scripture.

Fifthly, if non-imputation of sin were the same as the infusion of righteousness, the imputation of sin would be the same as the infusion of sin. This is an absurdity, for our sins were also imputed to Christ.

Objection #1: Those who wish to prove that justification can also mean sanctification, the infusion of righteousness, quote Isaiah 53:11 : "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." It is maintained that justification here refers to the infusion of holiness, for the knowledge of Christ is the means unto sanctification.

Answer: First, the knowledge of Christ is the means not only to sanctification but also to justification by faith (Romans 10:14-17). For this reason, knowledge and faith are conjoined: "... that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life" (John 6:40). Faith receives Jesus with which it is acquainted, and man is thus righteous in Him, being justified by coming to God in this way. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Romans 5:1). If one were to extract an illusory proof from this text, it might be determined that knowledge is only a means unto sanctification and not unto justification. Secondly, Christ is presented here as having made atonement by His suffering and death, which is not only confirmed by the entire chapter but also by the same verse. The prophet advances the reason that Christ justifies many by the knowledge of Him, for he states, "He shall bear their iniquities." By bearing the iniquities of the elect, Christ delivers them from guilt and punishment, and in this manner is made unto them righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). Christ does not primarily come to the foreground here as judge (even though He is the Judge), but rather as the meriting cause of justification -- as our righteousness by which we are justified. This is indicated by the original text which has been translated in the most common and natural manner of speech: "He shall justify many"; that is, He shall be the righteousness of many, applying righteousness to many -- and thereby they are justified. All this makes it very evident that "to justify" here does not mean "to sanctify."

Objection #2: "They that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). It is evident that ministers are not judges, nor are they authorized to acquit man. Rather, they are means unto the sanctification of men.

Answer (1) How then do the Papists explain the acquittals rendered by their priests?

(2) This text has no reference to the point of contention, for the question pertains to the word as used in reference to God as He deals with a sinner who is worthy of condemnation. This text speaks of the activity of one person in reference to another.

(3) The phrase “turn to righteousness” also does not refer to the infusion of holiness. Man is as incapable of this as he is to justify someone else. Since, however, he can be a means unto sanctification, he can also be a means unto justification by making man acquainted with Christ and by urging him to receive Christ by faith. Since one can be used as a means for the one as well as for the other, the objection is of necessity nullified. There should thus be a different proof; however, this is lacking. The text refers to being used as a means to bring someone to faith in Christ and who will thus be justified. The result is attributed to the secondary cause. In like fashion ministers are said to save others. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16).

Objection #3: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:11). In this text “to be righteous” does not mean “to acquit,” but rather refers to the infusion of holiness, for a) justification occurs once and for all, and here it is stated as something which is repeated and increases. b) It is also proven by way of contrast, for it is contrasted with being unjust.

Answer: First, we deny that the word “righteous” conveys the infusion of holiness; this argument has no validity, for a) the act of justification occurs daily, as we shall subsequently demonstrate. b) It is contrasted with being unjust, that is, as being condemned by one’s self (adikon and dikaios). Also dikaiotheto and adikesato are contrasted with each other, that is, if one admits that there is such a contrast here. This contrast pertains to the very same word, so that the same word can be used in the translation: “He that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still, and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still.” This means that whoever must condemn himself, and due to his ungodly deeds is condemned by others, ought to condemn himself all the more and should be condemned even more by others, for else he will become even more condemnable. He who himself is justified by faith manifests this by a holy walk, and is acknowledged and declared as such by others, let him endeavor to be justified in his conscience as well as by others with all the more clarity.

Secondly, the fact that the word “to be justified” does not refer here to the infusion of holiness, that is, to the act of becoming holy, is evident from that which is added: “and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” The fact that this is added makes it very evident that “to be justified” is something different from “to be sanctified,” and that “to justify” is not the equivalent of “to sanctify,” but expresses the act of acquittal from guilt and punishment, just as sanctification consists in transformation and the removal of pollution. The Act of Justification Described and Clarified

Having dealt with the meaning of the word, we shall proceed to consider the matter itself. In order to perceive this, so to speak, in one glance, we shall in the first place give a brief description of this.

Justification is a gracious work of God whereby He, as righteous Judge, acquits the elect from guilt and punishment and declares them to be heirs of eternal life because of the righteousness of

Christ the Surety, imputed to them by God, and received by them through faith. When we refer to this as a work of grace, we do so in reference to man. It is pure and sovereign grace alone that God has chosen His elect, has agreed to the mediation of a Surety, has Himself ordained and given a Surety, and then calls them to Jesus, gives them faith, and, without their merits, acquits them and renders them a right unto salvation. It is thus pure sovereign grace alone. However, as far as the act itself is concerned, it completely conforms to justice in the fullest sense of the word. God does not justify as a merciful Father by overlooking sin. Rather, as a righteous Judge, He, in the Surety who has paid and done everything for them, finds them to be free from all guilt and punishment, and as having a title to salvation. It is therefore righteous that God declares them to be thus.

The Components of Justification In the second place we must consider what constitutes the form, that is, the very essence or the nature of justification. Justification does not only consist in the acquittal from guilt and punishment, but also in granting by an act of incorporation the right to eternal life. It consists in being declared free from guilt and punishment, and an heir of eternal felicity. Both aspects are included in the act of justification. Adam, having been created perfect, did not immediately have a right to eternal felicity, but was first obligated to fulfill the conditions of the covenant of works. In sinning man brought upon himself guilt and punishment and robbed himself of felicity. However, if he were only delivered from guilt and punishment, he would be in the same state as Adam was in the beginning. He was then without guilt, but did not as yet have a right to eternal life. The Lord Jesus has accomplished both matters. By His suffering He has paid the debt, and by placing Himself under the law He has merited the right to eternal life for them. We have previously shown that the law had to be fulfilled in order to acquire a right to eternal life. We have also proven that Christ, by His active obedience, has merited the right to eternal life for His own. It is thus very evident that justification includes both the acquittal as well as the bestowal of the right to eternal life, for all the merits of Christ are the basis and reason for justification. This can also be ascertained from many texts of Scripture where both aspects are conjoined. "... that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified" (Acts 26:18); "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God" (Revelation 1:5-6); "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ... and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2). When we maintain that justification consists in acquittal from guilt and punishment, we join them inseparably together in order to oppose the errors of Papists and others who will admit to the removal of guilt and eternal punishment, but who maintain that we ourselves must make satisfaction by temporal punishment. They maintain that Christ has merited our ability to accomplish this by our own works, and that our merits are needful to have the forgiveness of sins applied which He has merited. This will be comprehensively refuted at the appropriate occasion.

The Cause of Justification

Thirdly, we shall consider the cause of justification. This is God Himself; that is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each in their own role in the economy of the covenant. This is a work of God, for God is the only Lawgiver (James 4:12), the only Judge of all the earth (Genesis 18:25), and the righteous Judge (Psalms 7:11). He, being righteous, can by no means clear the guilty (Exodus 34:7), His judgment is according to truth (Romans 2:5), and His judgment is a righteous judgment (Romans 2:5). Righteously He condemns the ungodly, and righteously He justifies believers. As I stated before, this is the work of God. "It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33); "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions" (Isaiah 43:25). It is attributed to the Father. "God was in Christ,

reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). It is also attributed to the Son. “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins ...” (Matthew 9:6). The Holy Spirit justifies when He makes known to the elect what God has granted them (2 Corinthians 2:12), when He “beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). It is therefore the abomination of all abominations that the pope claims to be authorized to forgive sins, erroneously hiding himself behind the fact that God has granted His servants ministerial authority to declare in His Name to repentant believers that God forgives them their sins (cf. Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18; John 20:23). Those poor people who have set themselves at ease upon his declaration of forgiveness will find themselves miserably deceived! The Meriting Cause of Justification

Fourthly, we must consider the foundation or basis, that is, the moving cause of justification. Since God justifies as Judge, and since He is a righteous Judge, he who is to be justified by Him must have a perfect righteousness. Man himself is sinful, and in the flesh of the best among men “dwelleth no good thing.” The best among them cannot say, “I have purified my heart, and I am free from transgression.” He daily offends in many things, and therefore he cannot answer upon a thousand questions. He therefore of necessity must pray, “And enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified” (Psalms 143:2). Therefore man’s own righteousness cannot be the basis for his justification, but in order for man to be justified he must be a partaker of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Christ, as Surety, has paid for the sins of His elect, and has merited eternal felicity for them by placing Himself under the law and being obedient to it. This righteousness God imputes to them by reason of His suretyship, and they partake of this righteousness by faith, upon it being offered in the gospel. Christ’s righteousness thus becomes their righteousness, and adorned with this righteousness they come unto God and are thus justified by a perfect righteousness. Paul said the same when he wrote, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24).

Those who are estranged from the truth and from godliness deem this imputation to be nothing but imagination and fabrication. They cannot comprehend how the righteousness of another can remove the sins of someone else, and can thus be imputed to someone so that it is as if he in person had paid for all his sins and had fulfilled all the righteousness of the divine law. In order to clearly understand this, we must note that something can be imputed in a twofold manner. It can either be done by something that one does himself, or by something that another has accomplished in his stead.

(1) When someone’s own deeds are imputed to himself, such imputation is a declaration that he has done either well or evil. Thus, the zealous act of Phinehas “was counted unto him for righteousness” (Psalms 106:31). In spite of the fact that there could have been found some outward reason for rebuke, God nevertheless declared that he had exercised righteousness, that he was righteous, and that he had acted properly. The sins of the ungodly are likewise imputed to them, that is, God considers and declares them to be guilty. “... blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood” (Leviticus 17:4). Therefore “not to impute” is to forgive, to hold for good, not to remember, and not to punish. “Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me ...” (2 Samuel 19:19).

(2) When that which has been accomplished by another is imputed to someone, it is thus acknowledged and declared that whatever has not been performed by the person himself is yet acknowledged as if he himself had performed it. This can be true, since he has done so by the agency of someone else. Even though the children of Ammon had in reality killed him, the death of Uriah was nevertheless imputed to David, since he had deceitfully exposed him to danger and thereby, as it were, surrendered him into their hands. This can also be due to someone becoming a surety for another person and by making payment as such. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account ... I will repay it" (Philem 18-19).

Apply all this to the matter at hand. Note first of all, that it is consistent with divine justice for God to deal with a sinner by way of a Surety (cf. chapter 16, The Covenant of Grace). Secondly, Christ is Surety for the elect, and really and truly on their behalf has atoned for their sins by His suffering and death, and as Surety has fulfilled the law on their behalf (cf. chapter 22).

(3) This righteousness is imputed to the elect, and since Christ, as Surety, has accomplished this in their stead, God considers it as if they themselves had accomplished this; we have already stated the same above. We find the infinitive "to impute" used as such in Romans 4:6, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."

We therefore maintain that Christ's merits imputed to believers are the reason, the basis, and the cause that God acquits man and declares him to be an heir of eternal life. This truth is first of all confirmed in express textual references, such as Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Here Adam and Christ are placed in opposition to each other. It speaks of the disobedience of the one and the obedience of the other, and of the consequences and effects: "to be made sinners" and "to be made righteous." However, "to be made" does not refer to the deed of someone else, and the deed cannot be reckoned to someone else, except by imputation. The sinful deed of Adam is reckoned to the account of his descendants by way of imputation, for the actual deed of eating from the tree was not committed by his descendants in person. In like manner the righteousness of Christ is reckoned to the account of His elect. For it is in this way that they are made righteous, and this cannot be true from God's side except by way of imputation; this imputation occurs on the basis of pure righteousness, since Christ, with His Father's approbation, has accomplished everything in their stead.

Evasive Argument: Christ is the cause for many being made righteous, that is, for being converted and sanctified. As such, and to that extent, His obedience does indeed benefit believers, having merited these blessings -- or also because His obedience is an example to be followed. He is not the formal and essential cause of justification, however, as if Christ's righteousness would be reckoned to the account of believers by way of imputation and that thereby they are delivered from guilt and punishment, and are declared to be heirs of life.

Answer (1) This statement cannot be proven and is therefore refuted as quickly as it is made.

(2) No mention is made here of either infusion of holiness or being an example worthy of imitation. Rather the reference is to imputation, which is evident from the contradistinction. Adam's deed becomes the deed of his descendants by way of imputation -- as if they themselves had committed

it. Likewise, the righteousness of Christ becomes the righteousness of His people by imputation, and thus as if they themselves had merited it. This entire chapter pertains to the righteousness of Christ as being imputed to His people. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Faith is the reception of Christ's righteousness and the entrusting of our soul to Him to be justified by His righteousness. On account of Christ's death the atonement becomes efficacious for His elect (Romans 5:10-11), which can occur in no other way than by imputation. By the transgression of one, others are made to be sinners and are subjected to condemnation, and by the righteousness of One, grace comes upon other men unto justification of life (Romans 5:11). Thus the righteousness of Christ becomes the righteousness of the elect by way of imputation, by which they are justified, have peace with God, are reconciled as enemies, and, while sinful in themselves, are made to be righteous in Christ. This is also evident in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Believers are thus made righteous in Him, as He has in like manner been made sin for them. Here is a mutual transfer from the one to the other, that He who was made sin has made them righteous in Him. However, Christ did not become sin due to sin cleaving to Him, but rather by the imputation of the sins of the elect to Him as Surety. They also are likewise the righteousness of God, not due to inherent holiness, but by imputation. They are righteous, not in themselves, but in Him. This is likewise true in Colossians 2:10, "And ye are complete in Him." However far one may advance in the way of sanctification, he is and remains imperfect, and daily offends in many things. He will not be able to say, "I have purified my heart and am free from transgression." However, they are nevertheless perfect, not in themselves, but in Him. This perfection they cannot have except by imputation, whereby God, due to the efficacy of Christ's accomplished mediatorial work, imputes His merits to their account. They in turn, due to the efficacy of the gospel offer and the promises, are made perfect upon embracing this mediatorial work by faith.

Consider now these three texts together, and you will observe that this conclusion irrefutably follows from this. If believers by reason of Christ's obedience are made righteous, and they, due to Christ being made sin, are the righteousness of God in Him and are perfect in Him (which cannot occur except by imputation), then Christ's righteousness is theirs. When they are therefore justified by the righteous Judge, they are not justified by their own righteousness, but by the righteousness of Christ. This is also evident in the following passages: "This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6); "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). Mention is made here of righteousness which is neither found in, nor originates in man, but in Christ. This nevertheless belongs to believers themselves. It cannot become their own portion, however, except by imputation, and it is in this fashion that the apostle uses the word. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Romans 4:6). Christ's righteousness is therefore the cause of man's justification.

Proof #1: This is evident from such texts in which man, on account of the satisfaction of Christ, is said to be justified without works. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:28); "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28). The act of justifying neither consists in an infusion of, nor in an

increase of, holiness. It rather consists in being declared righteous, in being acquitted from guilt and punishment, and in receiving the right to eternal life, all of which has been demonstrated comprehensively in the above. It is furthermore declared that man's works are not the foundation or cause of their justification, but rather the redemption of Christ which is received by faith. To be justified on account of the righteousness of another cannot occur except by imputation.

Proof #2: This is also confirmed in the justification of Abraham. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:1-5; cf. Romans 4:18-24). Abraham was justified; however, he was not justified by his works, for all his works were excluded. In his justification he was stripped of all honor and glory, and why is this so? He was justified by the righteousness of Another, which he received by faith, and which is therefore called the righteousness of faith (Romans 4:11; Romans 4:13). God promised him that he would be a father of many nations, and that the Savior would be born from him through Isaac. Abraham believed this promise, even when he offered Isaac; he received the promise by faith. In doing so he not only received the word of the promise but the matter promised by the word, the promised Savior. "But as many as received Him ... even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). Having been united by means of faith to the matter itself, that is, to the Savior, God thus imputed to him this received righteousness of Christ the Surety. Faith, as the means whereby the righteousness of Christ is received, which unites itself to Christ, and by which one is translated into Christ, was counted unto him for righteousness; that is, not the act of faith, but the righteousness of Christ of which he became a partaker by faith. The infinitive "to impute," which is used frequently in this chapter, implies the reckoning of someone's righteousness, someone's work, to the account of another, thereby justifying this individual. In this manner Abraham was justified, and in like manner all believers are justified (Romans 4:11).

Objections to Imputed Righteousness Refuted

Objection #1: God cannot justify anyone who is not righteous in himself; no one can be righteous on account of the righteousness of another. Thus the righteousness of Christ cannot be the cause or foundation upon which man is justified by God.

Answer (1) It is untrue to maintain that no one can be righteous on account of the righteousness of another.

(2) When a surety assumes the debt of another person, pays the debt, and meets all the requirements, the debtor is no longer a debtor, but goes free.

(3) We have proven above that man is made righteous on account of Christ's obedience (that is, the righteousness of God in Christ), that he is perfect in Him, that Christ is the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, and that He is Surety. It is thus possible for a man to be righteous on account of the righteousness of Another (that is, of a Surety), which becomes his by way of imputation (Romans 4:3-11; Romans 4:22).

(4) It is true that God as righteous Judge cannot justify anyone who is not righteous, and therefore man cannot be justified by his own righteousness, since he and all that he does are imperfect and

sinful. However, he is justified in Christ.

Objection #2: Believers are righteous by reason of inherent righteousness. Consider for instance 1 John 3:7, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." One is therefore not righteous by reason of the imputed righteousness of Christ, and it thus follows that one is not justified before God by way of imputed righteousness.

Answer (1) Righteousness implies holiness, and it is true that he who does righteousness is holy; however, no one upon earth is perfectly holy and righteous. The same apostle says in 1John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Thus man cannot be justified by his own righteousness before God, but there must be another righteousness which can exist in God's righteous judgment.

(2) The apostle does not speak here of justification (which is the point of contention), but rather of sanctification which is always conjoined to justification, and yet is not the same as justification. This text is therefore not applicable here.

Objection #3: In Christ man receives everything again which he has lost in Adam. Since we did not lose an imputed righteousness in Adam, we therefore also do not receive this again in Christ.

Answer (1) In Adam we lost perfect righteousness, and we receive perfect righteousness again in Christ. Incorporation and imputation merely refer to the manner in which we receive this, not to the matter itself. The imputation of Christ's righteousness is not contrary to the law, but has the witness of the law and the prophets (Romans 3:21).

(2) We deny that it is true that in Christ we receive all that we have lost in Adam. In Christ we receive more than we have lost in Adam: the forgiveness of sins, an unchangeable state, and the privilege to glorify God in His grace and mercy.

Objection #4: If we, on account of the righteousness of Christ, are righteous, we are no less righteous than Christ Himself, for all of His holiness, including the holiness of His divine nature, is our holiness. This is an absurdity. Thus we cannot be justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Answer: We reject this argument, for the righteousness which is imputed to man is the righteousness which Christ has merited as Surety and which is sufficient. The holiness of God is incommunicable, and cannot be imputed to man, nor can man be made a partaker of it; moreover, this is also not necessary.

Objection #5: We are justified by grace. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). We are thus not justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Answer (1) When we are said to be freely justified, all righteousness of man is excluded.

(2) When we are said to be justified by grace, this implies that God was not obligated to man, but that due to sovereign goodness and mercy He has been moved to give man a Surety to be justified by the imputation of His righteousness. Grace is thus not the foundation for justification, but the fountain from which our justification by the Surety issues forth. For this reason the word

“grace” is followed by the words “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” as being the meriting cause. This, however, does not imply that Christ’s satisfaction was not sufficient, as if a gracious estimation and acceptance would need to be added, for Christ “by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). It also does not imply that grace and man’s works are conjoined by way of a gracious acceptance, for grace and works are placed in contrast to each other -- the one excludes the other (Romans 11:6). Grace, however, is the manifestation of the goodness of God which moved Him to permit the possibility of a Surety, to give a Surety, and to save some individuals (in distinction from others) by means of this Surety. It thus remains certain that Christ’s righteousness alone is the meriting cause of our justification. The Means unto Justification: Faith

Fifthly, we must consider the means whereby man is justified, namely faith. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith” (Romans 3:28). God’s justice having been satisfied, and the requirements of the law having been met by Christ, the Lord our Righteousness, God was able, in a way of justice, to make the elect partakers of salvation. All work of man is entirely excluded. Since believers have everything in Christ and their faith does not contribute one penny to their justification, it could have pleased God, if His justice had permitted it, to save man without faith and repentance. It is nevertheless God’s wisdom and goodness to lead those, for whom Christ has accomplished everything, to the possession of the benefits which Christ has merited in no other way but the way of faith and repentance. The nature of faith consists in entrusting oneself to Christ to be justified, sanctified, and glorified on the basis of the offer and the promises. The person who has received Jesus by faith, and who has entrusted himself to Him, continues to be active with the promises unto justification and sanctification. In justification faith functions as follows: Faith first of all receives the righteousness of the Surety Jesus Christ. This occurs on the basis of it being offered by Christ to the sinner, together with many exhortations to receive it and to make use of it with boldness. The believer, having thus received perfect righteousness in Christ, having put Him on (Galatians 3:26-27), and having been robed with the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10), in consequence of this comes to God with the received and appropriated righteousness, displays this righteousness before Him, and desires to be judged and justified accordingly. Thus the believer, with a good conscience, asks God, on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21) whether or not his sins are paid for by Christ’s suffering, and whether he has a right to eternal life by virtue of His obedience. The believer then immediately turns to the promises made to those who have received Christ and His righteousness, namely, that such have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43); “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36). These and similar promises the believer brings to God. Being thus exercised with them, and while pleading in this fashion, he deems these promises to be the voice of God speaking to him (for it is the Word of God); he appropriates these promises to himself as being made to him, which thus acquit him from guilt and punishment, and declare him to be an heir of eternal life. Since it is the Holy Spirit who at such a moment works faith (that is, while thus being active), He also applies these truths to the soul; the soul, believing them, hears herself being justified by God. At times the Holy Spirit also seals the soul and causes her to taste that she is not only justified, but also the felicity which is included in being justified, thus granting the soul peace and joy. The Time when Justification Occurs

Sixthly, we must consider the moment when God justifies man. Concerning this we say God has eternally purposed to justify His elect through the merits of Christ. However, this is not the justification of which Scripture speaks. In time Christ has actually atoned for all sin and merited salvation for the elect and in consequence of this he has been justified in the Spirit. God thus views His children in Him; and yet even this does not constitute justification. God justifies man by faith, and thus justification is God's judicial pronouncement toward man. This sentence is not only pronounced once upon the first act of faith, but is made as frequently and as often as man exercises faith in Christ unto justification. This is not an assurance that they are justified once and for all, but it constitutes an actual and daily act of forgiveness. The Truth of Justification Defended

Having dealt with the first issue, the definition of the nature of justification, we shall now proceed to deal with the second issue: the defense of this truth against opposing parties. We shall do so by presenting and dealing with the points of contention.

It is here as it was with the foxes of Samson; their heads were separate, but they were bound together with their tails. As different as these opponents may be and as much as they may vary in their sentiments, they nevertheless conspire in a similar fashion to engage in battle against the doctrine of justification. In this, Herod and Pilate are united in their opposition toward Christ. The Socinians deny the merits of Christ entirely, as well as man's justification on the basis of Christ's righteousness; they maintain that man is justified by his own righteousness. This is not due to the inherent righteousness of these works, as if these righteously merited to be justified. Rather, it is due to the gracious evaluation of these works, that is, by accepting a part as the equivalent of the whole. They maintain that man is not justified until his death, when he is delivered from all evil and receives eternal life. We have dealt comprehensively with this error in chapters 17 and 18. The Papists in reality do not consider justification as such. They understand it to refer to the infusion of holiness and to progression in the way of sanctification, all of which we have refuted in the above. They nevertheless do speak of the forgiveness of sins as well as of merits in relation to works; by reason of these they are delivered from temporal punishments and become partakers of salvation.

Question: Can God, the righteous Judge, in executing His righteous judgment, justify man; that is, can man thus be acquitted from guilt and punishment and be declared to be an heir of eternal life by means of inherent righteousness, his suffering, and his good works?

Answer: The Papists answer in the affirmative and we in the negative. They define justification as consisting in the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life.

(1) Concerning the forgiveness of sins they maintain that Christ has made a sufficient satisfaction for all men, and that this is efficacious for all sins committed prior to baptism and the punishment of them (both temporal and eternal), all being fully removed by virtue of baptism. They also maintain that Christ has made an efficacious atonement pertaining to guilt and eternal punishment, but not the temporal, incurred by the actual sins of the penitent and those who persevere in this. However, they themselves must make satisfaction for the temporal punishments pertaining to sins committed subsequent to baptism. They must do so by way of brokenness of heart, oral confession, and the performance of works. If they come short in this life, they must make satisfaction after this life in purgatory. They must be assisted in this by the merits derived from the surplus good works of the saints. They must therefore make satisfaction for the temporal

punishment themselves, merit heaven by their good works, and thus be justified by works.

(2) They also maintain that Christ has merited the renewal of life for all who cooperate as a result of their own power and free will, and repent. They pronounce an anathema upon those who maintain that man is only justified by the righteousness of Christ. As far as justification is concerned, they make a distinction between justification by the law and justification by the gospel. They denote their justification as evangelical, since they deem Christ to be the cause of the forgiveness of sin, the renewal of life, and of sanctification. They maintain that Christ has merited their ability to merit, and thus they add their own works to the merits of Christ as being the joint cause of justification.

We respond, first, that Christ did not make satisfaction for all men, but for the elect only. This satisfaction also does not merely pertain to sins committed prior to baptism, but also to all sins which are committed until the end of life. Furthermore, Christ has made satisfaction for both the guilt of sin and all punishment, temporal as well as eternal punishment. There thus remains no punishment if satisfaction has been made for the guilt of sin. We also maintain that man can merit nothing at all -- neither by his suffering nor by his good works. Finally, there is neither a purgatory nor such a thing as surplus works, and the virtues of some men cannot be charged to the account of others.

Secondly, we maintain that whoever is justified is also sanctified. We do not say that one only needs to trust in the righteousness and merits of Christ, and then need not be concerned about sanctification, but can live as he wishes and will nevertheless be saved. This is not the doctrine of the Reformed Church. She despises such language and such a life, and declares that those who conduct themselves in such a manner and persevere in this until the end will never be saved; their faith has never been the right faith, and they have never been partakers of the righteousness of Christ. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8).

Thirdly, we maintain, however, that good works, however needful and beneficial they may be to glorify God, to edify our neighbor, to be personally assured of the sincerity of one's faith, to adorn the gospel, and as the way which leads to salvation, are nevertheless of no value in the matter of justification. Therefore, not good works -- neither whole nor in part -- but only the righteousness of Christ imputed by God to the elect and received by them in faith, is the meriting cause of their justification. The fact that man is not justified by works is evident for the following reasons:

Proof #1: All works of man are expressly excluded from justification. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:20; Romans 3:28); "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Romans 4:6); "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16); "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident" (Galatians 3:11). The exclusion of works from justification cannot be stated in a more clear and absolute sense than the apostle does in these and in other texts.

Add to this all those texts where all boasting in man's justification -- as if man could contribute something to it by his works -- is taken away. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith" (Romans 3:27); "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God" (Romans 4:2).

Evasive Argument #1: In the quoted texts the reference is not to the moral law (so that works pertaining to this law are not excluded), but rather to the ceremonial law; thus only the works pertaining to this law are excluded.

Answer (1) The texts refer to all works without distinction. The apostle makes no such distinction, either here or elsewhere, and such a distinction is thus of necessity nullified.

(2) He refers to the moral law very expressly, however; for in Romans 3:1-31 he refers to this law when he states, "There is none righteous, no, not one: ... there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, ... Their throat is an open sepulchre; ... whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: ... there is no fear of God before their eyes ... that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:10-19). All these deeds have no reference to the ceremonial but rather to the moral law. The apostle thereby excludes all works of the moral law from justification. In the letter to the Galatians there are also express references to the moral law, for he refers to this law when he says, "The man that doeth them shall live in them" (Galatians 3:12). This cannot be said in reference to the ceremonial law itself nor to its related deeds. The reference is rather to the moral law which is contrasted with the gospel and faith, as is clearly observed in the texts. The ceremonies do not stand in opposition to the gospel and faith, but belong to them. Christ was found in them and He was partaken of by faith. He speaks of this law in Galatians 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The apostle here quotes Deuteronomy 27:26, where mention is made of image worship, making light of father and mother, removing a neighbor's landmark, causing the blind to wander out of the way, the perversion of justice, incest, secretly smiting one's neighbor, and of taking rewards -- all of which are sins against the moral law rather than the ceremonial law. The apostle thus excludes justification by all the works of the moral law.

Evasive Argument #2: In the quoted texts all works performed prior to baptism, conversion, and faith are excluded; however, this is not true for those works performed by faith in Christ.

Answer (1) This is mere speculation, for the apostle does not express himself in this manner.

(2) The apostle excludes all works by placing works and faith in opposition to each other.

(3) He addresses Jews who, even though they believed in Christ, wanted to be justified by works, be it by works alone or in conjunction with faith. They considered the ceremonial and the moral law as being one and the same, and wished to perform ceremonial deeds in the same manner as they performed moral deeds, seeking to be justified by works. These works the apostle excludes.

(4) Abraham, David, and Paul were converted and believed; their works were nevertheless excluded from justification (cf. Romans 4:6 for Abraham; Romans 4:6 for David; 1 Corinthians 4:4 for Paul). Therefore works performed by faith are also excluded.

(5) On the contrary, the publican (Luke 18:13), Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2), and the thief on the cross (Luke 23:1-56) were all justified without their works. Therefore our proof is upheld in spite of all efforts to pare it down. All works, whatever they may be, are excluded from justification, and man is thus not justified by works.

Proof #2: Justification occurs entirely and solely by the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed by God and received by man through faith without any additional works of man; this we shall demonstrate when we deal with the next question. Man is thus not justified by his own works -- neither fully, for then there would be no need for Christ; nor partially, for then Christ's righteousness would not be sufficient.

Proof #3: Man is justified freely by God's grace, which is here placed in opposition to works. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). In Romans 3:20 the apostle had excluded all works; in Romans 3:21-22 he shows that there is a justification which differs from the righteousness of the law: the righteousness of Christ which is received by faith. In Romans 3:23 he declares that man is condemnable by sin, and is not able to be justified by his own doings; he furthermore shows in Romans 3:24 that justification occurs freely (in Greek: as a gift), so that merits are not the issue at all, for it is by the grace of God. Grace does not refer to something to be found in man or which is graciously put within man. "His grace" refers to the goodness of God whereby He is moved to give man a Surety, contrary to his merits, and to justify man on the basis of Christ's merits, and thus to justify him "by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." The words "freely" and "by His grace" exclude all work and merit. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6).

Proof #4: Man can absolutely not be justified by his works, for:

(1) man, even if regenerated, is entirely imperfect, and each day sins in many things -- in thoughts, words, and deeds (cf. 1 Kings 8:46; Proverbs 20:9; James 3:2). He thus cannot be justified in and of himself, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Therefore, "How should man be just with God? If he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand" (Job 9:2-3). Therefore everyone has need to pray, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psalms 143:2).

(2) Every deed, even the very best, is deficient from every perspective, proceeding from an imperfect heart. It is deficient in faith, fear, love, and has a deficient objective, for "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6); such is man. God, on the contrary, is a righteous Judge whose judgment is according to truth, and who will by no means clear the guilty. Man can therefore not be justified by his works. Man battles against this with all his strength in order to make his good works meritorious, and to promote justification by the works of the law. In doing so the following objections are advanced:

James's Justification by Works and Paul's Justification by Faith

Objection #1: Scripture states clearly that Abraham was justified by his works, and thus one can be justified by works. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works

was faith made perfect? Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way" (James 2:14;James 2:21-22;James 2:24-25).

Answer: James states that Abraham was justified by works and Paul in Romans 4:2-5 states resolutely that Abraham was not justified by works, but by faith. It is the same Spirit of truth who has spoken both by Paul and by James. It is thus certain that they do not contradict each other, but rather, both say the same thing. It is, however, due to the ignorance of man that one cannot see the consistency between them.

(1) The Papists wish to bring both texts into harmony with their twofold justification, which is a distinction not according to God's Word and has been refuted above. They consider the first justification to be an infusion of grace and a renewal of life, originating in God and occurring apart from works. They maintain that Paul speaks of this. The second justification they consider to be growth in grace and sanctification, insisting that James speaks of this. Since, however, as we have shown above, this distinction is but a human fabrication, such a relationship between these texts is of necessity rendered null and void.

(2) An effort to harmonize these texts by making a different distinction -- suggesting that Paul speaks of the justification of the ungodly and James of the justification of a regenerate person (which is on account of their good works and by which they receive a right unto eternal life) -- is essentially no different from what the Papists endeavor to do. We shall refute this a bit further on.

(3) It is also dangerous to suggest that when James speaks of justification by works, he means to say that this is not meritorious, but issues forth out of God's veracity and justice by which He cannot but declare the virtues of the godly to be virtuous, the godly to be sincere and God-fearing, and His work in believers nothing but His work. It is also contrary to the language of the Bible, which never refers to this as justification; this would also not be consistent with the text, for it would not harmonize with James's objective. It is his objective to demonstrate that true faith manifests itself as being a living faith by good works, thus convincing those who live carelessly that their faith is not saving. When the work of Phinehas was counted to him as righteousness (Psalms 106:30), this did not pertain to his personal justification, but was rather a justification of his deed, which from various perspectives could be misconstrued. It is also a declaration that this occurred by a special unction of the Spirit. (We shall deal with Matthew 12:37 later on.) In 1 John 3:7 the apostle is not referring to justification. Rather, he states that whoever does these things is righteous and holy.

(4) We also consider it to be an injustice to the text if we say that Paul refers to justification before God, and James to justification before men; that is, a demonstration of works which verifies one's justification by faith.

(5) However, if one observes both texts correctly, the apostles express the same truth: Man is justified by faith; however, their opponents were different. Paul had to deal with Jews who, having been converted to Christianity, sought for justification by the law, either entirely or in conjunction with faith. Against such he maintained that justification is not by works at all, but only by faith, irrefutably understanding thereby a true faith by which the just live (Romans 1:17). James, however, had to deal with a group of people who were loose in their lifestyle, and agreed with the

truth that man can only be justified by faith without works. They abused this truth by suggesting that it was not necessary to live a godly life and to perform good works. James therefore did not need to convince them that one can only be justified by faith without the works of the law, for in this they agreed. James states this very clearly in James 2:23, "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." We observe that Paul and James use the very same words and they thus agree with each other.

However, since they had to deal with entirely different opponents, they placed a different emphasis upon the truth. Paul convinced his opponents that they had to look away from (not cease from) works as far as being justified by them, since man can only be justified by faith without works. James, however, urges the practice of good works which his opponents rejected as being unnecessary and neglected to perform, boasting in the fact that they had faith whereby they would be justified and saved. To them he showed that they neither had true faith, nor understood its essential nature, but that the faith of which they boasted was merely historical faith by which one does not become a partaker of the matter itself; their faith was a dead faith since it was without life and fruits. It resembled the faith of devils who tremble as a result of their faith. He proceeded to show to those persons that true faith is alive and works by love, obedience to God, and good works; and that nothing other than faith leads to eternal felicity. Thus one must judge his faith by his works, and consider whether or not one has true faith. This he proves by using Abraham as an illustration, demonstrating that Abraham's faith did not only consist in assenting to the promise as being true and certain, and thus to consider matters settled. Rather, his faith manifested itself in obedience to God, even to the sacrificing of his son Isaac, from whom the Messiah had been promised to him. Therefore the apostle states, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect" (James 2:22). He does not state that his works functioned in conjunction with faith; this he would have said if any merit were to be attributed to his works, and if it had been his objective to prove that man must be justified by the merits of his own works. Rather, he says that faith wrought with his works. So strong was his faith that Christ would come forth from Isaac, that Abraham believed that Isaac would become alive again even though he would sacrifice him. That faith stimulated him to be obedient to God and that faith he exercised when he was engaged in sacrificing; and that faith has been *eteleiothe*, that is, completed, executed, finished, brought to conclusion, and thus has been made perfect by way of the act of sacrifice. From this it is evident that true faith manifests itself in godliness. Though it is only a means whereby man is justified, it nevertheless does not function singularly, but is accompanied by works, as a consequence thereof. This he states in James 2:24, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Here the apostle conjoins faith and works and declares that man is justified by faith; however, not singularly but also by works which accompany faith. It is therefore as much as said, "by an active faith." This conjoining of faith and works does not occur in a collateral manner, that is, functioning side by side as if executing the same task, as if each contributing its own part to justification and much less as if both and each individually were the cause of justification. For the latter is not even true for faith, which only functions as a means in justification whereby the righteousness of Christ is received. Previously we have confirmed by four proofs that works are not the cause of justification (cf. pp. 360-363). The apostle Paul resolutely refutes this also as far as the person of Abraham is concerned. This is also not the objective of the apostle James, who sought to convey that this faith by which man is justified is a living and active faith. Thus in verse 24 faith and works are conjoined as cause and effect, the objective being to

demonstrate the true nature of the cause, namely, faith. When James therefore states that Abraham, Rahab, and man are justified by works, he does not refer to works singularly and by itself, but rather as a consequence of being conjoined to faith as its cause. By attributing justification to faith in this conjunction (James 2:23), and works as the fruits of faith, establishing it to be the evidence of true faith, he refers to the consequence and thereby implicitly refers to the cause. It is as much as to say that one is justified by a living and fruit-bearing faith.

Refutation of Additional Objections Pertaining to the Relationship Between Justification and Good Works

Objection #2: "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37).

Answer (1) This text is contrary to the view of the opponents, for it is evident here that the act of justification is judicial in nature. Justification is the very opposite of condemnation, and thus signifies acquittal.

(2) This text does not refer to God's work in reference to man, but to man's activity in reference to others. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; words reveal what is in the heart. A good man brings forth good things out of the good treasure of his heart, and an evil man evil things. By this, one man judges the other and declares him to be either good or evil; he either justifies or condemns him. This text therefore does not support their sentiment.

Objection #3: "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

Answer: The word *euarsteitai* is rendered as *promererai*, (= to earn) in the common Latin translation. Therefore this text is used in support of the meritorious nature of good works. However, since their own linguists are now embarrassed about this, this being such an obvious error, an answer is not necessary. The word means to find pleasure in. We fully embrace the idea that good works are pleasing to God. We deny, however, that they are meritorious before God, and this text is therefore not a proof text for them.

Objection #4: Believers receive eternal life because they are worthy of it, and thus they are justified by works. "They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Revelation 3:4).

Answer: The worthiness of a person is one thing, and the worthiness of a deed is another. Their works are not worthy, for even the very best of them is imperfect as we have shown above; they are thus unprofitable servants. However, believers themselves are worthy to walk with Christ in white garments since they are righteous in Christ who has merited the right to eternal life for them. They shall walk in white robes which have been made "white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14); "For the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:8). The reason for their righteousness is to be found here and not in their works.

Objection #5: The reward is according to works, and thus man is justified by works. "Then He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27); "Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:6). (Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 2:23; Revelation 20:12.)

Answer: These texts refer to the qualities of, and the distinction between, the persons who will be rewarded with either evil or good. There is no mention made, however, of the causes as to why it will be well with the one and evil with the other. Those who have done well and who have lived godly will be saved, but whoever has lived in an ungodly manner will be condemned. Therefore it does not say that every man will be rewarded because of his works, but according to his works, albeit that the works of the ungodly are the cause of their destruction.

Additional Objection: The ungodly are condemned due to their works and their works merit condemnation; therefore, it is likewise true that good works merit heaven.

Answer: This is not a logical deduction since the contradistinction is incomplete. The works of the ungodly are completely evil, whereas the works of the godly are imperfect. There is also a difference between punishment and reward. It does not necessarily follow that when something merits death that contrariwise the opposite merits good. He who commits a murder is worthy of death, but he who does not commit a murder does not therefore of necessity deserve to remain alive. There is a proportionate relationship between ungodliness and condemnation; however, this is not so between good works and salvation. We therefore cannot make a logical deduction from the one to the other.

Objection #6: The reward is given in reference to good works; this is likewise true for justification. "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat" (Matthew 25:34-35); "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much" (Luke 7:47).

Answer: First, as far as Matthew 25:34-35 is concerned:

(1) it is not stated here that man will inherit heaven due to good works as the meriting cause;

(2) this is not conveyed by the word "for," for it can relate to an evidence, a token, a proof, as well as to a cause. This is confirmed in the following passages: "It will be fair weather: for the sky is red" (Matthew 16:2); "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (1 Corinthians 10:5);

(3) it is evident from the text that the word "for" is not causal, but rather relates to a proof or evidence for the antecedent. It is stated expressly here that heaven is not given as a merited reward, but rather as an inheritance, for it reads, "Inherit." Heaven is given to the blessed ones, that is, to the elect (Ephesians 1:3) for whom it was laid away from eternity. This inheritance was prepared for them before they were born -- yes, from before the foundations of the world. An inheritance given as a blessing to someone, and prepared thousands of years prior to one's existence, excludes all merits. The Lord Jesus therefore shows in Matthew 25:35 who those blessed ones, those heirs, are and how this is evident: It is given to those who have believed in Christ and whose faith, by reason of love to Christ, has been active in love toward believers (Matthew 25:40).

Secondly, Luke 7:50 does not state that the woman received the forgiveness of sins because of her good works. The word "for" is here also evidential and not causal. The forgiveness of sins is not attributed here to love, but to faith. "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke 7:50). Love, here, is an evidence of faith, which has as its nature to be active by way of love (Galatians 5:6). This is also

evident when considering the objective of the Lord Jesus. His objective is to demonstrate who ought to love most, the person to whom many or to whom few sins have been forgiven. Simon answered, "He, to whom he forgave most" (Luke 7:43). The Lord Jesus approved of this answer, which shows that the forgiveness of sins is presupposed and that love issued forth from it rather than preceding it as a cause. One may consequently conclude from the magnitude of love the forgiveness of many sins. The Lord Jesus applied this to the woman, for since she loved much, it therefore followed that many sins had been forgiven her. And thus the thought of the Pharisee who had invited Him had been answered: Christ was truly a prophet and Simon thus had no reason to be amazed that Jesus permitted this great sinner to touch Him, since all her many sins were forgiven her. Her touching therefore issued forth from spiritual love as an expression of gratitude.

Objection #7: Good works merit reward and this reward is according to the righteousness of God. Man is thus justified by his works. This is evident in the following passages: "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1); "Your work shall be rewarded" (2 Chronicles 15:7); "In keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalms 19:11); "For great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12); "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward" (1 Corinthians 3:14).

Answer: It is a certainty that God rewards good works. The fact that we must have this reward in view, and must also be motivated by this to do good works, is not only evident from all those texts in which God promises such a reward, but also from the example of Christ, who for the joy which was set before Him has endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2), as well as of Moses who saw the recompense of the reward (Hebrews 11:26). We do deny, however, that we merit this reward upon doing good works, for this is nowhere to be found in God's Word. This is contradicted by our being unprofitable after all we have done, the imperfection of our works, and the fact that it is a gift. The word "reward" does not imply merits, for there is not only a reward which relates to merits and debt, there is also a reward which is given out of grace and goodness. A reward refers to a singular gift without reference to any work (Psalms 127:3). This is confirmed in Ezekiel 29:18-20 where God, upon the destruction of Tyre, promises Egypt as a reward to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. It is certain that an unbelieving and ungodly man like Nebuchadnezzar could not merit a reward with God for his ungodly deeds which he committed toward Tyre, for he did not do this to do God a service. The reward was given to him purely out of goodness. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt" (Romans 4:4). There is thus also a gracious reward. "Give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first" (Matthew 20:8). Those who had labored one hour received the same wages as those who had labored the entire day. These wages were not given according to merit, which is something the others recognized, and they therefore murmured. It was given as a manifestation of favor, which is not only self-evident but is also confirmed in verse 15: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" All the presented texts refer to a gracious reward rather than a meritorious reward, for works are not meritorious.

Additional Objection: This reward is given in accordance with the righteousness of God, and it is thus a meritorious reward. Consider the following passages: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us" (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7); "... which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Timothy 4:8); "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love" (Hebrews 6:10).

Answer (1) Yes, they indeed receive the crown of salvation by the righteousness of God; however, not because of their work, but due to the Surety having merited this for them.

(2) It is also righteous for God to recompense His heirs, not because of, but upon their good works. This He had promised, and it is righteous to keep one's promise.

Objection #8: "These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8).

Answer: With one matter we can have several objectives in view as well as view it from various perspectives.

Thus, good works are also profitable to the glory of God, the edification of our neighbor, for one's own peace of conscience, and to the assurance of the veracity of one's faith. It is thus subservient to entering heaven -- to enter in this way ordained of God. From the profitableness of good works one can therefore neither conclude their meritoriousness, nor justification because of them.

Objection #9: Several times David desired to be judged according to his righteousness; one can therefore be justified by his works. "Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me" (Psalms 7:8); "Hear the right" (Psalms 17:1); "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness" (Psalms 18:20).

Answer (1) He does not say "for," but rather "according to my righteousness."

(2) There is a personal righteousness resulting from the perfection and holiness of one's disposition and deeds. As such, no man living shall be justified in His sight (Psalms 143:2). There is also a righteousness which relates to a cause; in this respect someone can be completely innocent in a matter of which he is accused. These texts refer to the latter sort of righteousness, not to the former.

We have thus confirmed this cardinal point of Christian doctrine. Having refuted the objections, the truth is thus all the more evident.

Justification Not Twofold

Concerning this there is still another point of contention which appears to be somewhat different, but basically is almost the same. The question is as follows:

Question: Is it not possible to maintain a twofold justification, the one pertaining to the elect as being ungodly, and the other to the elect as being godly?

Answer: One then maintains that the justification of the ungodly consists in the forgiveness of sin by the suffering of Christ, of which man becomes a partaker by faith in Him. The justification of a godly person is then said to occur upon the performance of good works which are neither according to the law of nature nor according to the ceremonial law, but rather according to the law and the commandments of Christ. Thereby man acquires a right to eternal life and is declared to be an heir of it. We resolutely reject this proposition and will prove our refutation as follows:

First, we refer to the proofs against the Papists mentioned above and reaffirm that justification is not by works.

Secondly, Christ, in placing Himself under the law as Surety, and in perfectly fulfilling it, has fully merited the right to eternal life for His elect. This we have already proven. Man therefore does not acquire this right to eternal life by his works, for otherwise Christ would not be a perfect Savior. One would then be obligated to thank Him for the lesser: the removal of guilt and punishment, but not for salvation; for this one would then be grateful to one's self.

Evasive Argument: All glory must be to Christ and thus also as far as our salvation is concerned, for inherent righteousness and good works proceed from Christ and function by reason of Christ's power.

Answer (1) It is nothing else but the popish proposition that Christ has merited our ability to merit. It is true that Christ is worthy of all honor for the deliverance from guilt and punishment, the acquisition of the right to eternal life, as well as our sanctification. This does not imply, however, that someone is justified by way of inherent righteousness. This is neither God's objective in sanctifying us, nor the objective of the godly, nor the purpose of works which are stained by much sin.

(2) If one maintains that a right to eternal life is acquired by his good works, and that this right is granted by way of justification by works, all would nevertheless be attributed to man, and therefore he that has performed these good works would then have to thank himself. This is contrary to Scripture and the confession of the Reformed church.

Thirdly, justification is a judicial act of God as righteous Judge and consists in the following two matters: acquittal from guilt and punishment, and the granting of a right to eternal life.

(1) If the foregoing proposition (in the question) were true, Christ's righteousness would not be the sole cause of man's justification, but Christ's suffering and man's works would be conjoined and justification would then be in consequence of both; thus Christ would not be a perfect Savior.

(2) It is impossible for man's works to play any role in justification, for in justification all must be according to righteousness and all must be perfect, and man's works are imperfect.

Evasive Argument #1: God accepts them as being sufficient.

Answer: This is neither the truth, nor does it meet the standard of righteousness. It is therefore utterly impossible for a righteous God to do so.

Evasive Argument #2: Christ covers the imperfections.

Answer: In what manner? Not by His suffering as that delivers from guilt and punishment. If it is by reason of His holiness, then Christ's active obedience must be added to this. In what manner does that occur? Does this occur partially, supplementing what is lacking in man? Then He would neither be a complete Savior nor the only cause of justification. Even then, whatever man adds will always remain imperfect in and of itself, will fall short in justification, and will never play any role in it.

Fourthly, justification only occurs by faith, it being the means whereby the sinner receives the active and passive righteousness of Christ as his own (Romans 3:20; Romans 3:28). Faith excludes all works and stands in opposition to works (Romans 2:6; Php 3:9).

Evasive Argument: Works which pertain to the moral and ceremonial law are excluded; this, however, is not true for evangelical works.

Answer: Scripture knows of no evangelical commandments. The perfect law of the ten commandments is the law of love, given to believers as a rule of life by which they must walk in union with Christ.

Whatever reasons could be advanced to support these erroneous sentiments have already been refuted above.

Objection #1: In Romans 3:1-31; Romans 4:1-25 the apostle speaks of the ceremonial law and not of the law of the ten commandments.

Answer: We have demonstrated the contrary to be true.

Objection #2: Consider James 2:14; James 2:22; James 2:25. Answer: Refer to our earlier answer.

Objections #3 & 4: Consider Matthew 12:37 and Psalms 106:30-31. Answer: Refer also to the above. Having considered the meriting cause of justification, we shall now proceed to the means by which this occurs, namely, faith. The Role of Faith in Justification

Question: What role does faith play in justification? Must it be viewed as a work and thus as a meriting cause? Must it be considered as the basis and reason upon which God justifies man; or is it a means whereby the righteousness of Christ is received?

Answer: Papists, Socinians, and Arminians (to whom the Anabaptists generally join themselves) hold to the first proposition. They all have an erroneous view of faith, not considering it as the reception of Christ's merits, but rather as consisting in love and obedience to the commandments. We have dealt comprehensively with this in chapter 32.

Papists maintain that faith consists in love and that it enables man to do that which is righteous, man initiating this faith which in turn is meritorious; and thus it is part and parcel of righteousness itself. In this manner man would then be justified by faith.

Socinians, who deny the entire atonement of Christ, maintain that the act of faith does not consist in the reception of the righteousness of Christ, but is a virtue and the cause of justification. Not that faith by virtue of inherent worthiness would be efficacious unto eternal life, but rather by way of gracious acceptance -- acceptance of a part as the whole. The Arminians maintain that Christ by His suffering and death has satisfied the justice of God for the entire human race, and that He has enabled God to deal with man according to His good pleasure as far as the acquisition of salvation is concerned. Therefore God, instead of requiring perfect obedience to the law, requires faith instead -- but not as a means whereby one receives the righteousness of Christ. It is rather an act of obedience by which man is justified and receives eternal life. We deny all this, maintaining that faith does not function as a work in justification, but rather as a means by which it receives and appropriates the perfect passive and active righteousness of Christ. This is evident for the following reasons:

Proof #1: If man were justified by faith as a work: (1) Then man would be justified by works; this, together with the exception that it is an evangelical work, we have thoroughly refuted.

(2) Then God's judgment would not be according to truth and righteousness, for faith is imperfect.

(3) The righteousness of Christ alone would not be the cause of man's justification, and therefore faith, as a work, cannot be considered as a cause.

(4) All boasting is not excluded. If, however, man is justified by faith, "where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith" (Romans 3:27). If man were to be justified by faith as being a work, which, as they claim, proceeds from their own free will and power, then all boasting would not be excluded. Man would then have something which would proceed from his own goodness; this is expressly excluded here, together with all works, irrespective of what the nature of these works may be.

(5) The stark contrast between works and faith would have no function if faith were here to be viewed as a work; then works would ultimately be contrasted with works. However, in the letters to the Romans and the Galatians, faith is continually contrasted with works. Faith is therefore not to be considered as a work in reference to justification.

(6) It could be said that man is justified because of faith. Scripture states nowhere, however, that man is justified because of his faith, but always by and out of faith. From all this it is very evident that in this matter, faith cannot be viewed as a work. Faith functions as a means and therefore is neither the meriting cause nor the foundation or reason for justification.

Proof #2: Scripture states clearly that faith functions as a means, and that man, in receiving the righteousness of Christ by faith, is justified. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28); "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8); "... that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law" (Galatians 2:16). There are but two ways whereby man could be justified: either by his own works, and thus by way of the covenant of works, or by faith, and thus by way of the covenant of grace. These two cannot harmonize, for the one demands perfect righteousness within one's self, and the other in a Surety who can only be received and appropriated by faith; the one excludes the other (Romans 10:5-6). It is irrefutable that Paul continually establishes a contrast between faith and the works of the law.

Evasive Argument: How about the works of the gospel? Answer: There are no evangelical works. If they existed, there of necessity would also have to be an evangelical law. Even then faith and works would be contrasted with each other. In maintaining this contrast, the apostle rejects justification by works and establishes justification by faith. Thus, faith cannot be considered as a work, but must rather be viewed as a means.

Proof #3: The nature of faith consists in the reception of Christ unto justification, in taking refuge, and in entrusting oneself to Him unto justification, sanctification, and glorification, as well as in trusting in and leaning upon Him. We have dealt extensively with this in chapter 32. Faith must thus be viewed as a means -- and not as a work -- whereby the believer receives the righteousness of Christ as his own righteousness.

Objection: The most significant argument against this can be found in Romans 4:3, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (cf. Genesis 15:6; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). Thus faith itself is man's righteousness, and therefore in justification faith functions

as a work rather than as a means whereby the righteousness of Christ is received.

Answer (1) The text itself refutes this, for it excludes all boasting and thus all works.

(2) He says that Abraham was not justified by works, but rather by faith; faith can therefore not be denominated here as a work. Faith is indeed an activity as well as an active principle which brings forth holiness. This is, however, not the point of contention. Instead, the controversy is whether in justification faith functions as a virtue or as a work, and thus is the basis, foundation, and reason why man is justified. Scripture denies this in reference to Abraham as well as to all men.

(3) To impute is to credit something to someone's account which he has not accomplished himself and which stands in opposition to all his own work. This is true for the righteousness of Christ which is received by faith. (Cf. Romans 4:4-6; Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

Additional Objection: The words are clear and simple: Faith itself is imputed to Abraham. One can therefore neither understand this to refer to the work and merits of another, nor deem faith to be the means whereby one receives the righteousness of another.

Answer: It is consistent with the style of God's Word to mention the effect (that which has been wrought), and yet thereby imply the means. In this manner the gospel is called the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), knowledge of eternal life (John 17:3), and "His commandment is life everlasting" (John 12:50). In like manner the means are also mentioned here, which must be understood as referring to that which he received: the righteousness of Christ. God promised the Savior to Abraham, that He would come forth from him through Isaac. Abraham believed this promise, not only receiving these words as truth, but by that faith penetrated to the promised matter itself -- the Savior. Being thus united by faith to the matter, that is to the Savior, God imputed this received righteousness to him. The act of faith cannot be understood any other way but as a being united with that which one receives, since the very nature of faith consists in receiving. When faith was therefore imputed to Abraham, it is considered as being in union with that which it had received: the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, from which proceeded the efficacy of justification.

Justification Is not from Eternity

After considering the means, we shall now proceed to consider when justification occurs. The following question relates to this: Does justification occur only once, that is, either from eternity, at the death of Christ, or when one first comes to the conclusion that Christ is his Savior? Before we answer this question we shall first clearly present our own sentiments by way of several propositions. Subsequent to this, we shall present the sentiments of the so-called Hebrews.

We maintain, first of all, that in the matter of justification God must be viewed as the Justifier and man as the one being justified. Justification is therefore the pronouncement of a sentence, not only concerning man, but also addressed to man. One can thus view the act of justification from God's perspective, that is, what He performs in this act, or from man's perspective, noting the manner whereby man receives this. When viewing this act from God's perspective it is referred to as justification activa, active justification. When viewed from man's perspective it is referred to as justification passiva, passive justification. These are one and the same act. The difference pertains only to the manner in which it is performed or how it is received. One therefore also cannot

separate them. Wherever there is active justification there will also be passive justification, and vice versa, wherever there is passive justification there will also be active justification.

Secondly, prior to creation and the existence of the elect, God has eternally purposed to justify the elect in their lifetime on the basis of the merits of Christ which are received by faith. "Who hath saved us ... according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9); "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:5). This purpose is not the equivalent of justification, for a purpose differs from its execution; we shall demonstrate shortly that this is so.

Thirdly, man having sinned, the Lord Jesus, because of the covenant of redemption, gave Himself as a Surety who took all upon Himself. As such He took their personal guilt from them upon Himself in order to atone for this at the appointed time. Since He made full satisfaction for this guilt, He has merited the right to eternal life for them. Having fully accomplished this, He was therefore "justified in the Spirit" (1 Timothy 3:16), that is, God declared that satisfaction had been made by Him and that He no longer had to suffer and be obedient for the satisfaction of His justice on behalf of the elect. Thus, their sins have been atoned for by reason of a transaction between the Father and the Surety, and the right to eternal life was merited. Christ having thus been justified, all His elect are justified in Him virtualiter, that is, by its virtue and efficacy, and are indeed reconciled. This, however, is not so actualiter, that is, actually, for they did not exist as yet. The first [justification virtualiter] is not the justification of which Scripture speaks, but rather the latter [justification actualiter]; this cannot occur unless man, having sinned, exists and believes in Christ.

Fourthly, when man does actually exist, is grievously troubled and perplexed about his sins, and by means of the gospel believes in Christ, thereby being united to Him and being a partaker of His righteousness, God then actually justifies him and pronounces the sentence of acquittal upon him from His Word, which is the voice of God. This is even so if the believer as yet is not aware of a peace in his conscience as a result of this declaration. This may be due to ignorance of the voice of God, to objections arising in his mind, or to doubts regarding the veracity of his faith. It may also be that upon hearing this pronouncement in the Word, he believes this by faith and finds peace. It may also be that this is sealed by the special operation of the Spirit, causing him to taste and perceive immediately what it means to have the forgiveness of sins, to be reconciled with God, to be an heir of eternal life, and to enjoy the fruits of all these.

Fifthly, justification is an actual, absolute, complete acquittal of guilt and punishment, and a granting of the right to eternal life. It is neither contingent upon any condition which could change the sentence, nor does it pertain to some sins (thus having no effect upon others), but it pertains to all the sins of the person as he presently is. It is identical for all believers, irrespective of time, location, or person; the one is not justified in a different or more complete manner than the other. They are all justified on the basis of the satisfaction of Christ, which is received by faith. "Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith" (Romans 3:30); "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Since justification is identical in all, it is likewise also perfect, and thus there can be no mention of a greater or lesser degree, as is true in sanctification. God justifies the person, forgives all sins, and gives him full access to all the

benefits of the covenant; there is nothing lacking in this. However, since faith -- the means -- is either stronger or weaker, the assurance of justification is likewise variable; this, however, is not so for the justifying act of God. This act is perfect and complete. This is true in reference to the spiritual state of believers; that is, in being declared heirs of eternal life and reconciled children of God, as well as in reference to the sins which they repeatedly commit. The latter are repeatedly removed. Forgiven sins can never again be brought back to provoke the wrath of God and incur punishment. God nevertheless chastises His own concerning all forgiven sins. David's sins were forgiven, but the sword would not depart from his house because of these sins; Job inherited the iniquity of his youth.

Sixthly, after the pronouncement of peace, believers do again return to foolishness, and daily they yet stumble in many things. These sins by their very nature are time and again worthy of temporal and eternal punishments. The Lord Jesus, however, as High Priest and Advocate, stands before the throne of grace and continually exhibits the efficacy of satisfaction for sins which are repeatedly committed. They are thus delivered from wrath by His life (Romans 3:9-10). Sins do not place them outside of the state of grace, as if their prior justification were thereby nullified; no, God is and remains reconciled with them in Christ. God views them as His children, favorites, and heirs. The justification which occurs upon the first act of faith, and which occurs time and again after that, each time includes the forgiveness of sins -- sins to be committed subsequently virtualiter, that is, as far as virtue and efficacy are concerned; thus declaring that they would also each time be forgiven ctualiter, that is, actually. However, sins cannot be forgiven in actuality prior to being committed. We cannot speak of that which does not exist; whatever has not been committed cannot be forgiven. The godly also understand it to be thus when they perceive themselves to be justified by faith. They believe that God, in Christ, has forgiven them all their sins, has received them as children and heirs, and are assured that in the future they will remain reconciled and continue to be heirs. Therefore, when they fall, God will each time and repeatedly forgive them. We shall discuss this more comprehensively in answering the next question. The Error of the "Hebrews" Refuted In our days a sect begins to manifest itself which calls itself by the name of Hebrews. This is so because the one knows the Hebrew alphabet, others can read it, and maybe one or two begin to understand it. They consequently imagine that they know the language as well as the best of them, and they can personally discern and know how each word must be translated. They conduct themselves as if they were masters, even though they know no more than D. Leusden tells them in his dictionary and D. Trommius in his concordance. Some of them are disorderly people and have loose morals, who abuse the grace of God in order to commit fornication and ungodliness, and who abuse Christian liberty, using it as a pretext to indulge in the flesh. Women among them "have the floor," and preach in their own way. They cannot do much harm to the church, since they draw the scum of the church (who should have been excommunicated long ago) away from her. They usher souls to hell with a false peace. They are unstable, for one time they say this and then again that. They seem to have peaked already and are now despised by all honest citizens. Their doctrine primarily consists of the following elements.

(1) They either hold to an unlimited election of all men who believe that Christ has died for them, or to an election limited to a certain number, who God from eternity views in Christ and thus from eternity justifies. Therefore, He has nothing against them from the very outset. At birth Adam's sin is thus not imputed to them, and the corruption of their nature is no sin to them, since they already

are justified.

(2) They either hold to an unlimited atonement by Christ for all who but believe that Christ is their Savior, or to a limited atonement for all the individual elect. They maintain that not only all their past, present, and future sins are paid for, but also that God has perfectly justified them from that very moment, and from the very first cannot view them in any other way but in Christ. Thus, nothing is sin to them anymore, in spite of the fact that they do all that is called sin.

(3) They maintain that faith consists in the determination that Christ is their Savior and has died for them, without this being evident by some tokens of sorrow over committed sins; rather, they laugh about them. They deem conversion to be nothing else but a believing that Christ has died for them. They consider sanctification to be the cleaving of Christ's righteousness to them as their own personal righteousness. They thus consider that they must be viewed as having personally fulfilled the law -- as one upon whom the law no longer has a claim. It is therefore sufficient for them merely to believe that Christ has died for them, for then they are free from the entire law, and whatever they do is no sin for them. One thus may not have any sorrow for sin; there is no need to confess sin and seek Christ, fleeing to Him for reconciliation, and receive Him as his ransom. One need not pray for forgiveness, since doing so would be mocking with God, who has already forgiven them, either from eternity, at the death and resurrection of Christ, or from the moment when they believed that Christ died for them. One now need not do anything else but to give thanks. Their exhortation to believe is as follows: Would you be so ungrateful as not to believe that Christ has died for you? Therefore believe this and you will be delivered from everything.

(4) They maintain that one is not obligated to attend public worship, that there is no such thing as a divine commission for ministers, and that everyone should therefore be a minister. They make no avail of the sacraments, or if they do use them, they maintain that no one may use them who doubts his salvation.

Thus the basis for all their abominable and carnal propositions is a misconception and abuse of the doctrine of justification. They therefore answer the question presented above by stating that justification does not occur frequently and daily, but that it has occurred once and for all.

Having said this by way of preface, we shall now proceed to prove the following truth: Justification from eternity, at the time of Christ's death, or upon the first act of faith, did not take place so as to exclude daily justification in reference to committed sins.

First, we maintain that justification did not occur from eternity. God has, indeed, decreed from eternity to justify the elect; however, this decree and purpose is not justification itself. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, this purpose is never referred to as the act of justification. It is one thing to purpose and to decree, and another thing to execute that purpose and decree.

Secondly, the elect, prior to their regeneration "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:3), and enemies of God (Romans 5:10). This they could neither be, nor could this be said of them if they already had actually been justified.

Thirdly, justification occurs after being called. "... whom He called, them He also justified" (Romans 8:30). It occurs by means of the act of faith. "Therefore being justified by faith ..." (Romans 5:1);

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). Since faith is exercised by a person who actually exists, it follows that justification did not transpire in eternity.

Fourthly, Scripture speaks of the forgiveness of sins in the future tense; God shall justify and God shall forgive. “Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith” (Romans 3:30); “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43); “... then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin” (2 Chronicles 7:14). Justification did therefore not occur from eternity.

Fifthly, God justifies believers when they actually exist and confess their sins. “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah” (Psalms 32:5); “This man went down to his house justified “ (Luke 18:14); “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). From the foregoing it is therefore irrefutable that justification did not occur from eternity. Out of this most essential proof follows also the second proposition: Man is not actually justified at the death and resurrection of Christ, even though their sins have completely been paid for and God's justice has been satisfied.

Justification: A Daily Occurrence We shall now proceed to the second proposition which raises the following question:

Question: Does justification occur once and for all upon the first act of faith, or does it occur daily upon the renewed exercise of faith after falling into sin?

Answer: Since this controversy arises primarily from a misconception concerning the nature of the difference between the two, it is necessary to state several things by way of preface, and to add to what we have said relative to the previous question. Aside from the Hebrews, there are also some of Reformed persuasion who maintain that justification occurs only once and for all.

First, the act of justification is not man's own doing. Man believes and receives Christ and His righteousness by faith as his own and thus comes into a righteous state, and can then be a subject for justification. However, irrespective of how effectively he may appropriate the righteousness of Christ, he nevertheless does not justify himself. Rather, it is God as Judge who justifies such a one who is righteous in Christ, having received the righteousness of Christ by faith.

Secondly, we must make a distinction between the purpose to justify and the act of justification. God has purposed from eternity to justify the elect, but He does not actually justify them from eternity. To do so it is necessary that the elect actually exist and be in a state of righteousness before God as Judge as we have shown earlier.

Thirdly, one needs to make a distinction between reconciliation and justification. God's justice has been satisfied in Christ; the elect, as enemies, have been reconciled with God by the death of His Son. From God's side His justice had already been satisfied. God was already reconciled with the elect before they were born, and, having been born, prior to their conversion. God from His side remains reconciled, even when believers fall into the deepest possible state of backsliding. A renewed reconciliation and satisfaction are not necessary. It is an error of many unpretentious and

simple believers that they, after having fallen into sin, view God as being unreconciled with them. It is one thing to be fearful of being no partaker of Christ and of reconciliation through Him, while it is another thing to view God repeatedly as being unreconciled with one's self. Reconciliation remains a reality both from God's side and from the side of the believer as far as their state is concerned. This is true even when they fall into sin, are in great darkness, have strife, are unbelieving, or are distressed. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, spiritual life, and the propensity of faith remains. God, however, does not justify the believer when he does not exist as yet or when he is still unconverted, for man, being yet without Christ, is then still incapable of being a suitable subject for justification. When a truly converted and believing person is engaged in the practice of sin, God does not exercise the act of justification toward those who are in such a condition. At that time they are also not suitable objects for this transaction, for they do not exercise faith whereby they are justified. As far as their spiritual state is concerned, their reconciliation is a reality and remains in force, as well from God's side as from the side of the believer; however, justification is the declaration of a sentence.

Fourthly, the act of justifying or not justifying does not imply a change in God. We must not be of the opinion that God, when not exercising the act of justification, is each time again in a dissatisfied and wrathful disposition, and that whenever He exercises the act of justification again He is of a loving and satisfied disposition. This is by no means the case, for with the Lord there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. The change is in the subject. Man, while not existing as yet, or if he exists but is not converted, or if he is in essence converted but is engaged in the practice of sin, is not a suitable subject toward whom God exercises the act of justification. He becomes a suitable subject, however, when he exercises faith.

Fifthly, justification is not a purpose, but an actual deed; it is also not reconciliation, nor does it imply mutability in God. Instead, it is a pronouncement of the sentence of acquittal concerning and toward a person, who by faith receives Christ and His righteousness. I repeat, it is the pronouncement made toward the believer: "Your sins have been atoned for; My justice is satisfied; you are reconciled with Me; I forgive you your sins; I remit them; I do not charge them to your account; and you are an heir of eternal life." God makes this pronouncement by means of His Word whenever a believer hears, reads, or reflects upon such sentences. This pronouncement is made by the Holy Spirit to the heart of a believer when He either impresses a special text upon him, addressing this to his heart, or when He holds before him the gospel in a general sense and applies it. Believers to whom this pronouncement is made are not all in the same condition. Some hear this pronouncement very clearly and distinctly, believe that they are justified, experience peace in their conscience, and have free access to the throne of grace, exclaiming, "Abba, Father!" Others do not hear this pronouncement as clearly, and therefore also do not enjoy the fruits of this with as much clarity. Again, others are so full of trouble and anxiety concerning their spiritual state and the forgiveness of their sins that they do not give heed to the pronouncement of the Word nor to their feelings, be they feelings of comfort and peace. He who is hard of hearing in the court of conscience is acquitted as well as the one whose hearing is exceptional; the one who is weak in faith is acquitted as well as the one who is strong in faith.

Sixthly, justification is not *actio permanens*, sed *transiens*, that is, a permanent act, which is effective from the very first moment of a believer's regeneration until their death, but rather a transitory act, which ceases to render a pronouncement, and is therefore repeated each time

again. The first pronouncement to them is past, and there is each time a new pronouncement which is not of a different nature, but is identical in nature. This is not to imply that the first act of justification is repeated, nor that God would direct a believer who prays for the forgiveness of sins to the first act of faith when He, at the outset of his conversion and faith, justified him -- nor is it implied that the application of the first act of justification would be a daily occurrence. This initial act could have been either not so powerfully and sensibly experienced or could have been erased from one's memory. Thus it is a daily and renewed pronouncement of the very same nature.

Seventhly, the point of contention is not merely a matter of reflection, but pertains to the practice of life itself. It is something which the believer daily encounters in his prayers. If the soul does not have a clear grasp of this matter, it will be confused, not knowing how it can pray with understanding and spiritual liberty. One therefore must know:

(1) he does not pray whether reconciliation would once again or daily occur, for this has occurred once and for all in the sacrifice of Christ;

(2) he ought not to pray that God's purpose concerning us would change, for this is immutable; the secret things are for the Lord, and in prayer he ought to be governed by the Word of God and his own state;

(3) he ought not to pray whether God would change His heart toward us, that instead of a heart of wrath He would be of a favorable disposition toward us; those who do this are ignorant, for God was already favorably disposed and loving toward the elect prior to their regeneration and before they believed;

(4) prayer as far as God is concerned pertains to the manifestation of His goodness, and as far as we are concerned to its application. Justification is nothing else but application in response to the first exercise of faith, as well as every exercise thereafter, when one, by renewal, becomes a suitable subject for justification. This is not the application of a comfortable feeling, but of a pronouncement made to us.

Eighthly, it is irrefutably true that an unconverted person must pray for justification as it takes place upon the first exercise of faith (even though we make no distinction between the first and the repeated exercises as far as the essence of the matter is concerned). It thus follows that all who are not assured of their regenerate state and of their faith, who fear they are not yet in this state, even though they may indeed be regenerated, must act according to their perception of their spiritual state. They must thus pray for forgiveness and justification as if this had never taken place yet; indeed, they cannot do otherwise. Since, however, the majority of the godly live without a clear knowledge and assurance of their spiritual state and repeatedly doubt what has previously taken place, this point of contention (see question on p. 381) would not pertain to the majority of the godly, but rather to the few who are currently assured.

Ninthly, one needs to make a distinction between regeneration, the adoption of children, and justification. Even though these benefits are bestowed simultaneously and immediately upon becoming a suitable subject for justification, the one benefit is not the other; the soul comprehends the one differently from the other, distinguishing between them when she speaks about them. The soul who is assured of her spiritual state neither prays for regeneration, nor for the adoption of children; this she knows already, as well as that God has previously justified her as far as her

previous sins are concerned. Rather, she prays for a new pronouncement of the acquittal concerning newly committed sins. She prays that the guilt and punishment she has incurred by her currently committed sins would be removed on the basis of the merits of Christ, and that God by renewal would be pleased to pronounce the sentence of acquittal toward and upon her.

Tenthly, a distinction needs to be made between justification and being assured of this, that is, the sense of comfort, peace, and joy. The latter are fruits of the first. The first, justification, can be present without assurance and without a sense of comfort, peace, and joy. In his prayer, the believer, be it in the first exercise of faith or subsequently, has more than the pronouncement of the sentence in view, that is justification; his activity does not terminate here. He also has in view a comforting sense of forgiveness, as well as peace and joy. Yes, he cannot be at peace without obtaining forgiveness. It does not follow, however, that someone is not justified nor has obtained the forgiveness of sins if he is without peace or joy, and that only those obtain the forgiveness of sins who acquire a sense of comfort. For even the weakest in faith must believe, on the basis of the Word, that God, upon his prayer and with his eye upon Christ, forgives him his sins since He has promised to do so. Therefore the essence of justification does not consist in a comforting and sensible application of the sentence, but in its pronouncement. This pronouncement is not only made upon the first exercise of faith, but still occurs daily, whether or not the believer enjoys its comforting fruits. Having stated this by way of preface, we shall now proceed with the proof.

Scriptural Proofs for Daily Justification

Proof #1: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). To forgive sins is to justify and to pronounce the sentence, "Your sins have been forgiven and My justice has been satisfied. I shall not punish you for the same; I grant you acquittal." "To forgive" implies simultaneously that someone is declared to be an heir of eternal life, as well as to be acquitted. Forgiveness must have a suitable subject; that is, a believer who sensibly and with shame confesses his sins having his eye upon Jesus. The apostle does not refer here to initial conversion, but to believers who have fallen into sin. This is evident from the pronoun "we," from that which precedes, and from that which is written in chapter 2:1. From this it is clearly evident that God daily pronounces the justifying sentence upon believers; that is, He justifies daily.

Evasive Argument #1: To forgive is to give a comforting application as well as peace in the conscience.

Answer (1) This is merely conjecture, and I deny that forgiveness is a comforting application and the giving of peace in the conscience; let one proof be produced.

(2) It expressly contradicts this text, for if forgiveness signified a comforting application, all upright confessors of the truth would, on the basis of God's faithfulness and justice, enjoy sensible comfort and peace of conscience. However, all upright confessors of the truth do not have this; experience bears abundant witness to this. Forgiveness is therefore not a comforting application.

(3) If forgiveness were synonymous with a comforting application, all who miss this comforting application would be bereft of the forgiveness of sins. It would be an offense against the generation of the children of God, grieving those whom the Lord has not grieved. It is thus evident that forgiveness is not a comforting application, but rather is the cause of peace in the conscience;

it can therefore be genuine without such evident results.

(4) If forgiveness is a comforting application, it would have to be an application of the first act of justification upon the first exercise of faith, or else it is a new application of the merits of Christ for them. The first option cannot be true, for most believers have neither the knowledge nor the witness of their first justification, and they rarely or never think upon this when they experience a comfortable application. If the latter is true, it is a new act of justification or a new repetition of the same which occurs frequently; it is this to which we are referring. We do not deny that forgiveness is an application; that is true for the first as well as for the repeated act. They are equal or identical in this respect; however, it is not particularly a comforting application, for comfort is the consequence. The latter can be present in various measures, at various times, and to various degrees.

Evasive Argument #2: If no one receives forgiveness but those who confess their sins, one could never have forgiveness of those sins which he has not confessed, since there are many sins which are either not noticed or have been forgotten.

Answer (1) A distinction must be made between reconciliation and forgiveness, that is, justification or the pronouncement of the sentence. Reconciliation with God is and always remains a reality, also in a condition of great backsliding. The pronouncement of forgiveness, however, occurs when there is a suitable subject, this being an upright confessor.

(2) When a believer, after falling in sin, makes confession, he includes therein all his sins. He even includes his sinful nature and whatever has proceeded from this (whether known or unknown), and he thus confesses them all.

(3) When God forgives, He thus forgives all sins which have been committed, and He justifies the person as he presently is.

Evasive Argument #3: When believers pray for forgiveness, they aim to be conscious of this, as well as for peace of conscience as a result of being sensible of the forgiveness of sins. Thus forgiveness is to be understood as consisting of consciousness and comfort.

Answer: It is true that believers desire and seek this; it is their obligation. However, in prayer they make a distinction between forgiveness and comfort. In the first place, they pray in an absolute sense of the word since God has promised this to them; in the second place, they pray conditionally -- it being contingent upon the Lord's pleasure -- and submissively, since they have no absolute promise concerning this. Sometimes the Lord grants it and sometimes He does not.

Proof #2: We formulate this second proof from such texts in which believers pray daily for forgiveness, upon which God daily forgives. Consider the following from among many: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:14); "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6:14); "Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba ... wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop ... Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God" (Psalms 51:1-2; Psalms 51:7; Psalms 51:14); "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. ... The Lord also hath put away thy sin" (2 Samuel 12:13); "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalms 32:5). It has now

been shown that forgiveness is the pronouncement of the justifying sentence, rather than comfort and the comforting sense of forgiveness which occasionally follow it. This is also evident from the foregoing texts. In Matthew 6:14 it is stated that God will forgive us if we forgive our debtors. However, our act of forgiveness does not consist in the comforting application to the conscience of our neighbor, but in a declaration that we acquit him, shall not avenge ourselves, and shall treat him as if he had not committed this deed; this is likewise true when God forgives us. In 2 Samuel 12:13 Nathan said to David that the Lord had taken his sins away, but he did not declare to him that God had given him comfort and peace of conscience. Believers pray daily for forgiveness and God daily forgives them. It is thus evident that justification does not occur once, but takes place frequently.

Proof #3: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). Add to this the texts which speak of Christ's intercession as High Priest. (Cf. Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34.) If justification were to occur once and for all upon the first exercise of faith, the second high-priestly ministry for believers would no longer be necessary; then they would have no need for an Advocate or Intercessor. However, one does need Him again each time he has sinned. Thus intercession has reference to sins which are repeatedly committed, praying that they be forgiven. Forgiveness therefore does not occur once and for all, but daily.

Evasive Argument: Christ's intercession pertains to application, that is, to this comforting sense.

Answer: We have already responded to this. This daily application is the daily justification, that is, the daily pronouncement of the justifying sentence, or daily forgiveness. The first act of justification, as well as those subsequent thereto, is applicatory in nature. The same act of justification is frequently repeated and the sentence is frequently pronounced. This does not imply that the latter nullifies the first, but that the spiritual condition of believers repeatedly requires a new declaration or repetition of it. God accommodates Himself to man's nature and state, and deals with him accordingly. Man in this respect must also act as man, and thus not in a manner as God functions in reference to Himself, but rather in a manner which is suitable to man. One would have to prove that the daily application consisted of nothing else than the comforting of the soul. This will never occur, however, and thus this argument is futile.

Proof #4: This proof we formulate on the basis of such texts in which it is declared that justification follows the exercise of faith. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1); "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith" (Romans 3:28). Faith must not be exercised once and for all, but it is the duty and task of believers to exercise faith daily, and to receive Jesus daily as the ransom for their sins, unto their justification. Would faith only be efficacious when first exercised and not subsequently? No, faith is always of the same efficacy. Since justification is the fruit of faith when first exercised, justification is also the fruit when faith is exercised by renewal. This we observe for example in Abraham. Abraham was already a believer and had long before been justified prior to the promise in Genesis 15:1-21 being given to him, namely, "So shall thy seed be" (Genesis 15:5). It is nevertheless stated in Genesis 15:6, "And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." Paul had this in mind in Romans 4:1-25. It was the apostle's objective to prove that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith. This he proves by quoting Genesis 15:6, where he

uses Abraham as an example, demonstrating that Abraham was not justified by works, but by faith. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). Abraham was already justified prior to this; nevertheless, when subsequently he believed again, he was again justified. Paul uses this justification as a proof that man is justified by faith rather than the law. Therefore, as often as a believer exercises faith, so frequently is he justified.

Proof #5: "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11). Since a justified person must not remain focused upon the first justifying act, but rather must endeavor to be continually justified, it follows that justification does not occur once, but frequently.

Evasive Argument #1: "To be righteous still" refers to an increased manifestation of one's justification by his fruits.

Answer: The words "to justify" and "to be justified" never have this meaning. This is also not the case in James 2:21. Consider also our commentary upon the foregoing texts. If somewhere it were to mean this (which we nevertheless do not admit), this cannot be the meaning here, for being justified is joined to being sanctified, and sanctification manifests itself in the practice of virtue.

Evasive Argument #2: The reference here is to passive justification rather than active justification. Active justification is a work of God toward man whereby He acquits him; however, passive justification is the assurance of being justified and the comforting sense of it.

Answer: This is a fabricated distinction which is not founded upon the Word of God. Wherever there is passive justification, there is also active justification. Neither can someone receive anything, nor can anything be done toward anyone, or there must be the work of another who either gives or does something toward the other. If one wishes to make this distinction, then it pertains to the same deed. It is active as far as the performer of the deed is concerned, and passive as far as the subject is concerned, who is the recipient of the operation of the other. We absolutely deny, however, that passive justification would mean the assurance of one's justification and the comforting sense of it; there is no proof for this in the entire Scriptures. Many of the godly die without ever having had this comforting sense; they then would not have been justified.

Proof #6: We derive this proof from the absurdities which are the logical consequence of the view that justification occurs once and for all:

(1) God would forgive believers sins which they have not committed, since forgiveness cannot occur unless there is a committed crime. Just as someone neither can nor will be punished for sins which as yet are to be committed, so one can likewise not be justified concerning sins which are as yet to be committed. Christ, as Surety, was punished for sins which the godly would as yet commit. This, however, is an entirely different situation, since He, being God, dealt with God for whom everything is in the present; also as Surety He could only suffer once since this atonement was a perfect atonement.

(2) One could then also never pray for justification or forgiveness, since God sees this sin but once according to their view, forgiving all sins simultaneously.

(3) One would then have a comforting sense concerning sins which are as yet to be committed. Instead, one ought to mourn over the commission of sins and be grievously sorrowful.

We have therefore demonstrated very clearly that justification occurs daily.

Objection: Justification is perfect; God justifies the person and this includes the forgiveness of all sins -- past, present, and future sins -- and is as such distinguished from sanctification which occurs by degrees. If justification would occur daily, the believer would repeatedly be in an unreconciled state upon sinning, since he repeatedly would be in need of new forgiveness.

Answer: First, we admit that justification is perfect; God does not forgive a sin partially and therefore consider part of it to be unforgiven (such as occurs in sanctification). God does not forgive some sins of believers and deem other sins to be unforgiven, but He perfectly forgives all sins and justifies the person as he is at that present moment. The efficacy of this justification includes in it virtualiter that God will also thereafter forgive subsequent sins committed in the future; sins can therefore not rob them of their salvation. However, it is an invalid conclusion to deduce from the perfection of justification that God, upon the first exercise of faith, also in actuality includes all future sins which they would subsequently commit. Such a conclusion we deny. It would be valid if the believing sinner were justified once and for all; however, since God frequently justifies, and since each time this justification is perfect in reference to the person as he is at that moment, the logical conclusion is therefore not correct.

Secondly, the argument that future sins are not included in the first act of justification, and that therefore believers when sinning time and again come into an unreconciled state, and thus become subject to wrath and condemnation, is as invalid as the conclusion itself. In doing so one mixes reconciliation and the meriting of salvation with justification as if they were identical, and as if man is reconciled with God through justification; this is obviously erroneous. Reconciliation occurs on account of the merits of Christ; this is and always remains in force and has occurred once and for all. A believing and converted person is and also always remains in a reconciled state; sins committed in the meantime can never undo this reconciliation. Since the Lord Jesus has made a perfect atonement, the believer can never come into an unreconciled state nor can he ever be subject to wrath and condemnation (even though his sins when considered in their essence make him guilty and worthy of punishment). Justification presupposes reconciliation; in order for someone to be justified he must first be righteous in Christ. When he is thus, he will then be justified, that is, God pronounces the sentence of acquittal upon him. By making a distinction between these two matters, this argument will be rendered null and void. It thus remains true that justification is perfect, even though it is frequently repeated.

We thus consider this objection to be answered, and the doctrine itself has been further reinforced.

Justification and its Result: Assurance

Having considered the time when justification occurs, we shall now proceed to consider the secondary aspect or result of justification, assurance.

Question: Can a believer be assured of his justification, and consequently of his salvation?

Answer: The Papists and Arminians answer negatively, whereas we answer in the affirmative. The Papists oppose this with all their might, for they perceive that this will topple their entire

ecclesiastical structure. No one will then ask any longer for the merits of the saints, concern themselves with their selling of indulgences, their masses for souls, absolution, nor their fabricated purgatory. Once the truth of assurance as being the result of justification has been established, their treasures will be empty and their kitchens will smoke. They keep people in a continual state of fright and fear, so that with handfuls of money they will take refuge to them. The Papists maintain that man cannot know whether he is truly regenerated, possesses true faith, is truly sanctified, nor does he know whether he will persevere or become an apostate. Consequently, he cannot be absolutely assured of his salvation, nor must he strive for this assurance. They will admit that one can and may make conjectures concerning this, and that God can reveal and indeed has revealed this to some in an extraordinary manner. Apart from this, however, assurance is but conjecture or imagination. The Arminians neither understand the nature of grace nor of those who possess it -- they who as a result of assurance are that much more strongly motivated to sanctification. (Cf. 2 Corinthians 7:1; Romans 12:1; 1 John 3:3.) Therefore, they wish to stir up people to good works by means of fright and fear, being of the opinion that assurance engenders careless people. On the other hand, they also believe in the apostasy of saints, and they thus deny assurance.

We observe in God's Word the unbreakable chain of election, calling, faith, justification, and glorification, and we also know from God's Word and experience that assurance does not engender careless people. Rather, it engenders love in man and strongly motivates him to true godliness. We therefore maintain that man can be assured of his justification and consequently also of his salvation; he must therefore continually strive for assurance. We state at the same time, however, that all believers do not come to this full assurance. He who is currently assured, can subsequently come into a condition of doubt, fear, and anxiety as a result of darkness, sin, and strife due to the weakness of faith. That man can be assured is evident for the following reasons: First, this is evident from all those texts in which man is commanded to examine himself whether he is in the faith and whether Christ dwells in him. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28); "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Being obligated to examine oneself, one must then of necessity be able to know whether or not he possesses faith. One can thus acquire the assurance that he is in the faith and that Christ dwells in him. One can therefore also be assured of his justification and furthermore, of his salvation. Man is created in such a fashion that he not only knows what he is doing, but also that he consciously knows this. If this is true in the natural realm, it is much more true in the spiritual realm, since man's nature has been improved upon, illuminated, and sanctified. He knows that he chooses and desires to have God as his reconciled Father, his portion, his delight, and his resting place. He knows that his soul can only find delight upon possessing all this, and that he grieves if he misses all this. He knows that he longs to have the Lord Jesus as His Surety, that he desires Him, and therefore frequently prays tearfully to Him. Such a person offers and surrenders himself to Him. He knows that sins grieve and sadden Him, and being enamored with sanctification, he prays for sanctification and therefore runs to Christ. A believer knows that all these things are to be found in him, and he is conscious of this knowledge. If he, however, would know with certainty that whatever he knows to be within him is true grace and are the motions of the Holy Spirit (such as regeneration, faith, and sanctification) he would be able to make a conclusion which would result in assurance. However, it is here that the believer

falls short and therefore he dares not assure himself. Since, however, he knows that this frame and these motions are to be found within him, he also ought to learn the other from the Holy Scriptures by the operation of the Holy Spirit. If he were to be clearly conscious of both, he could not but be assured. If he must examine himself whether or not he has faith, he can also come to the assurance of this possession. This knowledge is to be observed in the following texts: "And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ" (John 6:69); "... for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded ..." (2 Timothy 1:12); "And hereby we do know that we know Him ..." (1 John 2:3).

Secondly, one must pray for the fruits of assurance, and thus also for assurance itself, without which one cannot enjoy the fruits. "Make me to hear joy and gladness; ... restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation ..." (Psalms 51:8; Psalms 51:12); "... say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Psalms 35:2-3).

Thirdly, it is evident from texts in which it is expressly stated that believers are indeed assured. "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, ... in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:25-27); "And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:21); "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:38-39); "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded ..." (2 Timothy 1:12). Add to this also the following texts: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs" (Romans 8:16-17); "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14); "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13).

Evasive Argument: Job, David, and Paul had their assurance by way of a special revelation of the Holy Spirit, and therefore one cannot draw a conclusion from their assurance in reference to others.

Answer (1) This is a statement that cannot be proven.

(2) All believers have the same Spirit for the purpose of knowing "the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12).

(3) In Romans 8:1-39, Paul speaks not of himself to the exclusion of others, but he includes all who have the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9), who are led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14), who by the Spirit of adoption of children cry out, Abba, Father (Romans 8:15). He states concerning those, including himself (Romans 8:16), that the Spirit testifies with their spirit that they are the children of God and thus also heirs. This argument is therefore futile.

(4) In the quoted texts, John also does not speak concerning himself, but of believers to whom he wrote, declaring that they knew they were regenerated, that they were in God, and that God would remain in them. It thus remains a certainty that believers are indeed assured.

Fourthly, this is also evident from such texts where it is declared that believers have the fruits of assurance, and thus assurance itself. Without this they cannot be partakers of the fruits, which are:

(1) Peace: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Romans 5:1).

(2) A rejoicing “in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2). To have hope is to have a certain expectation of a promised matter to be received in the future. To rejoice in this, and thereby to endure all tribulation with joy, implies that there is assurance of being a partaker of this matter.

(3) Joy and happiness in consequence of being justified. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10).

(4) Addressing God with the name “Father.” “Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15).

(5) Gratitude for being partakers of salvation and having been translated into Christ. “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:12-14). Who would be able, or dare, to think that such who are in this state or who perceive such motions within them do not have a true and strong assurance of their justification and salvation? There is therefore no room for the evasive argument that they are merely guessing or imagining this to be so.

Fifthly, this is also evident from the operation of the Holy Spirit in the elect, it being His objective to assure them. “Now we have received, ... the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12). The Holy Spirit is for them an evidence that they remain in God and God in them (1 John 4:13). He is an earnest which serves no other purpose than to assure them of the certain possession of this matter. “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Ephesians 1:14). The Holy Spirit seals them: “... in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13); “... whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30). The purpose of a seal is to confirm and assure someone that he is a partaker of the sealed matter. Furthermore, God has sworn an oath in order that His elect would be all the more assured. “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation” (Hebrews 6:17-18). It is thus a certainty that one can be assured.

Evasive Argument: One can, however, not know whether this assurance is the operation of the Holy Spirit or whether this is brought about by our own spirit. One can deceive himself in this matter, so that one cannot derive a certain assurance from this.

Answer (1) If the Holy Spirit is operative for the very purpose of assuring someone, this person can most certainly be assured in this manner. Otherwise the operation of the Holy Spirit would be unprofitable to that end, as He would not be able to accomplish His objective. Such a view would expressly contradict God Himself.

(2) Because an unconverted person, being a worm of the dust, is blind and cannot comprehend spiritual things, which instead are foolishness to him (1 Corinthians 2:14), and whereas he neither knows nor sees the Spirit (John 14:17), he therefore cannot judge concerning the operation of the Holy Spirit. He also cannot judge how one may know whether something is the result of the

operation of the Holy Spirit, or whether it proceeds from our own corrupt nature. It would be advisable for such fools to be silent in order that their foolishness be not made manifest. The godly, however, are acquainted with this, and their concern is neither whether it is of the Holy Spirit nor whether it proceeds from their corrupt nature, but at times whether it proceeds from the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit or whether this occurs as a result of their spiritual, regenerate, and renewed nature. A believer, however, does not need to concern himself with this, for whether it immediately proceeds from the Holy Spirit or is due to spiritual light and life, they nevertheless both proceed from the Spirit. As fire and light manifest themselves, however, the Holy Spirit likewise can manifest Himself so clearly that they know indeed that it is the Holy Spirit who assures and seals them. This is similar to a man who knows the voice of his intimate friend.

(3) The Holy Spirit operates in harmony with the Word, the infallible rule for believers. There they observe that the Holy Spirit gives assurance after mourning, praying, and wrestling in faith. This brings the soul near to God, and in the enjoyment of communion with God she receives assurance. They find that assurance does not only engender peace with God in the soul, but also love, obedience, and sanctification. It renders the earth and all its glories as insignificant, and it becomes all their desire and joy to live in the realm of the invisible. If a believer, in the enjoyment of assurance, finds himself to be thus, he may know that he is not deceiving himself, but that it is the Holy Spirit who assures and seals him.

Refutation of Objections to the Truth that Justification Engenders Assurance

Several arguments are advanced to overturn this truth. Objection #1: The promises pertaining to forgiveness are uncertain and doubtful, and are presented in the Word of God within the context of the word “perhaps.” One thus cannot be absolutely assured of this. “... if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity” (Daniel 4:27); “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22).

Answer (1) The promise of the forgiveness of sins upon faith and repentance is made absolutely and with certainty. One can therefore assure himself of this if he finds repentance and faith within himself. “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

(2) When in addition to these two villains (that is, uncertainty and doubt), the words “if there could be” and “perhaps” are used, it does not refer to the uncertainty of forgiveness upon faith and repentance, but rather upon the uncertainty of their repentance, and consequently of forgiveness. “For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee” (Romans 11:21).

Objection #2: One is called to fear and tremble, and thus cannot be assured of his justification and salvation. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Php 2:12); “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Hebrews 4:1).

Answer: Fear and trembling are not always a being fearful and frightened that one will not be saved. Very frequently fear and trembling refer to respect and humble submission to God. “... and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple” (Psalms 5:7). It can also refer to a painstaking care not to sin. “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death” (Proverbs 14:27). There is a slavish fear, to which we are urged not to succumb. “Fear not”

(Exodus 20:20); “And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered, ... Fear not ye” (Matthew 28:4-5). There is also a filial fear which consists in respect and painstaking carefulness. Blessed is the man who fears continually. The one fears punishment, and the other fears out of love for God. In the quoted texts the reference is to filial fear, rather than to slavish fear or fear engendered by doubt.

Objection #3: All assurance must be obtained from man’s own heart, which is deceitful. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it” (Jeremiah 17:9). One can therefore not know whether he is truly converted and believes. Consequently, one can neither know whether he is justified nor whether he will be saved.

Answer (1) By such an argument man would not be conscious of his actions in any matter and would have to be in doubt about everything; man, however, is conscious of his actions and objectives. Since man knows for a certainty that he lives, speaks, and believes this or that with his heart and in truth, we conclude that a true believer also knows for a certainty that he is spiritually alive, believes, prays, etc.

(2) The text refers to the functioning of the heart of an ungodly person in deceiving other persons; it does not say that the heart is unconscious of its own functioning and objective.

(3) Assurance does indeed issue forth from the heart, as it judges its spiritual disposition and deeds. The heart does this, however, not according to its own standard, but according to the infallible rule of God’s Word accompanied by the operation of the Holy Spirit who bears witness with our spirit (Romans 8:16). A believer can therefore know in truth what is within him, and in this manner assure himself of his justification and salvation, for the Word of God promises this to those who are of such a disposition and conduct themselves accordingly.

Objection #4: Since, according to this view, assurance rests upon the infallible promises of God, a believer should neither have the least doubt, nor the least concern, but should always be absolutely and infallibly assured. However, since according to this view, it is also true that believers are not always so infallibly assured and without fear and concern, the promises are not made in such an absolute sense of the word, and man can never be absolutely assured.

Answer: A believer has both a reason and a foundation for always being infallibly assured, and he also ought to be thus, since the infallible promises of God are applicable to him. It is due to his weakness, however, that he is not always thus -- not because he doubts the veracity of the promises of God. It is because he is frequently in darkness as far as recognizing the grace he possesses. Due to trials, inner corruption, and other evidence against him, he fears that he does not have the disposition of such a person to whom the promises have been made. Thus, his doubt is no proof that the promises are not absolute, nor that one cannot be assured, but a proof of his darkness and weakness.

Objection #5: Even if one could presently be assured, one can nevertheless not be assured as far as the future is concerned, and thus also not of his salvation. A person does not know whether he will persevere or become an apostate.

Answer: The Spirit abides eternally in the person to whom He was once given (John 14:16). There He abides as an earnest until the promised felicity has been bestowed (Ephesians 1:14). “For the

gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). Christ gives His sheep eternal life and they will not perish unto all eternity (John 10:28), and "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:5). Therefore the fear for apostasy is unfounded and cannot prevent them from being assured. (For a comprehensive treatment of the perseverance of the saints, see volume 3, chapter 50).

We have thus explained and confirmed the truth of this weighty doctrine of our Christian religion, namely, justification, and defended it against opposing parties. The purpose of this is not merely to know the truth, but rather that we would practice it, that is, that we would endeavor to be justified, to remain in a justified state, to be exercised in this state with justification, to rejoice in it, to magnify God concerning this, and thereby to be motivated unto sanctification. Since people are so careless in this respect, and even believers so frequently are not in earnest to exercise themselves continually in this matter and to make use of it at all occasions, it will be necessary for us to stir people up to be thus exercised.

Exhortations to Strive for Justification

Questions: Is not justification a work of God outside of man, so that man does nothing at all and is merely a subject of it? Does not this take place purely without any merit, and without reference to man's goodness, will, or activity? Does not God justify man because of the righteousness of Christ which He Himself imputes to him? Has not God eternally decreed whom He will justify and whom not, this being a decree which cannot be changed by man? Is it not therefore best to be quiet and await the outworking of this decree, that is, whether or not God will justify me? Are not all exhortations to strive for justification then in vain?

Answer: Justification is a work of God which does not only pertain to man but which is also directed toward man, for God pronounces the sentence of acquittal to the soul. The eternal purpose and the imputation of Christ's righteousness in and of themselves cannot render comfort to man, nor engender either gratitude or sanctification, as long as the person is neither justified in his conscience nor hears the pronouncement of the sentence toward him. We do not need to belabor ourselves to motivate God either to establish a decree or to change His purpose; rather, we must labor to become conscious of His purpose and the imputation of Christ's righteousness by way of the actual pronouncement. One must not strive and labor to be justified by his works, but he must strive to receive the righteousness of Christ by faith and thus be in a condition to be justified. He must strive to receive by faith the promises made to believers and with them approach unto God in order to hear the actual justifying pronouncement of God, both out of His Word as well as by His Spirit. This is the life, joy, and comfort of the soul. This will render a person ready to manifest gratitude, to glorify God, and to live a sanctified life. It is the objective of the ensuing exhortations to bring this about; you who either read or hear this read, permit yourself to be persuaded to practice this, and with a quiet and impressionable soul, consider the following reasons:

First, God, in this life, justifies those who will live forever. One can be assured in this life of having been justified, of the forgiveness of his sins, and of having been appointed to be an heir of eternal life. All of this has been demonstrated above. No one therefore needs to despair, no matter how great and prolonged his sinnership may be; he may and must seek this great benefit, since God commands this and offers this to him. While thus seeking, he will certainly attain to this, since God

has promised it to those who seek it. Failure to seek this will either be due to:

(1) pure wickedness and a despising of God, of His grace, and of one's own salvation;

(2) foolish world-conformity. One will then, bewitched by and out of love to visible things, not avail himself of the grace of God. This is so that he may be all the more at ease in yielding to the lusts of the flesh and thus choose the creature above the Creator;

(3) or abominable laziness, not being willing to make any effort in this respect. One does indeed perceive the desirability and bliss of being justified, but he looks up against the work itself; it is not worth all this trouble. If it could easily and effortlessly be obtained, one would indeed be willing. However, to thus pray and wrestle, and to overcome so many temptations requires too much effort and thus one refrains from this. Tell me therefore, you despisers of grace, you who are conformed to the world and are lazy, is your condemnation not just? Will you not have to say upon your deathbed and in the day of judgment, "I was not willing; it is thus my own fault; therefore, woe, woe is unto me that I have been so foolish and that due to my own neglect I now have to go lost forever and be condemned!"

Therefore, since so great a grace, such comfort, and such joy are available to you, and you can and may avail yourself of this, let nothing hinder you; but be resolved in your endeavor to be justified, and be assured that you may live happily here and be eternally in the state of felicity hereafter. The Lamentable Condition of Those Who are Not Justified

Secondly, meditate for a moment upon the lamentable condition of the man who is not justified, and of yourself if you are still in such a condition. You are still in your sins, and the eternal, unbearable wrath of God hangs above your head. If you are not justified in this life, you will die in your sins and be eternally condemned. You will die and I hereby pronounce your death sentence upon you. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27); "Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live" (Isaiah 38:1). I cannot designate a specific moment; maybe it will be today. "This night thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:20). It may be that you will either die suddenly, or suddenly lose your mind; or maybe you will be much troubled by bodily pains and anxieties. The terrors of conscience may be so severe in view of eternal condemnation that you will not be able, with composure, to be sensible concerning sin, and you will neither be able to take refuge to the Lord Jesus to receive His righteousness, nor be able to turn to the promises. It could also be that the time of grace already has passed by beforehand and you are given over to the hardness of your imagination, traveling thus toward eternity. He who is not justified in this life will also not be justified in the life hereafter. How will you then fare? How frightful will be such a death! What will there then be to comfort you? Where will you then go? You will go nowhere but to your eternal damnation. Will not the terror of the Lord then persuade you to believe and to be justified before you die?

If a person may be justified, however, and in this life may have the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins and of his eternal inheritance, how joyfully will such a person be able to die! How cheerfully one will be able to depart from this life and say with Paul, "For I am persuaded, that neither death ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39); "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). This caused

David to say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me" (Psalms 23:4). Then death is no longer a terror; one can long for it and say with Simeon, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Luke 2:29-30). Observe therefore how different death and eternity will be. What would a person not do to have a day of death and to enter into eternal felicity! Since, however, there is nothing which can comfort the soul in life and in death, except for justification, how you ought to strive to be to be justified!

Thirdly, if you still live in an unreconciled state:

(1) You cannot but spend your days with much terror. Aside from the fact that the worm of your conscience continually gnaws, and at times dreadful thoughts and terrors arise in your soul (be it in dreams during your sleep, in darkness while being awake, or in distant solitude), even the rustling of a leaf or an unusual noise will terrify you, and the hairs of your head will stand up straight for terror when you hear of or observe a remarkable judgment upon others. You will continually be in fear that the wrath of God will be manifested toward you. If you suddenly have an unusual pain or a dizzy spell, or if you are in danger of drowning, or if the sword is extended toward you, or if one is in danger of death in any other way, then with Belshazzar all the members of your body will tremble due to the terror of your heart. Eliphaz speaks of this in Job 15:20-24, where we read, "The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer will come upon him. He believeth not that he will return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword. He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him." In this manner an unreconciled person spends his days. The conscience may be somewhat asleep for a time, and one may find some diversion in that which is visible. Nevertheless, even when he laughs, he shall have sorrow. Sin, however, which as a sleeping dog lies at the door, will then attack all the more vehemently, and the king of terrors will take hold of him and will at last send him to his eternal woe where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

(2) Furthermore, you cannot find delight in that which, due to God's longsuffering, you receive for the body. The heart is not pacified by this, and all this is as a snare, as sin, causing God's wrath to rest all the heavier upon you. As long as you are unreconciled, the curse is concealed in the best of that which you may enjoy; it all groans as it were against you (Romans 8:22). Everything is transformed into a curse. "I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart" (Malachi 2:2); "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out" (Deuteronomy 28:16-17; Deuteronomy 28:19). This curse is in your food and drink; in your gambling, dancing, and the vain company you keep; in your clothing, crowns, and jewels; in a word, you are cursed in everything. You are cursed in your vision, hearing, speaking, walking, profession, and business. Such is the condition of those who are not reconciled, even if they bathe themselves in wealth. "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt" (Ecclesiastes 5:13); "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Proverbs 1:32). You who are unreconciled, consider yourself to be thus; all that you have and do must be viewed from this perspective. If this cannot move you to seek reconciliation and justification, I no longer know

what to advise you.

Compare this for a moment with how the righteous may enjoy the things which pertain to the body. All that they have proceeds from fatherly love and the merits of Christ; yes, temporal blessings, whether great or small, are even proofs of God's love to them. All that they receive, all that they eat or drink, that with which they dress themselves, and that upon which they place their feet, belong to them. The sun rises and the moon and stars shine for their sake. For their sake the appearance of heaven is so beautiful during quiet nights, and the earth brings forth a variety of verdant growth, trees, herbs, and flowers. Whatever people plant in delightful gardens, as well as walkways which are covered with foliage of neatly arranged trees, it all exists for the purpose of delighting them by way of vision, hearing, smell, or taste. "For all things are yours" (1 Corinthians 3:21). "The righteous shall inherit the land" (Psalms 37:29). Oh, how refreshing is even a piece of dry bread if one may perceive it as having been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, and consequently, as having a right to it! It can cause tears to flow out of their eyes for love and joy. When there are miseries, plagues, and wars (and whatever else could terrify), their heart nevertheless remains steadfast, trusting in the Lord; they will trust even in the midst of death. A justified person can therefore run his course with joy. The fact that they do not do this more frequently is due neither to not having a right to it nor to there being no reason for it, but because they are not more frequently exercised with their justification. When considering the dissimilarity between the lives of the unrighteous and the righteous, contrasting the one with the other and observing how the one issues forth from a state of being unjustified and the other from a state of being justified, this ought to be sufficient to persuade everyone to earnestly endeavor to be justified. The Spiritual Sweetness and Delight Found in Justification

Fourthly, consider also justification by itself. Note what sweetness, delight, and glory is to be found in this for the soul.

(1) In justification there is forgiveness of all sins and all punishment; this is so perfect that it is as if one had never committed sin. "... and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7); "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5). They only who have felt sin as a heavy burden and have tasted its bitterness, know what this entails. This forgiveness is an everlasting forgiveness; God never brings sins back in order to exercise His wrath toward them again. They who have once been justified, will never revert to being unworthy and despicable again, but their sins will eternally remain forgiven. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

(2) They are not only cleansed from all their pollution, but they are furthermore adorned in an extraordinary measure with the perfect righteousness of Christ. "And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel 16:14); "And ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10); "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair" (Song of Solomon 4:1). When the righteous may thus view their beauty due to the righteousness of Christ, they will rejoice in this. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).

(3) In justification they furthermore obtain the adoption as children of God, and are appointed as heirs of eternal life. God views them and meets them with light, comfort, love, and care as His dear children; and they view Him as their merciful Father. Therefore time and again they turn to Him and cry out, "Abba, Father!" They thus tell Him of all their needs, and request from Him whatever they desire; they delight themselves in Him, and turn away from everything else, for it is only good to be with Him.

(4) This engenders in them a sweet peace, and a glorious and inexpressible joy; they dwell together in sweet, mutual love. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Romans 5:1); "... Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it" (Isaiah 38:17); "My beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16).

Now consider all this simultaneously: A justified person is eternally delivered from all sin, all wrath, all curse, and all punishment without any retraction. A justified person, due to the imputed righteousness of Christ, is perfect in his beauty before God, before the angels, before believers, and to himself. A justified person is a child of God and an heir of eternal life; he has an inheritance which he cannot lose, but which is kept in heaven for him. There is sweet quietude, peace, joy, and delight in God to be found in the soul of a justified person, more than a natural man can understand, and more than a justified person can express. If this cannot motivate a soul to endeavor to attain to justification, nothing will be able to do it. Nevertheless, it remains God's work.

The Fruits of Justification

(1) Justification makes the heart joyful. "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it ... for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isaiah 38:17).

(2) Upon falling into sin, it motivates the believer not to remain there, but to arise again and cheerfully to persevere. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isaiah 33:24).

(3) It always affords free access to the throne of grace. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Hebrews 10:22).

(4) It fills heart and mouth with the praises of God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Psalms 103:2-3).

(5) Justification is the fountain of sanctification. Sanctification is exceedingly precious to believers, for it consists in humbly walking with God, honoring Him with holy reverence, loving Him, fearing Him, and pleasing Him in our walk. They thus have the image of God and manifest this to His honor, as an ornament to the church, to the conviction of the unconverted, and as a stimulus to the converted. The righteous are enamored with such a life, and they seek this with all their heart. This is not only true because it is a means to remain near to God and a practice upon which God bestows much blessing, but because it is their life and the beginning of felicity. A believer is mournful over his deficiency, and due to an inordinate desire for sanctification he at times becomes discouraged, thinking, "I will never attain to such a state during my entire lifetime. Oh, that my ways were directed keep the Lord's statutes! What must I do? What way shall I turn to attain this?" I answer that justification is the means to this. Since justification is the fountain, it therefore defines the proper manifestation of sanctification and its true essence. One must, therefore, with all his might endeavor to attain to justification and to being assured of this.

He who endeavors to attain to sanctification upon another foundation has gone astray, will never attain to it, and will never make progress in it. First to require self-denial and pure love for God (He being worthy of this) is to err and could lead very well to one's perdition. There are those who first wish to bring justification to a conclusion and leave it rest as a finished matter. They then wish to yield to sin for a time, and only strive for sanctification subsequent to this. They are as much in error in the opposite direction, and indicate that they have never been acquainted with the nature of either justification or sanctification. They are sought simultaneously, and the matter as to what is sought first or last is not a matter of time but rather of order. In the continual exercise of justification the soul is sanctified. "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Psalms 130:4); "... purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9); "How much more shall the blood of Christ, ... purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14); "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4); "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself" (1 John 3:3). As justification is the fountain of sanctification, giving it its true essence, so sanctification is likewise a necessity, for without holiness no man shall see God (Hebrews 12:14). Therefore, he who wishes to be saved, must first be sanctified; and if he is to be sanctified, such sanctification must necessarily proceed from justification. Therefore you must consider both the desirability and necessity of sanctification; both ought to motivate you to be exercised relative to justification and to be assured of it.

Guidance in Seeking for Justification and Marks for Self-Examination

It now remains for us to guide those who desire justification in seeking after this. We shall do so by proposing the means which serve to the attainment of this end. We shall propose them in such a manner that they simultaneously serve as proofs and marks which reveal that a person is justified.

First, a person who desires to be justified in his conscience ought to endeavor to have a view of his sinful heart -- and of the sinful manifestation of this heart in thoughts, words, deeds, and activities, along with the manner of this manifestation. He must also seek to have a view of his condemnable condition, adding to this a sorrow over his sins and his state of condemnation. When I mention sorrow, I am not suggesting that there must first be a certain degree of contrition, terror, or despair. Many who are ignorant in the way of the Lord first wish to have this before they dare to think that they are justified. Since they do not have it in the measure they imagine it ought to be, they reject everything and live in a continual state of unsteadiness and restlessness. Instead this sorrow also consists in loathing one's self, in being absolutely destitute, in indignation toward sin, in the perception of one's emptiness, in sinking away in one's condemnableness, in heartache, in languishing, in perceiving with understanding that one is in such a condition, and in the confirmation, "Yes, I am thus." One also needs to make a distinction between an unconverted person who presently begins to seek, and a converted person who already believes in Christ (irrespective of whether he knows or doubts this). In the beginning, many have much more of the spirit of bondage again to fear and more slavish fear and terror, and thereby are driven to Christ. They are more engaged in a legalistic sense, albeit not all in the same manner and measure. The converted, however, have shame, loathe themselves, are humbled, and are filled with indignation and revenge toward themselves in a more evangelical fashion; however, this also varies greatly. It is certain, however, that only rarely does someone come joyfully to Christ as Zacchaeus did; and only few come to the knowledge of being the property of Christ by means of knowing and

approving of the truth. Rather, the common way is one of perplexity, sorrow, and fear. This is not to suggest that one must first have these things as a condition before one can come, but it is a quality without which one shall not be willing to come. Therefore all who are desirous for justification must first seek to receive a view and be sensible of their misery. Observe this in those who believed on the day of Pentecost. "They were pricked in their heart" (Acts 2:37); the jailor came trembling (Acts 16:29); "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). He who has never had some knowledge of the frames mentioned above, who has never had them in a heartfelt and conscious manner until coming to faith in Christ and being justified, and who nevertheless considers himself justified, deceives himself. He who does not seek justification in this way will never attain to it. Yes, even those who in an evangelical manner or by way of knowledge and acknowledgement of the truth have attained to faith and justification, have nevertheless had this frame, albeit that they were soon swallowed up by love and the truth. However, this will afterwards become manifest to them in a sensible manner. Therefore if you wish to attain to justification, make a beginning and learn to become perplexed within yourself; and being sensibly destitute, sinful and condemnable, come to be justified without price by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The second means unto justification is faith in Christ. Man, being convicted in the manner just stated, sees that he cannot but be condemned by the righteous Judge. He therefore seeks for a Surety who satisfies the justice of God in his behalf, and thus finds Jesus Christ. He acknowledges that His suffering and death fully satisfy the justice of God, and that His holiness is unto the attainment of salvation. He observes and acknowledges the offer of righteousness to himself, however sinful he may be. He, now being desirous, takes refuge to Him, receives Him unto his righteousness, and comes with this received righteousness to God. He presents himself to the Lord as miserable and condemnable within himself. He displays to the Lord the righteousness of Christ, and that he has received and appropriated this righteousness upon it having been offered to him. He holds before the Lord His promises made to such persons. While thus praying, wrestling, believing, and urgently making use of the promises, a Scripture passage or the gospel promises in general will be applied to his heart in such a way that he perceives himself to be justified. At times this will be accompanied by the sealing power of the Holy Spirit, so that he may have peace and joy. He who imagines himself to be justified, and who nevertheless is without these exercises of faith, deceives himself, and he who does not seek justification by way of the exercise of faith will never find it. Therefore, if you desire justification, seek it by faith. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith" (Romans 3:28).

Thirdly, he who desires justification must, while seeking, also desire sanctification; these two can neither be separated in their possession nor in the seeking after them. He who desires justification and has no desire after holiness, gives evidence that his heart is not upright before the Lord. If he imagines himself to be justified, but is as yet without sanctification, he deceives himself. If he seeks the first without the latter, he will never attain to it. It is true that the desires are sometimes more vehement and directed toward the one, and at other times to the other; however, the one is always intertwined with the other. Many believers doubt their justification since they do not perceive that they are being sanctified. However, they lack the light to know what sanctification is. They require of themselves a certain measure of holiness, and if they do not attain to this measure, they reject the matter itself which is nevertheless to be found in all believers. Such persons need to know that sanctification manifests itself as follows:

(1) The more a believer may live close to God and be assured of his justification, the more his desires for a pure frame of heart, for the manifestation of the image of God, for humility, wisdom, kindheartedness, and a tender walk will become stronger and lively. He neither knows nor desires any holiness except that which flows out of a reconciled relationship with God -- holiness proceeding from love for and the fear of God.

(2) It manifests itself in a hatred for and a being repulsed by a sinful heart, apprehension and fear concerning the commission of sin, sorrow upon having sinned, and having a restless heart until one by renewal is cleansed in the blood of Christ.

(3) It manifests itself in repeated restoration and in the intention to refrain from sin. One will pray for strength and thus endeavor to be dependent upon the leading of the Holy Ghost.

(4) It manifests itself in being repulsed by worldly company; one cannot unite his heart with such company. Rather, the desires of the heart are toward the godly whom he highly esteems, considers to be glorious, and loves.

(5) It manifests itself in a general sense. Such a person does not give himself more leeway in the one sin than in the other. Sin is sin for him, irrespective of whether a sin is great or small; he does not minimize the nature of sin. All sins are in essence the same; that is, they are contrary to the will of God, albeit that one will fall into one sin more than into another.

(6) It manifests itself in a strong desire for more holiness; such a person cannot be satisfied with the little hunger and thirst for righteousness he has.

(7) It manifests itself in the actual victory over many sins in which one previously lived, even to the extent that one can reject them as soon as they surface; yes, he is no longer unsettled by many of them. He will not peacefully give way to those sins which are stronger, but will do battle against them; and upon having fallen into the same sin, one will arise again (be it more readily or more slowly) and resume the battle. All this will enable a little one in grace to perceive that he, though not attaining to the measure of sanctification he demands of himself, need not reject his justification. Since in his desires, seeking, and actions, he conjoins justification and sanctification (albeit that he derives the latter from the first), he can be conscious of his uprightness in this. However, others who do seek justification without sanctification, or sanctification without justification, are not upon the right way, and those who thus proceed will receive neither.

Fourthly, he who seeks after justification, desiring to be assured thereof, must let God's Word be the judge. Many who are truly justified do not attain to assurance, or readily lose it, since they wish to be their own judge and establish their feelings as the foundation of their assurance. It would be a blessing if someone could always have this; however, it is not God's normal way always to seal His children and to give them the sense of this assurance. The Lord has established another foundation which is more steadfast, durable, and consistent: His Word. It is a good thing if one is suspicious of his own heart, being desirous not to be deceived in such a weighty matter. However, how will one attain to such a certain and steadfast assurance? He must bring himself often before the Lord, and do as David did, saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24). Let him then also turn to the Word of God to observe what promises are made there, and to whom they are made. Let him, while lifting up his soul, ascertain the certainty

of these promises as being pronounced by a God who is true. The issue therefore is whether these promises are made to him. This he can know if he has the qualities of those to whom the promises have been made. Let him then first of all examine the Word of God and consider characteristic after characteristic while laying his heart bare before an omniscient God. Let him examine his own heart (in which he ought not to be easy on himself), and make a righteous judgment concerning himself. He ought not to attribute to himself that which his conscience testifies he does not have. He also ought not to deny that which his conscience testifies he does possess. Herein he must acknowledge that it did not come forth from his nature, but that it was wrought in him by the Spirit of God. If he then finds such matters within him in truth and if his heart agrees with the qualities mentioned in Scripture while God and his conscience also bear witness of the veracity of this, he must draw the conclusion that these promises have been made to him, and consequently, that God justifies him. Let him receive this Word as the voice of God -- which it truly is -- and let him thus hear the divine acquittal. Even if one has a greater or lesser degree of light, feeling, joy, or peace, the matter does not change, for truth is and remains truth. The qualifications are reality and the pronouncement of God the Judge is reality. One must then give God glory for His truth, verify his justification, rejoice in it, thank God for it, and thus cheerfully and in love, with godly fear and obedience, proceed in the way of the Lord, until one obtains the end of faith -- the salvation of his soul.

I stated that the presentation of the means unto justification would simultaneously serve the purpose of determining whether someone is justified. Whoever therefore perceives that he has attained to justification in the way of sorrow over sin, faith in Christ, and a desiring and seeking of both justification and sanctification by appointing the Word as judge, may perceive the genuineness of his graces and the veracity of the promises of God made to him. He who has not entered upon this way, however, and nevertheless imagines himself to be justified, his sins to have been forgiven, and himself to be an heir of eternal felicity, deceives himself most dreadfully -- and to his eternal destruction, if he does not repent.

First, let him therefore who has not been justified by God not justify himself, as the Pharisees did who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous" (Luke 18:9).

(1) Self-justification has no validity before God; not man himself, but God is Judge over him. Therefore man's entire salvation is dependent upon God's pronouncement, and not his own. "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Corinthians 10:18). Poor man! How will you profit from your own acquittal if God condemns you?

(2) One will be prevented from seeking true justification when one justifies himself without reason upon a false foundation, or upon presumptuously laying claim to good grounds; this will cause him to go peacefully to hell, for Christ did "not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13). Therefore, do not deceive yourself in this matter, for in doing so you will deceive yourself to your eternal destruction. It will not help then to say, "We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets" (Luke 13:26); "Have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works" (Matthew 7:23). For then will He "profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me" (Matthew 7:23). A Final Exhortation to Justified Souls

Secondly, do not condemn yourself if God justifies you. It is abhorrent to God to justify the ungodly and to condemn the righteous (Proverbs 17:15). The unconverted are guilty of the first when they justify themselves, and the righteous would make themselves guilty of the second if they were to condemn themselves. It is not our desire that someone would force himself to consider himself justified. It is our desire, however, that someone who, in the presence of God -- the Holy Spirit also bearing witness -- is convinced to be a partaker of the frames and exercises mentioned above, would by faith acknowledge himself to be righteous. Let him not condemn himself if, perhaps, he does not find within himself a certain measure of light; that is, such a measure which would enable him to answer all objections, one for one, as well as a certain measure of feeling, peace, and sanctification. He ought not to do so since he, in the meantime, does and is able to see the truth of his justification.

(1) To do so would be to deny the work of the Holy Ghost, contradicting Him to His face.

(2) This would be a despising of the merits of Christ. Would He have suffered so much for you and should you not acknowledge this -- yes, should you deny it?

(3) To do this would be to bring anguish upon yourself, since the Lord does not cause you grief. You yourself are the cause by giving in to your unbelief, so that your life is consumed by sorrow and by many years of sighing. The Lord speaks peace, but you do not want to receive it unless the Lord first makes you to be such and such. However, "who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered" (Job 9:4). Why are you a tyrant to yourself and cause yourself grief and sorrow? Believe the Word of God, acknowledge the work of grace in you, and you will thus be established and run your course with joy.

Thirdly, a justified soul may not yield to sin by reason of Christ already having made satisfaction for him.

(1) This is contrary to the nature of a justified soul, and of justification (cf. Psalms 130:4; 1 John 3:3).

(2) This is an abomination, for to do so is "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 1:4).

(3) It would give opportunity for slander and to encourage the enemies to slanderously state that our doctrine makes men careless and ungodly, as if we were saying, "Let us do evil, that good may come" (Romans 3:8).

(4) It is contrary to the Word of God which conjoins justification and sanctification inseparably (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Therefore, those who believe in God must be careful to promote good works; these are the things which are good and profitable for men (Titus 3:8).

Fourthly, a justified soul, every day anew ought to endeavor to be justified. This is not to suggest that he could fall away from his justified state, but because the voice of divine acquittal in God's Word, and by His Spirit to the heart, is so sweet; and sins, which time and again come in between, also necessitate justification. A justified soul must always acknowledge sin as sin. Sin remains sin committed against God and makes the sinner subject to guilt and eternal condemnation. Even

though Christ has made satisfaction for him and as Advocate presents this satisfaction directly to God, and even though the Word justifies the believer who time and again falls and arises, I maintain nevertheless that sin retains its nature. A justified soul must see and feel his sin also as such, and thus acknowledge himself to be condemnable as far as he himself is concerned. He must thereupon confess his sins, by faith receive the merits of Christ unto justification, and thus be justified in reference to a given sin. This is the practice of the saints, this we are commanded to do, and upon this the promise of forgiveness is made, all of which has been shown above. Therefore take heed to your actions, be on guard against defiling that which is good, and beware of the sinfulness of evil. This will humble the soul, exalt grace all the more, make Jesus' merits all the more precious, and cause him to walk all the more circumspectly. Such a soul who continually desires to be justified, will live in a more abiding peace with God; whereas another who ignores this will be more disturbed and troubled, be further from God, and be more negligent in his walk of life. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Psalms 107:43); "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein" (Hosea 14:9); "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity" (Proverbs 10:29).

040. Chapter 35: The Adoption of Children

----- CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE ----- The Adoption of Children [Ephesians 1:5] In the previous chapter we have shown that justification does not only consist in acquittal from guilt and punishment, but also in the bestowal of the right unto eternal life and in God's child being declared an heir of eternal salvation. To this end Christ was placed under the law, "... made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). The apostle speaks of this in Romans 8:15-17, where we read, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Thus, justification includes spiritual sonship, and this we shall presently discuss.

Justification Includes Spiritual Sonship First, many are referred to as children of God, and this from a variety of perspectives.

(1) It is true of Christ according to His divine nature by eternal generation. "... Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (Psalms 2:7).

(2) It is true of the angels and Adam, and, in him (by reason of creation), for the entire human race. "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7); "... Adam ... the son of God" (Luke 3:38); "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us" (Malachi 2:10).

(3) It is true of governments, since God has appointed them to reflect His dominion. "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High" (Psalms 82:6).

(4) It is true of believers by reason of adoption (cf. Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:4-5). "And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters" (2 Corinthians 6:18). It is of them we shall presently speak. The manner in which believers are children of God is by way of adoption as children. Occasionally this is understood to refer to the glory of the revelation of the children of God after this life. "... waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). John has this in view in 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." The word "now" does not imply a contrast with the Old Testament, for believers were children of God then as well as in the New Testament. Rather, the word "now" is a reference to the future glory of which they will become partakers when Christ will be revealed in the day of judgment. We are here not referring to this adoption, but to adoption as children in this life. This is true as well in the Old Testament. "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption" (Romans 9:4). This adoption was not by reason of an external covenant, for this did not exist. Rather, this was by reason of the covenant of grace which had been made with Abraham and his seed. Many of them, however, were unfaithful to this covenant -- just as many in the New Testament are likewise unfaithful, each being personally responsible for this. This is also true in the New Testament. The Gentiles are now partakers of the adoption of children. "... that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians

4:5). We are the Gentiles, and it is the objective of the apostle to show the advantage which the Gentiles have received due to the coming and declaration of Christ: They who previously were strangers of this, did not know God, and served idols, became partakers of the adoption of children as well as the Jews. The latter, under the loving custody, direction, and guidance of the ceremonies were directed to Him -- ceremonies which in the clearest possible way proclaimed the coming Savior (who was only promised at that time) in all His suffering, as well as the efficacy of this suffering. Thus, the Gentiles also became partakers of the adoption of children, as well as they who then believed in the Savior. They were God's children, addressed Him lovingly with the name of Father, and did not need to stand from afar but had access to the throne of grace. They were not merely satisfied to have Canaan as if that were the earnest and type of heaven, but rejoiced in salvation itself as their inheritance.

Regarding this sonship we shall consider three matters: 1) its excellency, 2) who the partakers of it are, and 3) what their obligations are. The Excellency of the Origin of Spiritual Sonship The excellency of the children of God is so great that it exceeds all comprehension. This may be known in some measure by considering 1) their origin and state, 2) the manner in which they became children of God, and 3) the privileges they have.

First, the origin and state of a child of God is more excellent than anything imaginable. To be the child of a king is a great thing in this world. Many boast of the fact that they consider themselves among the descendants of kings and of great men of the world; some pagans boasted of being descendants of the gods. What then must it be to be a child of God Himself who has all glory within Himself, is above all praise, and has made everything? Everything belongs to Him; all creatures and all kings of the earth must be at His service and His beck, and must obey Him to the minutest detail; He accomplishes all that He wills, is nothing but love and goodness; and all that He is, He is for His children. They are of divine descent. Let kings and princes boast of their descent; let nobility, by way of a long succession of noble ancestors, ascend to generations of higher origin; and let families who are now poor and of low estate be encouraged by the fact that their ancestors at one time were noble -- all this is at best but an earthly honor. Oh children of God, you must, however, consider your descent to be from God Himself, not only as Creator (which you have in common with everyone else, and which can only cause us to be ashamed, considering that we have fallen away from this majestic God, have thus become His enemies who are worthy to be punished by Him), but that you have been adopted as children by Him and appointed to be the objects of His fatherly goodness!

Furthermore, to be children of God means that their nature is exalted and glorious -- yes, they partake of the divine nature. Children of noble parents frequently degenerate and then boast in vain of the courageous deeds and titles of their parents. However, God's children remain what they are: "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Something is to be found in them which is exalted above the realm of the world, its riches, honor, and status, and whatever else may be in the world. They have a more excellent, princely, and free spirit (Psalms 51:12). There is something heavenly and divine in them, so that they consider earthly things to be too insignificant to esteem, give attention to, desire, or revere. They have in view that which is high, exalted, and heavenly; of this they speak, this they seek, and they govern their activities with heavenly wisdom. The fact that worldly-minded people consider this to be nothing but imagination and daydreaming, instead considering that which is of the world to be only and really true, essential, and glorious, they only

demonstrate thereby that they are children of this world whose portion is in this life. The children of God acknowledge them to be such, and view them as but foolish and contemptible. They know that visible things are but temporary and do not give satisfaction, that in and of themselves they are to be esteemed as nothing; whereas that which is invisible is essential, satisfying, and endures eternally. For this reason they are called, "the saints that are in the earth, and the excellent" (Psalms 16:3), and "the saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:18).

Secondly, the excellency of their state is also evident from the contrast between them and others. If all men were partakers of the excellent state of the children of God, it would appear that, due to such generality, the adoration and joy of such a state would be somewhat diminished; however, God does not translate all men into this state. The entire multitude of men remain in their sinful, polluted, and despicable condition, and there are but few who are exalted to this glorious state. For this reason they excel all the more, and in glory they exceed all glorious, rich, and prominent princes and kings. A godly beggar is a thousand times more exalted and glorious than the greatest monarch who has ever been in the world. The greatest men in the world have respect for the most insignificant but godly servant, since they are acquainted with his nature and perceive that he towers above them. They cannot commit evil deeds against them unless they first do battle against themselves and banish the esteem they have for them in their hearts. And only then will they oppose them because they cannot tolerate that such an insignificant person towers and has dominion over them. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour" (Proverbs 12:26).

Thirdly, by comparing what they once were to what they are now, their excellency stands out even more. Formerly they were the same as others: "of your father the devil" (John 8:44), "a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters" (Isaiah 1:4), "children of disobedience ... the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:2-3), and "cursed children" (2 Peter 2:14). If the latter were annihilated, so that they would be delivered from eternal pain; if such, in separation from God, were yet to enjoy some quietude and have some diversion, as one would cast a piece of bread to a dog, this would be great happiness for them. To become the children of God, however, is something which exceeds all comprehension. In comparison with his low estate, it was an exaltation for David to become the son-in-law of a king. "Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 18:23). The more base the condition of God's child was by nature, the loftier it is to be in the state of being a child of God, and the more glorious it is to be delivered from this misery and to be exalted to such glory. From being a child of the devil to becoming a child of God, from being a child of wrath to becoming the object of God's favor, from a child of condemnation to becoming an heir of all the promises and a possessor of all blessings, and to be exalted from the greatest misery to the highest felicity -- this is something which exceeds all comprehension and all adoration. The Excellency of the Manner in Which Sinners are Translated into Spiritual Sonship

Secondly, the excellency of God's children is evident from the manner in which they have been translated into this state. They neither became recipients of this by natural birth, nor by reason of wisdom and courage; they neither purchased it with their money, nor did they obtain it with their good will and virtuousness, but they have been translated into this state of sonship as follows:

(1) God has regenerated them by His Holy Spirit. In the human realm a person is a child of someone from whom he originates -- from whom he has his life by way of procreation. In like

manner a believer is a child of God since his spiritual life originates from God. "Of His own will begat He us" (James 1:18); "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God ... which were born, not of blood ... but of God" (John 1:12-13). Since therefore their spiritual being and life originates from God, they are the children of God by regeneration.

(2) They are children by reason of adoption. God decreed from eternity that in time He would adopt them from the human race to be His children and heirs of eternal life. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:5). According to that decree He actually adopts the elect -- each at his own time. "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption" (Romans 8:15), "that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:5). They lay in their blood, cast away due to the abominableness of their soul, and no eye had pity upon them. God, however, viewing them in pity, said to them while lying in their blood, "Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live" (Ezekiel 16:6). Behold, this is grace only -- free and inexpressible grace.

(3) God has betrothed them to His Son by way of a spiritual marriage, by which they are united to Him in one Spirit. Concerning this betrothal we read: "And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies" (Hosea 2:19). In the Song of Solomon the Lord Jesus therefore frequently calls them His bride: "My sister, My spouse" (Song of Solomon 4:9-12); and they call Him their Beloved: "This is my beloved, and this is my friend" (Song of Solomon 5:16). By reason of this marriage they mutually belong to each other. "My beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16). As two become one flesh in marriage, they likewise become one with Christ. "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17). As the father of the bridegroom also becomes the father of the bride by reason of marriage, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ likewise becomes the Father of believers. "Hearken, O daughter! ... the King's daughter is all glorious within" (Psalms 45:10; Psalms 45:13). He is also her brother, for He generally refers to her as sister in the Song of Solomon. And she in turn says, "O that Thou wert as my brother" (Song of Solomon 8:1). They therefore have but one Father, and thus the Lord Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17).

(4) They are children by reason of being united to the Son of God as members of one body (Ephesians 1:23). Since the Head is the Son of God, this is likewise true for the members, who, together with the Head, constitute one body.

Consider these four matters simultaneously, and upon proper reflection, it will cause a believer, with adoration, to be in ecstasy and to say: "I, who like other men lay in my sins; who was subject to the wrath of God; who was hateful, abominable, and intolerable -- I have been known of God from eternity, have been ordained in His decree to be His child, and in time have been snatched from hell, and have been adopted as a child, as a child of that great God! I, who am but despised and maimed, have been betrothed to the Son of God -- and this with the approbation of His Father and by reason of the incomprehensible love of the Son! I, who was dead in sins and trespasses, have been quickened by the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit! I have been born of God! This is incomprehensible and transcends all adoration. However, even though it is marvelous in my eyes, it nevertheless is the Lord's doing. Therefore I ought to rejoice over all this honor and glory, over

such love and benevolence. I shall therefore love Him in return and magnify His Name to all eternity." The Excellency of the Privileges of Spiritual Sonship

Thirdly, the excellency of being a child of God is evident from the privileges they have. They are so manifold, that they cannot be enumerated, and each one is so glorious and so delightful that it cannot be expressed. Let us but consider a few of these privileges.

(1) God cherishes them as His children with a fatherly love. Oh wondrous love! God, who is love, sets His infinite love in motion to cherish with love such persons who in themselves are hateful, despicable, and condemnable. This love is not generated by the desirability of the object, but it originates within Himself, being desirous to love and to love specific individuals. Observe the following concerning this love: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3); "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us" (Ephesians 2:4). This love is so great, vehement, and incomprehensible that the Lord Jesus Himself exclaimed in amazement, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Love was the origin of eternal election; love sent Jesus into the world to be their Surety; love drew them out of the world to Him, translating them into the kingdom of His love; love radiates continually upon them; love preserves them; love brings them to glory; and love engenders a perfect union with, and love for, Him. This would not be credible if God Himself had not said this. Since God does say this, however, we now wish to believe and acknowledge this, rejoice in this, and be engaged in adoration. We wish to give Him glory, and being ignited by His love, to love Him in return. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

(2) God has His eye upon them as a Father, to keep them so that no evil will befall them. "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore" (Psalms 121:3-8). How safely may such a child rest and trust under the shadow of His wings! He need neither fear nor be anxious, for the Lord cares for him (1 Peter 5:7). "I the Lord do keep it [the vineyard]; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isaiah 27:3); "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30). He who touches one of them touches the apple of His eyes -- yes, He even rebukes kings for their sake. Oh, how blessed is he who is a child of God, who due to fatherly love, is the object of the Lord's protection!

(3) Since He preserves them, He cares for them in all that they need according to body and soul, so that they need not be concerned as to what they shall eat and drink and wherewithal they shall be clothed, for their heavenly Father knows what they stand in need of. He who feeds the fowls of the air and clothes the lilies of the field with more glory than even a Solomon, will He not provide food and clothing for His dear children? The Lord Jesus impresses this upon us in this convincing manner in Matthew 6:25. The apostle does likewise: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). He will feed them with their appointed portion of meat, even if the ravens would have to bring it to them. They thus need not be distrustful nor fearful, but

may freely say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Psalms 23:1;Psalms 23:5-6).

(4) God has compassion and pity with them in all their bodily and spiritual ailments. It pleases the Lord to lead His children to heaven through many adversities and tribulations, in order that they may thus learn to know and feel their sins, be kept humble, be weaned from the world, be stirred up to prayer, be motivated to trust in Him, attentively acknowledge His help and His preceding grace, give all things into His hands and be satisfied with His government. "Thou hast seen it: for Thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with Thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto Thee; Thou art the helper of the fatherless" (Psalms 10:14). As the Lord remembered Noah when he floated in the ark upon the waters of the flood (Genesis 8:1), and as the Lord attentively observed the oppression of His people in Egypt (Exodus 3:7), in like manner He looks in compassion upon His children in all the trials which oppress them. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Psalms 103:13); "Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:20). For this reason He refers to Himself as "the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isaiah 54:10). The heartfelt compassion of someone may refresh a destitute person, albeit that he cannot help him; it is, however, as if he carries part of his cross. It refreshes His children to a far greater degree when they may believe and see that God has mercy upon them in truth, doing so out of love to them, and with a zeal to help them as only He is able to do. Unless it would serve their best interest to be exercised somewhat in a cross, He would also be able to either preserve them from tribulations or to deliver them immediately from it. Even if He does not immediately help them, He nevertheless governs matters in such a manner that it will be subservient to their best interest and to their salvation. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28).

(5) Since they are children, God hears and answers them as their loving Father. As children they take refuge to their Father in perplexity and by reason of this relationship they call Him, "Abba, Father!" In an intimate manner they bring their needs before Him, and with tearful eyes they tell Him what their sorrow is. They cry out, "My Father, the cross is so heavy and so very painful for me; it is of such long duration and I do not see my way through. Thou art able to help me, however, for Thou hast promised it and Thou dost indeed have compassion with me. Therefore, my Father, help, support, and deliver me!" The Lord looks upon such children in love, and is pleased with their childlike complaints and their taking refuge to Him. He will most certainly answer them and deliver them at His time and in His manner. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke 11:13); "How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him" (Matthew 7:11).

(6) Since they are children, they are free. "Then are the children free" (Matthew 17:26); "But Jerusalem which is above is free" (Galatians 4:31); "So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (Galatians 4:31).

[1] They are free from the covenant of works. "If the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband" (Romans 7:6). Likewise, the believer is also free from the first husband, the law. "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held" (Romans 7:6).

[2] They are also free from the old ceremonial administration. "Ye have been called unto liberty" (Galatians 5:13). [3] They are free from the power of Satan, who will neither have power nor dominion over them as he did prior to their conversion (2 Timothy 2:26).

[4] They are free from the dominion of sin. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. But now being made free from sin ..." (Romans 6:14; Romans 6:22).

[5] They are free from eternal condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). The truth has made them free (John 8:36), and the Son has made them free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). The Holy Spirit gives them a free disposition of heart, so that they find themselves to be free from everything, and, being free, walk in this liberty. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17); "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Galatians 5:13; "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (Galatians 5:13). They who have tasted the bitterness of slavery will know best what a glorious privilege this is. The apostle demonstrates this glorious reality. "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

(7) Since they are children, they are also heirs of God; that is, of all the temporal, spiritual, and eternal benefits of the covenant of grace. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). What an unspeakable inheritance this is! They may indeed exclaim, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Psalms 16:5-6); "Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!" (Psalms 31:19).

They are heirs of the earth. When God created our first father Adam, He appointed him to be lord over everything. "Replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Man, having sinned, has been deprived of this dominion; God, however, having restored His elect again in Christ, by renewal makes them partakers of all things. "How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Romans 8:32); "... all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours" (1 Corinthians 3:21-22).

Objection: The godly generally have the smallest portion in this world. How can all things then be theirs? And in what manner do they have dominion over everything?

Answer: A king owns his kitchen utensils, even though he neither uses nor controls them. The son of the king is proprietor by reason of his claim upon the crown, even though he does not as yet possess the kingdom. A landlord owns his rented land, even though he does not use it; such is also the case here.

(1) God's children are proprietors of all things; all things are theirs. They do not trespass upon the property of another man; they eat their own food, and neither do they have borrowed clothes nor live in the homes of other people, nor do they use the animals of others. They neither see a foreign sun, nor do they live by foreign air; it is all theirs. They have a claim to it all, and their Father has given it to them. Even though the world considers this proprietorship to be but imaginary, it is nevertheless the truth. Others may have much and extensive property; however, they have it as slaves who carry the goods of their master for his children, and as soldiers to protect their paymasters. The ungodly ought to thank the godly for being alive and that they may have a crumb for all their activity, for if there were no longer godly persons, they would all be in hell; they live from the goods of the godly. God permits them to use these in His common goodness, and the godly have no less for it.

(2) All that the godly may own and use, they may have in their Father's favor. Whatever exists unwillingly serves the ungodly; it all groans against them (Romans 8:20; Romans 8:22). All that is used by the godly, however, will serve the purpose for which it was made.

(3) Whatever exists, exists in subservience to them. The sun, moon, and stars are there to illuminate them and to cause them to rejoice; the earth with her fullness is there to provide food, clothing and enjoyment for them. The bird in the air, the animal upon the land, and the fish in the water exist for them. The devil in hell must serve them, even if it were to sanctify them (2 Corinthians 12:7), albeit that this is not His objective. All the activities and labors of the ungodly are in the end subservient to the godly for soul and body. The angels themselves (oh, wondrous goodness!) "are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). Behold, God's children are thus frequently "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10). The Lord Jesus through His poverty has made them rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Therefore, children of God, consider yourselves as having such an exalted position and as being so rich; however, you must know that this is but an added gift, and is nothing compared to the spiritual goods which you possess and anticipate.

(1) Since you are master over all things, with what princely spirit you ought to consider everything as being subject to you. You ought not to permit anything -- money, food, men, honor, or whatever it may be -- to bring you under its power, have dominion over you, divert your affections, and thus bring you in subjection to it.

(2) Since you are master and possessor of the world, why are you so filled with care and anxiety, fearing that some day you will yet be in want? Why are you so busy in gathering money and goods, since they are all yours -- all that has or has not been gathered by you?

(3) Since you are master over all things, use all things as proprietor. Make use of heaven and earth in this way; view all in this way, and delight yourself in that which you see, hear, smell, and taste. See to it, however, that you conduct yourself as a good-natured master and refrain from tyranny, utilizing and governing in this manner whatever the Lord gives you for your use -- be it your animals, your servants, and all who are under you or labor for you.

(4) Since you are master over everything, take special care that you do not use unlawful means to acquire your possessions, but receive everything from the hand of your Father, however much or

little He may be pleased to give you for your use; it will be sufficient for you as you use the means which He has prescribed for you. An only child is heir of all the goods that are in the house of his parents. If, however, he removes something from this inheritance contrary to the will of his parents, he will anger them; such is also the case here. You may freely eat from all the trees in the garden of this world; however, be on guard for that one tree called sin. Be satisfied with that which your Father bestows upon you. In all things He will give you that which suffices; if it be not according to your foolish desire, it will be to the benefit of your health. Therefore you may say with liberty and in faith, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalms 23:1).

(5) Since you are master over all things, do not forget your humble origin, so that the following proverb be not applicable to you: When nothing becomes something, something no longer knows itself. [Note: The Dutch proverb reads: "Als niet komt tot iet, dan kent iet zich zelve niet."] Know that you are a sinner, not worthy of receiving anything. Know that the Lord has granted you all only out of pure goodness and has richly given you all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17). Since you have received everything, do not boast as if you did not receive it, but had all this from yourself. This is an added benefit.

Secondly, they are heirs of a possession which is far more excellent than heaven and earth with all its creatures. They are heirs of all the benefits of the covenant of grace enumerated in chapter 16. Concerning this the apostle says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). This inheritance consists in sound wisdom (Proverbs 2:7), durable riches and righteousness (Proverbs 8:18), and a kingdom which the Lord Jesus has appointed unto them (Luke 22:29). It is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4), a glorious inheritance which is "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18). It is an eternal inheritance; "that ... they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). God Himself is their inheritance: "The Lord is my portion" (Lamentations 3:24). It is incomprehensible and inexpressible what this is. No one can comprehend this unless he has enjoyed in some measure what it will be when the soul, with full satisfaction, will enjoy God in an immediate sense. Of this we can say nothing else but, Oh, how great this is!

Consider all this together and on the one hand cast your eyes upon your own abominable, hateful, and condemnable condition, and on the other hand upon your sonship. Focus upon its excellency as having its origin in God, the King of kings, and as being a partaker of the divine nature, which is the portion of so few. Consider and attentively reflect upon the fact that you have become a child by adoption, by betrothal to Christ, by regeneration. Consider the glorious privileges which are therefore yours: to be loved by God, to be preserved by God, to be cared for in all things, to have the compassion of God in all tribulations, to be heard of God in prayer, and to be an heir of God. Our understanding is too small to perceive the magnitude of all this; it is impossible to fathom this; in adoration one must exclaim, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance" (Psalms 33:12); "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord" (Deuteronomy 33:29). The Marks of Sonship A believer will very readily approve of this, even if he is weak or just at the beginning; it will cause his heart to yearn for these matters with desire. However, it will also oppress him somewhat because he fears he is not, and perhaps will never be, a partaker of the adoption of children. It will therefore

be necessary that we present to you the nature of a child of God in its essence, beginning disposition, and affections or motions. In doing so, an unconverted person who readily imagines himself to be a child of God, will be able to see that he is not a child of God; and one whose faith is feeble and who is fearful that he is not a child of God, may be able to see that he is a child indeed. In the previous chapter we have shown that one can be assured of his justification, that is, both of forgiveness and of his right to this blessed inheritance. We have shown that he must endeavor to be assured of this, and that, being delivered from fear, he should as a child serve and honor God with love and gladness. To that end compare yourself with these marks, and by way of comparison determine what your state is.

First, one obtains the adoption of children by faith. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12); "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). Therefore, do you perceive that upon a sensible view of your sinful and condemnable condition, you have taken refuge to, and with many prayers and supplications continue to take refuge to Jesus Christ? Have you taken refuge to Him out of a heartfelt desire to be reconciled to God and to be in this state of sonship; to live in communion with God, in peace of conscience, in love to God, and in fear before Him; to attain to the disposition and exercise of sanctification; to battle continually against sin; to be preserved in your faith; and to enjoy eternal felicity? Have you thus taken refuge to Jesus Christ, knowing Him to be a complete Surety who is fully qualified to save, as One who in His goodness calls and invites you by means of the gospel, as One who offers Himself so that He may communicate this fullness to you, and as One who is true and Almighty? I repeat, have you taken refuge to Him, received Him, surrendered yourself to Him, and are you conscious of all these motions (of which you can be conscious if you but take notice of them)? You may then conclude as follows: I believe, and since my faith also pertains to sonship, since faith unites one with Jesus, the Son of God, and causes one also to be betrothed to Him, and since there is the promise that believers receive power to be the sons of God, I thus perceive that I am a child of God by faith. He who draws this conclusion from the Word of God and perceives this to be in harmony with his heart, (determining what its desires are by means of the Word), acts wisely, even though he does not taste as yet the glory and sweetness of such a state, or be it that he also does not yet perceive the sealing operation of the Holy Spirit, thoroughly removing all doubts and fear. Even he who is strong in faith -- and thus he who possesses and perceives the truth of these matters -- must put aside and disregard many things which as yet come forth from his heart.

Secondly, spiritual sonship may be recognized by the bearing of God's image. A father generates a son according to his image; a human being brings forth a human being, and a child has the same human nature as the parents. The Lord likewise regenerates His children according to His image (cf. Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24). He makes them partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and "followers of God, as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1). If a believer experiences that he, who at one time was darkness, may now be light in the Lord, has enlightened eyes of understanding, and knows the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit (even though this light, to his shame, reveals to him the sinfulness of his heart) -- if he perceives the loveliness of spiritual life with God (whereby the soul is stimulated in its desires), despises the vanity and despicableness of all that the natural man deems to be glorious and desirable -- if his heart is united with the will of God and it is his delight and desire only to do this will in thoughts, words, and deeds, doing so in love, fear,

and obedience -- if the desires of the heart go out toward God in order to have fellowship with Him continually, to be pleased with, rejoice, and delight oneself in the Lord, and there is a desire to be delivered from sin -- if a believer perceives this within himself in truth, he most certainly bears the image of God, as Scripture states that the image of God consists in this. As long as we are on this side of eternity, however, the image of God will be imperfect in man; the best among God's children has but a small beginning, and still has much of the old man. This engenders the battle between the Spirit and the flesh and its lusts (Galatians 5:17), and a praying against sin, and for sanctification. Thus this strife yields proof that a person bears the image of God, for if all were flesh, there would be no opposition and therefore no strife. Instead, there would be peace in the enjoyment of one's earthly pleasures. If you therefore perceive the principle of God's image to be found in you in truth, you may and must proceed with the conclusion that you are a child of God and an heir of eternal life. I am speaking here of the veracity rather than the degree of this matter. The third mark qualifying one as a child of God consists in the inner motions which only belong to a child of God. In order to show to you what they are, we shall compare a child of God with a child of nature, particularly in respect to love for parents, brothers, and sisters. As God loves them with an infinite, eternal, and immutable love, this love also ignites in God's children, who are now radiated with divine love, reciprocal love. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). This love is a veritable and infallible mark of sonship. "But if any man love God, the same is known of Him" (1 Corinthians 8:3). This love manifested itself continually in David throughout the Psalms. "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength" (Psalms 18:1); "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice" (Psalms 116:1). Paul was strongly motivated by the love of God. "For the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). Yes, anyone who has faith will manifest this love. "... faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). The Analogy Between Natural and Spiritual Sonship

Between parents and children there is a love which the Greek called *storgé*; this is a word which we can only translate properly by way of description. It is an innate love, an inner inclination, which spontaneously issues forth from the heart; it can only exist between parents and children, and cannot go forth toward others. A stepmother can love her stepchildren very much; however, says she, "I cannot give them a motherly heart (that is this *storgee*)." This love unites them as parents as is manifested in this relationship by a sense of belonging, much friendliness, care, and benevolence.

Natural children delight to be with their parents. A small child, when seeing the mother leave, will cry after her. If he misses the mother, he will look around and seek for her; if he does not find her, he will cry and be sorrowful. When he sees the mother again, he will run to her and fall upon her lap with laughter and happiness. If something occurs by which he is frightened, he will run to the mother, entrust himself to her lap, and be without fear. He is not concerned about food or clothing, but expects this from the parents. Even if the child has a meager portion at home, he would rather have dry bread at home than to enjoy all sorts of delicacies with strangers in the absence of the mother. He rejoices when the mother commands him to get something, and will execute her order with joy; he will be delighted if he perceives that the mother is pleased with this. He has a filial fear for the parents and does not wish to anger them. If he has been naughty and the parents maintain somewhat of a distance, the child will not be able to bear this. He will not cease to run to them, plead with them, and supplicate them until he perceives by renewal the former familiarity. If the children are older, they cannot bear to hear someone speak a dishonoring word about their

parents; it grieves them at their heart and they will defend them with all their might. The love of a child is also manifested toward the brothers and sisters; he is one with them, finds joy in being with them, whereas he very easily separates himself from strangers. Everyone knows that all of this is true for children.

Consider all that has been said and apply it to the spiritual. You will perceive that God's children have the same nature. If someone does not perceive this within himself, let him rest assured that he is not a child of God. If, however, someone truthfully perceives this nature within himself in a spiritual sense, he has reason to conclude that he is a child of God. Apply this disposition of a child to God's children, and you will then observe that Scripture states the very same about God's children.

(1) A child of God, aside from desiring the tender love of God, desires the continual presence of God. "But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:28). If the Lord hides Himself from the soul, she will be troubled. "My Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone: my soul failed when He spake" (Song of Solomon 5:6); "Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled" (Psalms 30:7). If the Lord departs, she will cry after Him. "All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord" (1 Samuel 7:2). The soul runs after Him and cleaves unto Him. "My soul followeth hard after Thee" (Psalms 63:8). And if she must miss His presence, she will sit alone and mourn "as a sparrow alone upon the house top" (Psalms 102:7). "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me" (Lamentations 1:16). During such desertion she thinks upon the days of old, and this softens her heart, arousing within her a strong desire for the former fellowship. "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me" (Job 29:2-5); "Lord, where are Thy former lovingkindnesses" (Psalms 89:49). Then the soul will cry out with David, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God" (Psalms 42:2). If the Lord by renewal appears to her, she will cry out for joy and say, "O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation" (Isaiah 12:1-2). And even if it pleases the Lord not to favor her with sweetness and comfort, she nevertheless wishes to remain near to Him, even if she would die of hunger while yearning for, waiting for, and crying after Him. In spite of all this she does not wish to depart from Him and entertain herself with the delicacies of the world. Even then the soul will say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalms 73:25-26).

(2) Like a child, the soul is humble before the countenance of her Father and perceives herself as a worm and as one not worthy of notice. In this frame she bows before Him and submits to Him as a weaned child. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalms 131:1-2).

(3) The soul of a child of God is willing to do the Lord's will; that is her joy and delight. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness" (Psalms 110:3); "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22); "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him" (2 Corinthians 5:9). If she is overcome by sin, it will grieve her in the innermost recesses of her soul, and she cannot be satisfied until she, by renewal, has been cleansed by the blood of Christ and once more has peace with God. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid" (Psalms 32:3-5); "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Psalms 51:2-3). And if the Lord receives her again after her fall into sin, and causes her to experience His grace and comfort, her love toward God will be ignited all the more vehemently. "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice" (Psalms 116:1).

(4) All these texts confirm the love of God's child toward God; and as they love God, they likewise love the children of God. "Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1). This is an evidence of being a child of God, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). The godly know the difference between a child of God and a child of the world. The latter are despised in their eyes; however, they honor the first (Psalms 15:4). God's children do not love each other because they have such a pleasant character, are of such a humble disposition, or are faithful; it is also not because one need not fear to be deceived by them, or because they are civil and religious. Instead, they recognize that God's children love Jesus and that Jesus loves them. It is for this reason that their heart goes out after them and unites itself with them, in order that together they may bear witness to Jesus and His cause. Their desire is "to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight" (Psalms 16:3); "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts" (Psalms 119:63). Together with them, they desire to be both exalted as well as humbled, and with them wish to endure one and the same circumstances. "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Hebrews 11:25-26).
The Need to Examine One's Self Whether He Is a Child of God

We have thus briefly presented to you the nature of a child of God, in order that it would provide both converted and unconverted with a suitable mirror by which they can perceive what their spiritual state is. Consider now the three marks mentioned earlier together, and if it is your desire to know whether or not you are a child of God, bring yourself into the presence of an omniscient God, and compare yourself with these marks. Then listen to what your conscience has to say.

If a person has been convinced that he possesses neither faith nor the image of God, and has not the nature of a child of God, but has been convinced of the contrary, let him be persuaded that he is not a child of God. Let him dwell for some time upon this realization and furthermore reflect upon the fact that God is then not His Father, nor is the Lord Jesus his Savior; and that he is neither a partaker of the promises which are written in the Bible, nor of eternal salvation. Oh, that the Lord would impress this condition upon his heart! Let him furthermore reflect upon the fact that he is a child of the devil (how dreadful!), and a child of wrath, that is, the object of God's wrath. He should consider that all the threats and curses which are recorded in the Word of God are applicable to

him, and that if he were to die that way, he has nothing else to expect than eternal condemnation. If there were any historical faith, if any attention were given to the natural conscience, this condition, along with the conviction of being in this condition, ought to bring on distress and cause him to frighten and tremble and to inquire whether there is still a means by which to be delivered. If you are sincere in this, there is still hope that from a child of the devil you may become a child of God -- from an heir of condemnation, an heir of eternal salvation. This hope lies in taking refuge to the Lord Jesus and in receiving Him by faith, for those will be given the power to become the sons of God (John 1:12). They have the promises that they will be saved (Acts 16:31). On the other hand, if someone has been convinced by the marks mentioned earlier that his heart is and functions as has been stated, he may not neglect to conclude that he is a child of God. He may not neglect to impress this conclusion upon his heart: "Now are we the sons of God " (1 John 3:2). He may not neglect to rejoice in this his blessed state. If he does not do so, he sins against the Lord, not acknowledging the great love of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). Such a person also does not acknowledge the inexpressible privileges of which he is a partaker. Can there be anything more glorious and blessed for a person than to have been eternally predestinated to be a child of God, to have been adopted in time, to have been betrothed to Christ, to have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, to be loved by God the Father, to be kept by Him as a Father, to be cared for by Him in all things, to be the object of His pity and compassion, to be always heard in all things which one desires in Christ's Name, and to be an heir of God, the world, and eternal felicity -- all of this being true for one who is so sinful and miserable in himself? And consider then that he belongs to the few who are partakers of it. Could one think upon or desire anything more lofty than this? If not, why then does your heart not rejoice in all these blessed realities? "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds" (Psalms 149:5). This is gratitude and is pleasing to God; to such He will continue to reveal Himself. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalms 37:4).

(1) See to it that you do not ascribe to your nature the dispositions and the motions of the heart -- outlined in the marks mentioned above -- which you perceive to be within yourself, as if your nature could bring forth such a disposition and such motions by way of external illumination. That would be a manifestation of pride and would rob God of His work which He alone has wrought by an almighty power within you.

(2) See to it that you are not kept from determining what your state is by reason of the magnitude of the matter and your unworthiness -- particularly when you perceive the root of the matter to be in you. That is a manifestation of pride, for it would be as if you do not want to receive anything unless you would be worthy of it, and as if the gift would have to be commensurate with your worthiness.

Know that God gives His children everything above and beyond, and contrary to, what they deserve; the best of them is as unworthy as the least among them, and it is all "to the praise of the glory of His grace " (Ephesians 1:6). Therefore, if God has and will bestow this upon you, then receive it all, doing so with much humility, and yet with gladness.

(3) See to it that your remaining corruptions do not cause you to deny the truth, for we know that God gives His children all things here only in part; in the best of them He allows many corruptions

to remain. We thus need not discern whether or not there are corruptions and how many there are, but whether truth, spirit, and life are to be found within. If such is the case, then, with Paul, make a distinction between your spiritual self and your carnal self and be assured that this feeble new man will certainly remain alive, and the old Adam will never put it to death. You may never draw a conclusion based upon your measure of sinfulness or spirituality, but your conclusion must be based on the truth. Therefore step over all obstacles, lift up your head out of all your failures, observe your bliss, and rejoice in it. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Php 4:4).
The Obligations of Spiritual Sonship

Those who are now convinced that they are the children of God are under obligation to conduct themselves as children of God. I am not putting a burden upon you which, due to its weight, would diminish your happiness; no, "It is joy to the just to do judgment" (Proverbs 21:15). The nature of a child of God spontaneously generates all that a child is obligated to do; it is his desire, his delight, and his life, and nothing grieves him, except that he does not serve his heavenly Father in a more pure and spiritual manner. Therefore since you are children, conduct yourself as children.

First, entrust everything pertaining to body and soul to your heavenly Father without fear and anxiety. "Therefore take no thought ... for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:31-32). Fear and anxiety are indicative of either doubting that one is a child of God (even when the heart is convinced of this and he is able to see the veracity of this in comparing himself with the Word of God), or it is a distrusting of God's power, His watchful care for you, or His goodness. How obviously this is contrary to God's Word! It can also be due to an inordinate desire and failure to deny one's own desires; that is, a desire to receive something in a given measure and at a given time. Such a sin ought not to be found with a child who ought to be subject to the will and wisdom of the Father. Therefore do battle against this, give it over into the hand of the Lord, and entrust it to Him. "Thou hast seen it: for Thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with Thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto Thee; Thou art the helper of the fatherless" (Psalms 10:14). Therefore you must let go and allow the Lord to care for it. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5); "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Glorify Him thus in His omnipotence, faithfulness, wisdom, and goodness, and you will experience that all will be well, and that the end will be peace.

Secondly, honor and fear your heavenly Father with a childlike heart. This most intimate and sweet relationship between God and His children may definitely not diminish their esteem for God. Rather, one ought to delight himself by continually reflecting upon and acknowledging the great glory of divine majesty. You must always know yourself in order to remain humble, have a holy reverence and respect for God, and display this before Him. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is My fear" (Malachi 1:6); "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17). As a child of your Father, request from the Lord all those things which are the focus of your good desires. This is the reason why the Lord does not fill His children to overflowing in this life, but permits much emptiness to be in them, so that they would make their childlike desires known to Him and beg of Him for fulfillment. Make all your needs known to your Father, that is, whatever presses you down, threatens you, and you long to have; do this as intimately as a child would ask his father. Do not

then tremblingly stand from afar, but rather, as a child, use the boldness which you have received and cry out, "Abba, Father." Pray for the fulfillment of your desires with sweet childlike supplications; that will be pleasing unto the Lord. He says: "Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song of Solomon 2:14); "Call upon Me in the day of trouble" (Psalms 50:15); "Open thy mouth wide" (Psalms 81:10); "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:19; Hebrews 10:22). In your approach, maintain the disposition of a child, and as you thus call, believe that He, as a Father, will answer you and grant you that which is needful and beneficial for you.

Reflect much upon Luke 11:11-13, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit (good gifts in Matthew 7:11) to them that ask Him?"

Fourthly, submit yourself as a child to the chastisement of the Lord as being the chastisement of a Father. The Lord deals with His children in a human fashion; when they misbehave, desecrate the Lord's institutions, and do not keep His commandments, He will visit their transgressions with the rod, their unrighteousness with plagues, and their body and soul with numerous afflictions. To flare up against this, to be grieved, to murmur, and immediately to say, "I am not a child of God, God is not my Father, God deals harshly with me; if He were my Father, He would have compassion on me; He would then deliver me from this grievous and especially this sinful cross" -- to speak thus does not befit the nature of an upright child. It is fitting for a child to be quiet, to humbly submit, and to say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Micah 7:9); "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Psalms 39:9). It behooves you to humble yourself under the rod, to permit yourself to be chastised, and as a child to fall under the rod. It behooves you to beg for grace, doing so not as a stranger, but as a child, clinging by faith to the fact that you are a child. Hope thus upon grace and deliverance according to the exhortation, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6). Therefore whatever you do, do not conduct yourself as a stranger during the heat of oppression -- which comes upon you as a trial -- as if something strange befell you (1 Peter 4:12). Know that this is the common way in which the Lord leads His children. Observe this in Hebrews 12:6-9, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons ... shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

Fifthly, obey God as your Father and endeavor to be like Him. Here we have the distinction between true and natural holiness, for the exhortation is as follows: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:14-15); "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1). Let the light and the new man within you, as well as your conformity to the divine nature, show themselves forth. Show forth that the goods of this world are not your portion, and that you have a better and more satisfying portion. Show forth your humility, meekness, moderation and your love, fear, and obedience toward God, as well as

your patient submission to His chastising hand -- so that men, seeing your light, may glorify God. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples" (John 15:8). Thus, with heart, words, and deeds, strive zealously for the honor of your Father, and He will manifest that this is pleasing to Him, and will permit you to experience more of His fatherly favor. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Php 2:15).

Sixthly, live as children in mutual love and peace, so that men may see that the Spirit dwelling in you differs from the one dwelling in them.

041. Chapter 36: Spiritual Peace

----- CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX -----

Spiritual Peace

Justification, that is, the forgiveness of sins, as well as the bestowal of the right to eternal life, engenders peace with God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The Use of the Word "Peace" in Scripture The word "peace" is used in a great variety of ways in the Word of God. In general it refers to every sort of felicity and prosperity; in a special sense it refers to either civil or spiritual peace. Civil peace refers to the tranquil coexistence of authorities, cities, families, and individuals. Believers are obligated from their side to do everything in their power to prevent disturbance and to promote whatever is subservient to peace. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). However, light and darkness, fire and water, life and death, Christ and the devil, and faithful children of God and unbelieving children of the devil, cannot agree to all eternity. Therefore the godly ought not to imagine that they will have much external peace in the world, for the world hates them (John 15:18). The world therefore does whatever it can to arouse hatred against the godly, so that the godly should be prepared to endure tribulation. The Lord Jesus says concerning this, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). We shall here not discuss this peace, but spiritual peace. This in turn pertains either to believers in their mutual relationship or to God and the conscience. It is the latter we shall discuss here.

Spiritual Peace Defined

Peace between God and the conscience refers to man's former, present, and future state. In reference to his former state, it pertains to a ceasing from and a laying aside of former enmity. Due to sin there was enmity between God and man (Romans 5:10). Sin made a separation between them both, causing God to hide His countenance from man (Isaiah 59:2). God hates the sinner and abhors him (Psalms 5:5-6); the face of the Lord is against him (Psalms 34:16), and His wrath is ready to destroy him (Romans 2:5-6; Romans 2:9). Conversely, man from his side has no desire after God (Job 21:14), does not delight in Him (Job 34:9), and hates God (Romans 1:30). "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7), and "he runneth upon Him, even on His neck, upon the thick bosses of His bucklers" (Job 15:26). In this peace the former enmity is taken away; God desists from this, now being reconciled by the blood of His Son, and believers desist from this, now having received another heart by the Holy Spirit. The apostle speaks of this: "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled" (Colossians 1:19-21). In reference to both the present and future state, peace consists in fellowship between the believing soul and God, this being characterized by oneness of heart, intimacy, friendliness, and love. There is unity: "... that they

also may be one in us" (John 17:21); "My beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16). There is intimate fellowship: "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee" (Psalms 73:23); "... what doth the Lord require of thee ... but to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). There is a delightful friendship: "... I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15); "... he (Abraham) was called the friend of God" (James 2:23). There is fellowship, in a mutual manifestation of love: "And I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God" (Hosea 2:23). The Father loves them: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). Believers love God in return: "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength" (Psalms 18:1). The Lord has loving encounters with them: "... Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it" (Isaiah 38:17). The believer in turn cleaves to the Lord Jesus: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" (Song of Solomon 8:5). A Triune God: the Cause of this Peace

God is the cause of this peace. Man would have never applied to God for peace, and furthermore, due to sin, it was impossible that he would obtain peace. However, oh wonder of wonders, God Himself begins from His side!

(1) From eternity God has had thoughts of peace toward sinners, and in the Counsel of Peace has ordained the Son to be a Surety to accomplish this peace by Him. He has a peaceful heart and delights in peace; for this reason He is frequently called the God of peace. "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20).

(2) The Son's entry into the world was accompanied by the holy angels who jubilated, "On earth peace" (Luke 2:14). He reconciles the elect with God by His death. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him" (Isaiah 53:5). For this reason He bears the name "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6), "Melchizedek, king of Salem," that is, peace (Hebrews 7:1-2), and He is called "our peace" (Ephesians 2:14).

(3) The Holy Spirit brings this peace into the heart of believers: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). In order to make believers partakers of this peace, the Lord uses the gospel as the external means and faith as the internal means. The Lord makes the elect partakers of this peace by bringing them into covenant with Him, which is called a covenant of peace. "... neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed" (Isaiah 54:10). By means of the gospel He calls and invites men to enter into this covenant, which therefore is called the "gospel of peace." "... your feet shod with the preparation of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). The Lord uses men to make this gospel known. He sends them forth as His messengers, putting the word of reconciliation in their mouths (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). They are called the "messengers of peace": "... the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly" (Isaiah 33:7); "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Isaiah 52:7); "O Zion, that bringest good tidings" (Isaiah 40:9). By these means, the Lord brings man to faith, and faith, being in exercise, generates peace in the conscience. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Romans 15:13). This peace is the portion of believers only. The unconverted and ungodly frequently have a dead and insensitive conscience. They, not being smitten by their conscience, imagine within themselves that all is well before God and that they have peace with God. How rudely they will be

awakened, however, and come to the realization that they are children of wrath and never have had peace with God! "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20-21). This peace is a hidden treasure which is kept for the elect only, which the Lord permits His children to taste as often as He deems best. "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near," (Isaiah 57:18-19). "And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it" (Luke 10:6).

All believers are equally partakers of this peace, that is, as far as their state and the veracity of this matter are concerned. The application of this peace, however, varies greatly as far as its sensible enjoyment is concerned. Some enjoy it in a greater measure and others in a lesser measure. Some remain in this peaceful condition for a long period, and so to speak live in it; others experience this peace rarely and it rapidly dissipates.

We shall discuss this peace in its specific manifestations to convince weak believers that the Lord has spoken peace to their souls; to discover to the unconverted that they have no peace; to make everyone delighted with this peace by presenting the desirability of being in such a state; and to stimulate everyone to strive for this condition. The Various Ways in Which this Peace Manifests Itself A believer is often as Samuel who as yet did not know the voice of God. The Lord frequently speaks peace to the soul; however, if this peace does not engender a disposition which in his opinion it ought to bring forth, he does not acknowledge it as such. He must therefore know in what manner and in which steps the soul enjoys peace.

First, sometimes this peace will reveal itself in a hope that one will as yet attain to it. The soul in her mourning, praying, and looking unto Christ, sometimes does not receive a certain assurance that she is at peace with God, but is nevertheless encouraged that God who has begun a good work in her will further deal with her, and this hope sustains her as an anchor sustains a ship in a storm (Hebrews 6:19).

Secondly, it manifests itself sometimes in quietness within the soul, even though the soul neither dares nor is able to determine that she is a partaker of Christ, and although she cannot yet be assured by way of the reflex act of faith, the grounds of which she does indeed behold. In this manner a calm and sweet quietness comes within the soul (she knows not how); even if this is not experienced by having communion with God, it is nevertheless so in the exercise of the soul toward God. Fear is gone, terror has disappeared and, due to promises which she secretly believes, the soul is quiet. "Truly my soul waiteth upon God [Note: The Statenvertaling reads: "Immers is mijn ziel stil tot God," that is, "Truly, my soul is quiet before God."] : from Him cometh my salvation" (Psalms 62:1).

Thirdly, this peace sometimes manifests itself in being delighted and satisfied. This is the request of an absolute and unconditional surrender into the hand of the Lord of herself, her salvation, and the way in which it will please the Lord to lead her. This is accompanied with a secret confidence in His power, goodness, veracity, and faithfulness, trusting that He will make all things well, saying, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me" (Psalms 138:8). The soul dares to place its trust in this.

Fourthly, sometimes this peace manifests itself in being assured of the forgiveness of sins and of being in the state of grace -- this being true, however, in the absence of joy and many sweet inner motions. She knows in whom she has believed, entrusts herself to Him, believes that she will be saved, and upon that truth stands firm even though she does not have the taste of the blessedness of her state which would enable her to find sweet delight in it. "... but I obtained mercy" (1 Timothy 1:13); "... I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12); "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalms 73:24).

Fifthly, this peace sometimes manifests itself in having free access to the throne of grace. The soul approaches as an adopted child, acknowledges God as her Father, and in this disposition comes to God through Christ with approbation, delight, confidence and in the lifting up of her heart, exclaiming, "Abba, Father!" (cf. Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).

Sixthly, this peace sometimes manifests itself in a delightful joy that the Lord has been reconciled with her, her sins forgiven her, that the Lord has made her one of His favored ones, and the recipient of salvation. Her soul rejoices in this and leaps for joy. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10).

Seventhly, this peace sometimes manifests itself in its essential form and excellency. God, who is peace, fills the soul with His peace and fully encompasses her with peace; and the soul is thus irradiated with peace from all sides. The passions are too limited, the understanding falls short, and words fail to express what it means to have peace with God. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Php 4:7).

Behold, believers, these are the many different ways in which this peace manifests itself. Who of the godly -- if he has given heed to the mercies of the Lord, and if he has some remembrance of his former experiences -- would dare to deny that he has ever enjoyed something of this peace? And if he has experienced something of this, let him be assured that, even though the feeling vanishes, this peace between God and his soul will never be broken. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). The Sweetness of This Peace From the foregoing it can already be deduced to some degree what the excellent sweetness of this peace is; this will be all the more evident from what follows.

First, this peace does not only consist in a cessation of enmity between God and the person (which enmity could not but instill terror to the highest degree), but it includes a free and familiar relationship with God. Such is the testimony concerning Enoch: "And Enoch walked with God" (Genesis 5:24), and such was the privilege of Abraham: "... walk before Me" (Genesis 17:1). Such a soul who may thus be at peace and walk with God, lives in separation from all that is visible and above all that is of the earth, and is irradiated by the perfections of God, all of which fill her. She humbly interacts with God as her Father; at one time she is silent and reverently bows before God while worshiping Him, and then again will be communing with Him. God speaks to the heart; He comforts, gladdens, strengthens, and encourages; the soul expresses her needs, tells of her sorrow, and pours out her desires before Him; she lets herself be irradiated by His love and is ignited with love in return. Then she views the perfections of God, so that in adoration she stands still and exclaims in amazement, "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is

unsearchable" (Psalms 145:3). She rests under His shadow; then the heart yearns for the future and beholds her perfect felicity from afar; the soul gives thanks for the wondrous benefits, and thus the soul which is at peace becomes radiant due to her fellowship with God.

Secondly, as sinful as the soul may be -- daily offending in many ways -- her conscience time and again finds peace in the blood of Christ. It is as if she had not committed sin (Hebrews 9:14). Even if all in the world would acquit, comfort, and offer assistance, it would all be in vain if the conscience within were to condemn her, be in bondage, and be restless. If the conscience may be at peace with God, however, whatever be in hell and upon earth that may set itself in array against her, the conscience is quiet and at peace. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" (Job 34:29).

Thirdly, since the soul is at peace with God, this peace also extends to the holy angels who previously were against man. The Cherubim barred Adam from Paradise and barred the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). Man now being reconciled with God, however, has communion with the holy angels, and is "come unto ... an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22). The angels now assist them in their way, for they are all "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

Fourthly, there is peace with God and with all men as men, and that not only with the godly but also with the ungodly. From their side, the heart of the godly is peacefully disposed toward all, for they view them all as creatures of their God and thus are ready to help them; and if they are evil, they are far beyond their reach and will not be able to harm them. "In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by Me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 54:14-17).

Fifthly, there is peace with God, with all creatures (the devils excepted), with sun, moon, stars, clouds, rain, hail, fire, silver, gold, and wild and tame animals -- yes, everything is kindly disposed toward them, and it appears as if everything smiles at them and is ready to be of service. "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee" (Job 5:23).

Sixthly, when the believer experiences this peace with God, he can readily bear all crosses and also "glory in tribulation" (Romans 5:3). Then they find themselves to be in Paul's condition: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). Then death is no terror unto them, but only a departing in peace (Luke 2:29), even if, due to their witness of the truth, they must die a violent death. This peace causes martyrs to sing and rejoice in the midst of torture and flames.

If already here peace with God is so sweet and invigorating, what will it be when there are no more sins which time and again disturb the peace, and when there will no longer be estrangement from

God, but rather eternal unity in joy, love, and peace! "For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" (Zechariah 9:17). The Characteristics of True Spiritual Peace

These excellencies mentioned are sufficient to stir up a believer, who is acquainted with this peace and has tasted it to some degree, to strive for an increased and more steadfast sense thereof.

However, since the matter is so great and they so readily lose this peace, and since they perceive that those who neither know nor seek God rightly yet boast of their peace and quietude, and because they, due to their ignorance, are not able to distinguish everything clearly, they fear that the sweet quietude and peace of their soul are not of a right nature; they thus have no peace with God. To convince such upright souls that they indeed have true peace with God, and to convict those who have carnal peace that they are without peace, we shall enumerate several infallible marks, in reflection upon which everyone may become manifest to himself.

First, one who possesses peace in truth is much exercised with peace; he cannot live without it, and if he does not find it, he is restless, in bondage, and goes about with a heavy heart. "... neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin" (Psalms 38:3); "And Thou hast removed my soul far off from peace" (Lamentations 3:17). He seeks for it and cannot be comforted with anything until he has received it by renewal. "My soul ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted" (Psalms 77:2). His continual prayer is, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Psalms 35:3). When such a person finds it again, he will delight himself in a most wondrous way and say, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste" (Song of Solomon 2:3); "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Psalms 4:8).

Secondly, the one who is at peace has reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ as the basis for his peace. There is no peace as long as sin is not removed, and sin cannot be removed except by the blood of Christ; however, one cannot be a partaker of this except by faith. For this reason a gracious person continually goes to Christ, receives His offered atonement as a ransom, humbly and prayerfully comes to the Father while wrestling with the promises, and thus obtains peace. "... that in Me ye might have peace" (John 16:33); "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace" (Romans 5:1); "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Romans 15:13); "... preaching peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36).

Thirdly, true peace is always accompanied by God's eye being upon them, by His presence, and by having fellowship with God. It is a quietude without inner unrest. Since God and man were separated due to enmity, they become one again by virtue of the atonement; thus, the peace which issues forth from the atonement is necessary for communion with God. The Father and Christ come and make their abode with him (John 14:23). The soul which is at peace, again exercises fellowship, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Such a soul cries out, "Abba, Father!" (Romans 8:15). She has liberty to approach unto God and makes use of this liberty. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:21); "... we have peace with God ..." (Romans 5:1).

Fourthly, true peace is tender and is readily impaired, and those who have peace readily perceive the impairment of this peace. It does not always please God to bring His children with the bride into the banqueting house, or with the disciples upon the holy mount, or with Paul into the third

heaven.

(1) He frequently withdraws Himself, and hides His countenance from them. "Why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalms 10:1); "How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?" (Psalms 13:1). At times He remains silent as if He had no regard for them. "Where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels and of Thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?" (Isaiah 63:15). At times He permits them to run after Him for a long time, call upon Him, and seek communion with Him with supplications and tears; however, it appears as if God does not heed this and does not hear them. "... I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer" (Song of Solomon 5:6). "Why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent" (Psalms 22:1-2). He appears to reject them and to be angry with them. "Why castest Thou off my soul ... Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; Thy terrors have cut me off" (Psalms 88:14-16); "... hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" (Psalms 77:9).

(2) Those that are at peace still have the old Adam within them, which frequently and very forcefully makes its presence felt. This engenders laxity and laziness in seeking the countenance of the Lord, as well as neglect of exercise to remain near to the Lord and to exercise communion with God. Added to this are more serious sins committed by them against their conscience and contrary to the warning of the Holy Ghost, thereby grieving the Spirit of God. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30).

(3) Furthermore, the devil secretly assaults them, or shoots at them with his fiery arrows. The world entices them with earthly beauty and terrifies them by its wickedness. Tribulations and various crosses overwhelm them. This tosses their faith to and fro, and darkens their peace; this they sense and it grieves them. It causes them to languish, and they cannot rest until they may have received it again.

(4) We have shown in the above in how many ways and steps this peace manifests itself. In all believers, peace does diminish, in the one as well as in the other. However, faith may continue to be in exercise in many who are strong in faith, so that they have peace with God, even though they miss the taste and the sense of this peace, and are subject to opposite sentiments. Since believers are very desirous of, and seek much for, this peace, they also readily perceive when this peace is disturbed in the least degree. "My Beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him" (Song of Solomon 5:4). This sentiment is indicative of being a partaker of this peace. Yes, even the excessiveness of consternation due to missing this peace, such as discouragement, unbelief, hopelessness, sorrow, and the temporary refraining from seeking peace -- giving up on this as if this could not be obtained -- reveals the strong desire, the hunger and thirst, the love for and knowledge of this peace, and that they have tasted thereof in some measure. Thus it is a clear evidence that a person has peace with God if he is in unrest when this peace is absent, and if he promptly and with sorrow becomes aware of this condition.

Fifthly, they who truly have peace, actively guard against sin and endeavor to live in tender godliness before the countenance of God. Since they have tasted the sweetness of this peace (the one more and the other less) and know that sin disturbs this peace; since they know that the Lord gives more peace to those who are determined to live a life pleasing unto the Lord; since there can be no peace with God without the love of God -- therefore they walk carefully, not as fools, but

rather as being wise (Ephesians 5:15). "He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly" (Psalms 85:8).

He who wishes to deal faithfully with his soul will readily be able to perceive from the above how he must judge of his peace; that is, whether it is a carnal peace of mind and carelessness, or whether his peace is true peace with God. An Exhortation to Self-Examination

You who are not exercised with this peace, are not restless about its absence, are not concerned about having and preserving it, and are not suspicious as to whether or not your peace of mind is of the right sort; you who effortlessly and as a matter of course have attained to this peace, that is, without the wrestling of faith to receive Jesus as a ransom, and to be reconciled by His blood applied to the heart by faith, and only there to find your conscience purged of dead works; you who have a peace of which God is not the focus and which you enjoy apart from being in the presence of and in communion with God; you who are always stable and always have and are at peace within (except that shame and harm or a crime may occasionally trouble you), and you are not conscious of the fact that this peace is readily impaired and the heart immediately troubled about its absence; you who due to this inner peace of mind are not prompted to be on guard against all sins (also those of the heart) and to live a life pleasing unto God -- I assure you that your peace is nothing but a carnal peace, and that God's eternal and unbearable wrath hangs above your head. Yes, your peace of mind is a dreadful judgment of God upon you in consequence of your prior sins. "For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes" (Isaiah 29:10). You belong to those who are at peace and of whom you can read with fear, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The Lord will not spare him" (Deuteronomy 29:19-20). Amos 6:1 is applicable to you: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria." If you presently do not come to your senses and repent, how rude will your awakening then be when it will be too late and you will open your eyes in hell! "Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14). On the contrary, you who have ever enjoyed this peace in some measure as previously delineated, and who perceive that the five marks of this peace enumerated in the foregoing are truly found within you, see to it that you do not deny this grace under any pretext. You would sin against your conscience, grieve yourself, and impede your growth in peace and godliness. Rely upon the witness of your conscience in the presence of God -- the conscience witnessing that the inner frames mentioned earlier and their inner motions are truly within you. Acknowledge it to be thus, that is, that you have peace with God, even though the light and the sensible enjoyment of it may have disappeared. If the thought should arise in you, "I am deceiving myself," reject it immediately if it occurs to you without reason. You can always rest assured that nothing is deceitful except that which keeps us from Christ, love for and communion with God, and a tender guarding of our heart against sin. Whatever stirs us up to the former is not deceitful and cannot deceive us, since it guides us in the way of salvation. Therefore do not cast your liberty away, but approach God as being at peace with Him.

Exhortation to Seek and Preserve this Peace

First, be much exercised to attain to this peace within your heart and to increase in the sensible enjoyment of this, for a) to live without this peace causes a continual restlessness, and if you are and remain unconverted there will be nothing but eternal unrest, for the worm will not cease to

gnaw unbearably to all eternity. b) To live in peace with God is inexpressibly sweet and engenders love and holiness, all of which is evident from that which has been said. To this end:

(1) Allow yourself time to acknowledge and feel this lack of peace as well as the cause thereof: sin in its abominableness and bitterness. Let this stir up your heart in such a lively sense that you can no longer bear it.

(2) Do not avoid this anxiety, and do not allow hopelessness to take its place, which will result in a deadly insensitivity. Neither allow earthly attractions nor a yielding to lust to take its place, for this, rather than eliminating evil, would only make matters all the worse. With this restless heart, however, run to Christ, the Prince of Peace; receive Him and His offered merits by faith, and apply Him to your heart in order that you might have peace in Him.

(3) Do not pass this by too quickly, but frequently pause in order to reflect attentively upon the way of reconciliation and peace, the efficacy of Christ's death, the certainty of the promises, and the fact that one becomes a partaker of this without merit, without price, and out of free grace. Reflect upon the veracity of these matters, applying them to your own heart until you sense that the truth of God's Word is also true in your heart.

(4) Furthermore, let there be frequent prayer that the Spirit of God would testify with your spirit, seal you, and cause you to experience the power and the sweetness of this peace. An unpretentious and upright soul who is thus engaged will find more peace than many who are knowledgeable (even though they are converted) and who hastily pass this by.

Secondly, be much exercised to preserve this peace -- whatever the measure of it may be -- for it is tender and is very readily impaired: a) by laxity in maintaining, exercising, and pursuing this peace (Song of Solomon 5:3); b) by not heeding one's heart or by imposing less restraint upon sinful inclinations (Psalms 37:3); c) by falling into greater sins (Psalms 51:10); d) by quenching or not yielding to the promptings of the Spirit and by desiring to go upon a different way (Isaiah 63:10); e) by esteeming earthly things too highly, by having our heart set upon them in seeking after them, or by being too troubled when one has to miss them (James 4:4). To that end:

(1) Be continually engaged in exercising faith, hope, and love.

(2) Acknowledge grace and rejoice in it in the presence of God.

(3) Thank the Lord for this as being a singular and free gift from Him.

(4) Use your liberty to approach continually through Christ, even if the sensible enjoyment is absent.

(5) Walk carefully. If you have fallen, do not remain there but quickly rise and wash your conscience in the blood of Christ so that absence of peace will not be able to take root. Thirdly, if you have lost the sense of being spiritually established, be it to a greater or lesser degree -- yes, if it appears that wrath has come in its place, do not remain in this miserable condition, do not yield to it by being either discouraged or in despair, but rather conduct yourself with valor and seek to be restored. To that end, know first of all that:

(1) God never changes. All change is from the side of man, which does not affect the matter itself, but rather faith and our feeling.

(2) A spark of life as yet remains in you which will surface and flourish if it could but come forth and break through. There continues to be sorrow due to what must be missed: the knowledge of the sweetness of this peace, and the memory of the previous peaceful frame. There continue to be thoughts of how you would rejoice if by renewal you could but attain to this previous peaceful frame, as well as a desiring for this. There will continue to be an intermittent lifting up of heart and eyes to heaven for the Spirit; you will not be able to return to the world. There will be fear for sin and there will be a desire for sanctification and an endeavor to be sanctified. All of this will always be present.

(3) Know that it is God's way to lead all His favorites in this manner, namely, that at times they may have the sensible enjoyment of this peace and at other times must miss this.

(4) Consider that you have also been in a troubled state prior to this peace being absent, have frequently been delivered from this, and have by renewal enjoyed this peace in some measure. These things ought to be of support to you and sustain you against discouragement and despair, for when hope collapses, the use of the means will cease.

Secondly, calmly search out the cause for the unrest of which we have spoken before. Having discovered this (or if you cannot discover this), labor to humble yourself deeply; that is, sink away in the sense of your sinfulness and the impotency of your soul. It is appropriate to set apart a day of fasting for this purpose, and then do as much as it pleases the Lord to enable you to do. If you have been very barren, dull, listless, and insensitive, you ought to resume this after some days, or after a week or two, bringing yourself before the Lord as you are, and as much as possible make known before Him your desire for peace. The Lord knows the intent of your spirit and for what purpose you have set apart that day, and He will at last speak peace to your soul.

Thirdly, lift up your soul to the covenant and to its Mediator, Jesus. Reflect upon former days, considering how you then were accustomed to wrestle and pray, how you received Him, how you surrendered to Him, but also the exercises and refreshment you indeed enjoyed at that time. This is suitable to quicken your soul in the exercise of faith and to receive Jesus by renewal, as a ransom for sin and as the Prince of Peace. A soul is frequently restored in this way and may receive a greater measure of peace.

Fourthly, do not expect, at first, to receive again the measure of peace and intimacy which you had prior to losing your peace, for that rarely happens; rather, remain humble and acknowledge the crumbs of grace whereby at one time you have been able to pray, weep, and pour out your heart before the Lord in order that some hope may intermittently arise. Therefore, quietly follow the leading of the Spirit who turns His hand to the little ones, comforts the humble ones, and gives them grace.

Fifthly, strictly adhere to your times of spiritual exercise; neither neglect it, nor engage in it hurriedly, as if you would only do so to satisfy your conscience; rather, remain prostrate before the Lord, however barren you may be, and wait to see if some light may not dawn. If not, be not discouraged, but keep your soul humble as a weaned child, and maintain that quiet hope that God will return. Let there be a determined resolution to nevertheless be willing to seek the Lord as long

as you live, being desirous rather to die at His feet than to depart from Him. And the Lord who is good to the soul that seeks Him will at last say, "Mary! My child, here am I," upon which the soul will rejoice. "Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means" (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

042. Chapter 37: Spiritual Joy

----- CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN -----

Spiritual Joy

Justification also engenders joy. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10); "Bless the Lord, O my soul ... who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Psalms 103:1-3); "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isaiah 33:24).

Man was created to rejoice; to be joyful is his life and health. Sorrow is contrary to his nature, and if man had not sinned, he would not have been sorrowful for one moment. A young child shows its joy by laughter and skipping around; all that man does, he does to be happy. Sorrow grips, presses, oppresses, and brings pain to the heart, whereas joy enlarges the heart and causes one to be refreshed by leaping for joy. This is true in the natural, and also in the spiritual realm.

Joy is the pleasure, delight, and rejoicing of the heart. It is the expression of a spirit set at liberty (or enlarged), generated by a present blessing or due to the anticipation of a future blessing. The Holy Scriptures, the best and infallible chronicler of nature, expresses joy by the verb rejoice: "... my heart rejoiceth in the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:1); by the verb enlarge: "... when thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psalms 119:32); by the verb delight: "Delight thyself also in the Lord" (Psalms 37:4); and by the verb cheer: "... let thy heart cheer thee" (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

Since man is not all-sufficient within himself, he must seek all his delight and joy elsewhere, that is, outside of himself. An unconverted person does perceive that he is empty within, but he does not know where his true and complete joy is to be found. Nevertheless, he must have joy, or else his heart will succumb. Thus, he seeks joy in creature delights, as everyone seeks that toward which he is most inclined and that which is most opportune. One person thinks that money will yield joy, whereas another person expects it from costly apparel, homes, furnishings, and gardens; another thinks that food and drink will yield this; again, others seek it in high positions and governmental offices, and some expect it from love and wisdom. Thus, every person labors for his own gain and with his own objective in view. However, this does not yield satisfaction. The heart even grieves when it laughs, and all such laughter ends in eternal sorrow and weeping. The Lord, however, causes His favorites to see that all this is nothing but vanity, sin, and sorrow, and that all joy and happiness consist in having communion with Him. This is the spiritual joy which we shall now discuss. In considering this joy we shall deal with 1) the nature of this joy, 2) the opposite of this joy, 3) that which resembles this joy, and 4) the parameters of this joy. The Nature of Spiritual Joy

We shall first of all consider the nature of this spiritual joy. This spiritual joy consists in a delightful motion of the soul, generated by the Holy Spirit in the heart of believers, whereby He convinces them of the felicity of their state, causes them to enjoy the benefits of the covenant of grace, and assures them of their future felicity. The seat of this joy is the soul or the heart. "Thou hast put

gladness in my heart" (Psalms 4:7); "... your heart shall rejoice" (John 16:22). This happiness is not one of appearance only, but is in truth; it does not consist in external display, but rather in possession. It is not something external which delights the external senses, but it penetrates to the internal, that is, to the innermost recesses of the soul, the intellect, the will, and the affections.

However, the heart of all men does not partake of this joy, but only the heart of believers. "Behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit" (Isaiah 65:14); "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous" (Psalms 33:1); "Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee" (Psalms 70:4). No one can manufacture this joy himself, but it is an inexpressible work of grace by God the Holy Spirit. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy" (Romans 15:13); "For the kingdom of God is ... joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17); "Make me to hear joy and gladness" (Psalms 51:8). For this reason David calls the Lord, "God my exceeding joy" (Psalms 43:4). If someone desires this joy, let him be sensibly convinced that he cannot manufacture this himself and that he is also unworthy to receive it; let him thus come through Christ to the Father and pray in His Name, "Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil" (Psalms 90:15); "Rejoice the soul of Thy servant: for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul" (Psalms 86:4). This joy pertains to being reconciled with God -- to their being the recipients of His grace, goodness, love, and benevolence, He being their God and Father, their portion, delight, rest, keeper, and felicity, and Jesus Christ being their Savior. This is manifested by the expression of rejoicing in the Lord. "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King" (Psalms 149:2); "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy" (Psalms 31:7); "Be glad in the Lord" (Psalms 32:11); "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9); "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:47). This joy is generated whenever they perceive and believe that God has bestowed a blessing upon them in His favor. Also the preciousness of the gospel, the benefits of the covenant of grace, and temporal deliverances and blessings bring forth this joy. They do so because they perceive that in all these things the Lord is manifesting His favor toward them. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart" (Psalms 119:111); "... Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jeremiah 15:16); "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted" (Psalms 89:15-16). In addition to the benefits which believers may enjoy here, they also have the promise of joy in heaven which is inexpressibly more excellent. Oh, how great is that treasure! How blessed is such a man who has been chosen, who is led for this purpose; what reason such a person has to rejoice! Therefore, rejoice in hope (Romans 12:12). From that which has been said, it is evident what the nature of true spiritual joy is. This will be all the more evident when we consider the opposite of spiritual joy, as well as that which resembles and qualifies it.

The Opposite of Spiritual Joy: Sorrow

The second aspect to be considered is the opposite of or that which is contrary to joy, which is sorrow -- not only the sorrow of the ungodly for whom weeping and gnashing of teeth are prepared, but also the sorrow of believers. God's children do not always have joy here; it has been foretold that they will cry, weep mournfully, and be sorrowful (John 16:22); they must experience that often they mingle their drink with their tears (Psalms 102:9). This can be due to being very far from God, weakness of faith, fear of not being a partaker of Jesus, the power of corruption (which not only assaults them, but may also hold them captive

for a long period of time), the assaults of Satan, or various temporal afflictions and tribulations. Therefore, their tears are their meat day and night and they pour out their soul within them (Psalms 42:3-4); their life is thus spent with grief, and their years with sighing (Psalms 31:10). However, the Lord does not allow them to sink away in sorrow. He is with them when they must go through fire and water, so that neither the rivers overflow them nor the fire burns them. He will yet refresh them in their sorrow, and afterwards cause their darkness to lift. He will by renewal comfort those who mourn and lovingly wipe the tears from their eyes. He allures them, speaks to their heart, and kisses them with the kisses of His mouth. This is the promise: "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

Now compare sorrow and joy with each other and observe the great difference between the two. From this can be deduced the exceeding excellency and desirability of this joy, as well as the inexpressible goodness of God that a people who are only worthy of eternal sorrow, are by Him filled and will eternally be filled with such exceeding joy. Furthermore, since God's children encounter many sorrows in this life, no one ought to be too dejected as if they were no child of God, for what they encounter is no different from what all God's children encounter. It can also be that one is sorrowful, humble, and ashamed over sin, mourns over the absence of sweet communion with God, and nevertheless rejoices in the assurance of his state, as well as in the promise that his sorrow will be turned into joy. He conducts himself wisely who accustoms himself to be joyful by faith, even though he weeps due to oppression.

Counterfeit Spiritual Joy The third matter to be considered is that which resembles this joy: counterfeit joy. The difference between worldly joy pertaining to earthly goods and the commission of sins, and this spiritual joy is too radical to be considered here. The joy of temporal believers, however, resembles spiritual joy in an external sense, even though they differ entirely in nature. Temporal believers are also joyful at times. "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it" (Matthew 13:20; cf. Luke 8:13). Their objective is spiritual, for it pertains to the gospel, having Christ as a Savior, entering into heaven, being numbered among the godly, being loved and praised by the godly, etc. The apostle speaks about the object of the joy of temporal believers in Hebrews 6:4-5 :? "... those who were once enlightened" [those who came from the darkness of Jewry and heathendom to the knowledge of divine truth] "and have tasted of the heavenly gift" [those who have had a clear perception of the desirability and glory of heavenly and evangelical truths, so that they rejoice in seeing their beauty, since the viewing of a glorious object is delightful even though one does not possess it], "were made partakers of the Holy Ghost" [not the indwelling of the Spirit, but rather His common gifts], "and have tasted the good word of God"[who, in contemplating upon the blessedness of those who are partakers of the forgiveness of sins, God's grace, and all the glorious promises found in the Word, imagine themselves to be partakers of them and thus flatter themselves with this and rejoice in it] "and the powers of the world to come" [who, due to their knowledge of the Word, contemplate upon eternal felicity, viewing it in a natural manner -- who, without any misgivings, consider themselves to be heirs of salvation on the basis of such imaginations].

Such is the joy of temporal believers; now compare to this the joy of true believers. You will observe that in both cases the object of their joy is the same, but that, nevertheless, the difference

is as great between the natural and the spiritual as between imagination and truth. This difference needs to be carefully defined so that those who have counterfeit joy may be convicted, and those who possess true joy may be assured and, with liberty, make progress in this true joy.

First, all true joy proceeds from faith as a result of the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit, even though it varies greatly in degree. Therefore, all joy which does not proceed from receiving Christ and union with Him -- by which one becomes a partaker of all His benefits -- is counterfeit joy. "... in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). The eunuch went on his way rejoicing after he had become a believer (Acts 8:37; Acts 8:39); the jailor rejoiced in the fact that he had believed (Acts 16:34). Therefore let him who has attained to this joy by faith, acknowledge the veracity of his joy, and proceed with liberty.

Secondly, all true joy is experienced in the presence of God and in communion with God as their reconciled God. "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:47); "Rejoice in the Lord alway" (Php 4:4); "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous" (Psalms 32:11); "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord" (Psalms 104:34). All counterfeit joy pertains to matters pleasant to the person and which do not end in God. Although true believers also rejoice in their happiness and in the matters which they have or anticipate, they do not remain with the matters only; that is impossible for them. Rather, in the enjoyment of these matters, they find themselves in the presence of God.

Thirdly, all true joy makes the soul holier, drawing the soul away from all that is not God and does not please God -- from sin. It enlarges the heart and makes them willing to do God's will out of love with humility. "... the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10); "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psalms 119:32).

It cannot but be that when one is joyful, there will also be love. One cannot but rejoice in a received benefit -- rejoice in having communion with God. Furthermore, it cannot be different but that the heart will be inclined to manifest gratitude by surrendering oneself to the service of the Lord. When David joyfully exclaimed, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust," he then exclaimed immediately, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength" (Psalms 18:2; Psalms 18:1). When he recognized that the Lord had heard his prayer, he said, "I love the Lord" (Psalms 116:12). When he acknowledged that he had received many benefits, he said, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take ...," etc. (Psalms 116:12-14).

If someone considers himself to be joyful and is nevertheless not tender in his walk, but instead lives in the world and yields to his lusts, doing everything with the wrong objective and in seeking self, his joy is not a joy in God, but is a counterfeit joy. However, whenever joy proceeds from faith, functions in communion with God, and begets tenderness, willingness, actual opposition to sin, and the practice of godliness -- then there is true joy. Let the heart of such a person rejoice, and endeavor to continually live in this joy. The Parameters for this Joy: the Fear of God The fourth thing to be considered is what qualifies this joy as being true: the fear of God. Since believers still have the old Adam within them, and the devil conspires and leaves no stone unturned to cause them to fall, he who has spiritual joy needs to be on guard that, upon experiencing joy, corruptions do not arise from any given direction. When a believer rejoices in the Lord, he must give heed on the one hand that he forget not his insignificance and sinfulness and become irreverent toward the

Lord; rather, he should remain reverent and humble in having fellowship with God. On the other hand, however, he must give heed not to become careless in watching against sin, for when rejoicing he will be vulnerable for this corruption. When a person, in rejoicing, deviates to the one side or the other, his joy will immediately cease. Therefore, whoever wishes to live in this joy ought to endeavor greatly to fear God. He must reverence Him and be on guard against sin. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psalms 2:11). From that which has been said it can be deduced what spiritual joy is. At the same time we must not understand by this joy the extraordinary illumination, being drawn up into heaven, and the elated experiences which some of God's children occasionally experience. Not all, but only a few experience these; and these do not remain but again disappear. Therefore a weak believer ought not to think that, since he has not experienced this ecstatic joy, he therefore has never been joyful and ought to strive for nothing but this joy only. Rather, by joy we understand the cheerful, joyous disposition which issues forth from faith in God. Each believer must seek for this and acquaint himself with God, so that it may be the general trend of his life to be glad and joyful in God. This is commanded: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Php 4:4). This is the promise: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day" (Psalms 89:15-16). This was Paul's desire and practice: "... that I might finish my course with joy" (Acts 20:24). Happy is he who may have this happy cheerfulness in view, seek it, and accustom himself to it.

Exhortation to Believers to Seek Spiritual Joy

Since believers generally aspire so little to this cheerfulness, considering it to be a matter too high for them, and spend much of their time in heaviness and sorrow, we shall seek to lift them up and endeavor to persuade them to seek this spiritual joy.

Therefore, come believers, "Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing" (Psalms 100:2). Have you not tolerated this heaviness and sorrow long enough and spent your time being melancholy? Recognize and acknowledge the grace which is in you -- however little it may be. Consider the disposition of other children of God, not dissimilar to yours, and God's dealings with them. Be in submission to the measure of grace the Lord bestows upon you; do not continue in sin. You and the Lord know that your sins are a heavy burden to you; therefore, go with them to the Surety. Let neither unbelief nor inadvertent ignorance concerning the grace which is in you, nor a coveting of greater grace apart from submission, cause you to remain sorrowful any longer. Come, allow me to take you by the hand and instruct you in this matter. Permit yourself to be persuaded, be compliant, and do not resist.

First, this sorrow and being double-minded is contradictory to your state, and is harmful in every way, for:

(1) It is a dishonor to God, your Father. Apart from the fact that it issues forth from a lack of faith, and thus strengthens unbelief, it prevents God from being glorified or thanked. It is also capable of causing others to have a prejudice toward God, as if He were but a barren wilderness to His people, treats them too harshly, and gives them no occasion to be somewhat refreshed, whereas He is, nevertheless, so good and extraordinarily benevolent.

(2) It is capable of deterring natural men from godliness. Man's nature does not find delight in sorrow, and cannot imagine that godliness and salvation could consist of sorrow -- and indeed, it does not. This hinders them if they begin to entertain thoughts about conversion. See to it that you are neither the cause of godliness being evil spoken of, nor hinder anyone from being saved.

(3) To mourn over sin at the appropriate time, and in an appropriate measure and manner is needful, and does not prevent one from living cheerfully. However, those who accustom themselves to be sorrowful, consume the strength of their body, and frequently acquire an illness from which they suffer their entire lifetime. This ailment is in turn the cause of sorrow and melancholy, and this sorrow in turn worsens the ailment. "... a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 17:22); "... by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken" (Proverbs 15:13).

(4) It is very harmful for spiritual life, injuring it. It not only impedes its growth, but exhausts it; if God by His omnipotence did not preserve it, this sorrow would extinguish it. If one gives in to such mourning, he can progress so far that he finds no delight in anything except in mourning and in consuming his own heart. He is then not fit for anything -- not for prayer, believing, battling and overcoming sin, the practice of virtue, nor for being beneficial to other people -- and makes himself unfit to be restored by the common means, since he refuses to be comforted (cf. Psalms 77:2). "A wounded spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14). Therefore conduct yourself valiantly, for it is as easy to yield to a mournful frame, as it is to collapse for a person who is fainting. However, the harmful consequences are too dangerous. Therefore, lift up your head and endeavor to break out of this.

Secondly, believers (even the most feeble) are entitled to and have reason for joy, for it is one of the promises of the covenant of grace. Let those of the world be troubled and fearful, and tremble about their present and future state. You, however, who have been delivered from the devil, hell, and wrath, for whom God is a reconciled God and is your portion, who have been adopted as a child of God, and have become partakers of justification, sanctification, and eternal glorification, what reason do you yet have for sorrow? If you say, "This is still lacking, namely, the actual and effectual enjoyment of all those promised spiritual benefits; and not only the comforts, but also the deliverance from sin itself," then I respond, "Is God's promise null and void with you? Are future benefits of lesser value because they are reserved for the future, where they will be an eternal and unchangeable reality -- as if in the future you would be able to get by without them? Is not God a God of truth to you? Would His promises be able to fail? Or do you consider the promises of future blessings to be excuses for not presently fulfilling the promises that supplicants will be heard, that hungry ones will be filled, etc. Be ashamed that you entertain such thoughts about the only wise God who makes all things well at His time." If a great inheritance has been bequeathed to someone, and the testator subsequently dies, would it then be considered worthless because he does not yet see and have the treasures in his hands, knowing, however, with certainty that he will receive them within a short time? Behold, a natural man will convince you. Therefore, value the excellency of the promised benefits, the infallibility of the testament which is confirmed by the death of the testator. Rejoice therefore in your title to the inheritance and in the certainty of future possession, even though you do not enjoy it as yet. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous" (Psalms 97:11-12). It is sown, and it has been sown for you, and therefore you will also harvest at the appointed time; rejoice in this hope: "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple" (Psalms 65:4).

Thirdly, God is pleased with the joy of His children. It is His will that they delight themselves, value the benefits, fully trust in His Word and in His promise, jubilate, leap for joy, and sing His praises with joyful and singing lips. Cheerfulness and joyfulness are a delight to Him. "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalms 22:3-4); "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth" (Isaiah 64:5). Is it your desire to do something which is pleasing to God? Is God's nearness, His presence, and your familiar encounters with Him, your desire and your delight? Accustom yourself then to live joyfully by faith.

Fourthly, to be joyful in God is heaven. In heaven there is neither weeping nor sorrow; there is nothing but eternal, exceedingly great, and inexpressible joy. If you could but see and hear how joyful the inhabitants of heaven are, how they jubilate and sing, your heart would indeed be stirred. If you desire heaven, you must find delight in joy, for what else would you do in heaven where there are none but those who are joyful and where there is nothing but joy? Eternal felicity is therefore referred to as joy: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matthew 25:21). If there is joy in hope, what joy will possession engender? Therefore, let your conversation be in heaven, and begin this heavenly work, that is, to be joyful. Or is being joyful such a heavy and distasteful matter that you would need many persuasive arguments to be stirred up to be joyful? Our nature is naturally inclined toward joy, and every person desires joy. Since you, however, have abundant reason to be joyful, would you then, nonetheless, be sorrowful?

Fifthly, you are very much in need of this joy, for in this joy there is strength against your enemies, as well as for your work. "For the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). Believers, there is yet much to be done by you. There is a world that still needs to be conquered, a devil that still needs to be battled, and flesh that still needs to be overcome. You are yet in need of the ornament of holiness; faith, hope, and love still need to be strengthened and increased. There are yet people who need to be converted, and you yourself have yet to become the luster and the glory of the church. You must as yet place a footprint in this earth so that others may know that you have been here. How will you accomplish all this without being cheerful and joyful? A melancholy person is a breeding place for all sorts of sins. The flesh, the world, and the devil have great power and advantage over such a person. Such persons will very readily neglect grace received. Carelessly, they act as if present grace does not exist, and thus a melancholy person will be unfit to offer resistance. There is strength in joy, however, and a joyful person can avoid many assaults which then have no opportunity to arise; and if there are such assaults, a joyful person will be able to turn them away with little difficulty. A joyful person will very readily despise the things of this world and cross providences do not oppress him very much. The practice of virtue will be a delight to him, and his joy will make it so attractive; yes, it will make him attractive. He will be suited to woo others, comfort those that mourn, and stir up those who are lax; everything suits him and he is desirous to do everything. Therefore "be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" (Psalms 32:11). The Believer's Difficulties Answered

Objection #1: A mournful person may object by saying, "How can a person rejoice who commits as many sins as I commit? That is impossible."

Answer: The cause and foundation for your joy must not be found within yourself and your virtuousness, but outside of yourself and in Christ. If a person had to wait with being joyful in the

Lord until he is without sin, he would never rejoice his entire lifetime, for the most eminent saint sees more sin in himself than does a little one in grace, since the larger measure of light reveals to him that which is lacking in his virtuousness, whereas others may see little of it. When someone's sins are a heavy burden to him and grieve him; if he then flees to Jesus and receives His atonement, and surrendering himself to Him to be justified and sanctified; if it is the desire and delight of His heart to live a life pleasing unto the Lord; and if he may be convinced of the motive for such exercise and such a disposition -- he has reason for joy. If he does not rejoice, it is evident that he still cleaves too much to the old covenant of works and desires to be justified by works. This reveals that he is not engaged in believing God upon His Word and promises, who declares those to be blessed who do so. This shows that he wants to teach God how He should deal with him. Therefore it also pleases God in turn to withhold him from being enabled to rejoice in God. All these sins are not commensurate with being a child of God. Therefore, be fearful of conducting yourself in this way. Accustom yourself to rejoice by faith in your title to and promise of salvation, even if you cannot do so with a strong sense of delight. Know it to be your duty.

Objection #2: How can I rejoice if I am not assured of being a partaker of Christ? I am not assured of this.

Answer: Here again is a misconception, perhaps even a subtle expression of resentment. Perhaps you do not wish to consider yourself assured except there be an extraordinary declaration and impression from God to remove simultaneously all inner objections and immediately lift up your soul to be joyful about her state.

You will most likely wait in vain for this. God rarely -- and especially in the case of fretful persons who refuse to be comforted -- does this. The normal way to assurance consists on the one hand in giving heed to the Word of God, and on the other hand in comparing yourself with this Word, coming thus to a conclusion -- a conclusion made in the presence of God while praying, believing, and reasoning. This is the manner by which a man is assured. To that end we have previously, at various occasions and in various ways, convinced believers of this by presenting the marks of grace to them.

Objection #3: Another person may perhaps say, "I have indeed been assured (at least I thought this to be so), and I have indeed rejoiced in the Lord; however, it has all disappeared again, and I therefore think that I have deceived myself. I therefore do not dare to do so again, for I might once more deceive myself."

Answer: We have dealt with this by demonstrating above what the essential nature of true joy is.

Objection #4: One must mourn, for God commands it and promises to dwell with such.

Answer (1) God dwells with those that mourn; however, He does so to comfort them, in order that the outcome of their mourning may be their rejoicing.

(2) There is a great difference between being mournful or being melancholy and despondent. The Lord delights when one mournfully humbles himself, tearfully seeks grace, and is active by faith to lift himself up again; being melancholy, however, is displeasing to God and men. Therefore mourn at the appropriate time, but flee from habitual melancholy and accustom yourself to be joyful.

Exhortation to Use the Means to Attain to this Joy To that end you should first of all continually exercise faith in Christ, reflect upon the truths pertaining to the atonement and God's way in which He leads man to salvation, and put your trust in Jesus, leaning upon Him. To entrust yourself thus to Him, without seeing Him or apart from any feeling, is the way that leads to joy (1 Peter 1:8).

Secondly, continue to read and acknowledge the Word to be what it really is: the Word of God. Acknowledge that it addresses itself at that particular moment to you. Search for the promises, deem them to be unbreakable, and when you apply them to your soul as such, you will experience joy. "For Thy word hath quickened me" (Psalms 119:50).

Thirdly, pray much, and acquaint yourself with the Lord by praying to Him, communing with Him, making request to Him, and laying before Him all that you lack and desire, especially your desire for joy. "Make me to hear joy and gladness" (Psalms 51:8); "O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days" (Psalms 90:14).

Pursue the promise and lift up your heart to the truth that whatever you will pray for in Christ's Name, He will indeed give you. While praying thus, the soul will find herself more often in a joyful frame.

Fourthly, engage much in holy contemplation and meditation. Reflect upon who and what you are, the ways the Lord has led you hitherto, and upon your former mourning, seeking, and tears. Reflect upon the comforts and deliverances which the Lord has frequently given you, upon the benefits of the covenant of grace (each individually), and upon future glory and all that the soul will forever enjoy there. This is suitable to cause the soul quietly to rejoice. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord" (Psalms 104:34).

Fifthly, be much on guard against yielding to a sinful routine in your life. Even if there are no great falls, this yielding, this drowsy carelessness, and this departing from God will readily rob us of this joy. Rather, one ought to refrain from unrighteousness, and, upon falling, arise each time again and immediately run to the fountain once more; this will, time and again, quicken joyfulness. May the God of our exceeding joy gladden you! Amen.

043. Chapter 38: The Sealing of the Believer by the Holy Spirit and by Means of the Sacraments

----- CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT ----- The Sealing of the Believer by the Holy Spirit and by Means of the Sacraments

All the ways of the Lord with His elect are mercy. Not only is this true in bringing the most wretched among them to the greatest felicity after this life, but also because He bestows so many benefits on them as they journey through this life. He leads them in a wondrous manner; every step is a manifestation of unfathomable wisdom and goodness. It is His desire that they see and know this, and that they would live in the assurance of His goodness toward them. To facilitate this, numerous marks and qualifications of gracious souls are presented in the Word of God, and in this manner many promises are made and repeated. Yes, above and beyond that, the Lord gives them an earnest and a seal, and transcending all adoration, the Holy Spirit Himself is that seal who seals the eternal inheritance to them. He does this Himself internally, as well as in a manner most commensurate with human nature: by means of external signs and seals, generally referred to as sacraments. A Description of the Act of Sealing

Sealing is the imprinting of one's coat of arms -- engraven in a signet -- upon something, doing Song of Solomon 1:1-17) to distinguish one's own property from that of others, 2) to conceal something from others, 3) to preserve something in its purity, and 4) to assure one of being a partaker of something. The Holy Spirit accomplishes this work by the instrumentality of the Word in order to engrave His operations in the hearts of believers. The Sealing by the Holy Spirit and what He Accomplishes Thereby The apostle testifies that the Holy Spirit seals believers: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The activities and purposes of the sealing process are also applied to the children of God.

(1) The Holy Spirit Himself is the seal and earnest of the promised inheritance. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ... ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

(2) The Holy Spirit impresses the image of God upon the children of God. They are the express image of Christ. "We shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:49); "I travail ... until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). The Holy Spirit accomplishes this by regenerating and sanctifying them. "But we all ... are changed unto the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

(3) Others recognize believers by means of this seal, and God knows them to be His property. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). Hereby the unconverted recognize the regenerate, perceiving that there is a different Spirit and a different life in them. "... They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13); "And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that

see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed" (Isaiah 61:9). Believers know by this seal that they are children and heirs of God. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13).

(4) Believers, by means of this seal, are hidden from the eyes of the world. The world indeed perceives that there is a different Spirit and life in believers, but is not acquainted with the glory and felicity of their state. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" (1 John 3:1); "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:3-4).

(5) By means of this seal believers are preserved free of blemish. In reference to this they are called "a fountain sealed" (Song of Solomon 4:12). Revelation 7:3 also refers to this: "Hurt not the earth ... till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

(6) By the seal of the Holy Spirit God's children are assured of being partakers of the covenant of grace and all its promises. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). The Holy Spirit reveals to them the graces which have been laid within them. He directs them to texts which promise salvation to those who are in such a condition. He enables them to fully understand these texts and by them draw a conclusion about their state of grace. Their sanctified judgment convinces them of this, and the Holy Spirit joins with this by His immediate operation upon their heart. He thereby witnesses in harmony with what their spirit judges and witnesses of itself, confirming that their judgment concerning themselves is right. Therefore, by way of the witness of their own judgment, He makes it clear to them and immediately makes the assurance lively within them that they are partakers of the promises. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

Sealing also Takes Place by Means of the Sacraments

God, in addition to this inward seal, also seals by way of the sacraments. God deals with man in a manner which is most consistent with his nature. Man consists of soul and body. Since it is God's desire to abundantly assure man of the grace he possesses, He uses means which relate to both soul and body. The Word of God affects the soul; that is, it engenders illumination, faith, regeneration, and strengthening; the sacraments affect the external senses, and thereby the soul. The word sacrament is not found in Scripture and its origin is uncertain. It most likely is a derivative of *sacrare*, that is, to sanctify, and to separate and/or devote to a sacred purpose. Due to its common usage, we may preserve the word as such. The Greek writers also call a sacrament *mysterion*, that is, a mystery; however, this word is also extra-biblical. A sacrament is indeed a mystery; however, not all mysteries are sacraments. Scripture refers to a sacrament as a sign and a seal. "... and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you" (Genesis 17:11); "And the blood shall be to you for a token" (Exodus 12:13); "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith" (Romans 4:11). A sacrament is a visible sign and seal of the covenant of grace, instituted by God to display Christ in His suffering and death to believers, and to seal to them that they are partakers of Christ and all His merits. In order to understand the nature of sacraments correctly, we must observe in them five matters which must be present in every sacrament. Therefore, something is not a sacrament when the following five matters are absent: 1) the Author or the Person who has instituted it,

472 2) an external sign, 3) the matter signified, 4) the relationship between the sign and the matter signified, and 5) the purpose.

God, the Author of the Sacraments The Author or Person who has instituted it can be none other than God. It does not suffice that something has been instituted by God, but rather it must have been instituted by God as a sacrament, and thus as a seal of the covenant of grace, for:

(1) God -- and no one else -- establishes the covenant. "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram" (Genesis 15:18); "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:7).

(2) Only God makes the promises and gives the matters which are promised. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

(3) The sacraments belong to that religion which God only has commanded and instituted. "But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

(4) Scripture declares plainly that God has instituted the sacraments. This is true for circumcision (Genesis 17:10), the passover (Exodus 12:3; Exodus 12:27; 2 Chronicles 35:6), holy baptism (John 1:33; Matthew 28:19), and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:25). In addition to the Author of the sacraments we consider the men who administer them -- men sent of God, to proclaim the Word of God and to administer the holy sacraments. (We have previously discussed the calling and the commission of ministers.) (1) This is also evident from the common practice in both the Old and New Testaments.

(2) Furthermore Christ has conjoined the ministry of the Word to this: "Teach all nations, baptizing them" (Matthew 28:19). John baptized and preached in the wilderness (Mark 1:4); "... He that sent me to baptize with water ..." (John 1:33).

(3) Since the sacrament is administered to someone on behalf of Christ, no one can administer this unless he has been sent and authorized to that end by Christ. Furthermore, for the individual it is not a sacrament except he receive it from the hand of a commissioned servant -- a servant who is a minister of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1). We therefore reject any baptism which is administered by private individuals, be it a man or a woman. If persons who have thus been baptized are subsequently converted to the faith, they are baptized rather than rebaptized, for the former was no baptism. We shall deal with this more comprehensively in the next chapter (Holy Baptism).

Question: Does the intent of him who administers belong to the essence of the sacrament?

Answer: The Papists claim that the intent of the minister is absolutely essential here. Thus it is even true that if the minister does not have the intent he ought to have -- to administer the sacrament to the communicant for such a purpose as has been instituted by Christ -- it is then (so they claim) not a sacrament, and such a child is not baptized, nor has such a communicant partaken of the Lord's Supper. Yes, they go beyond this and maintain -- which must necessarily follow -- that if someone, having been baptized without the minister having the proper intent in doing so, subsequently becomes a priest, his entire administration of the sacraments is therefore rendered null and void, for the priest himself was not baptized and therefore is no priest. We do maintain that a minister must conduct himself in a holy manner in the administration of the

sacraments, and that he commits a great sin if such is not the case. His good or evil intent, however, (or the absence of any intent) has no reference at all to the true essence of the sacraments.

First of all, there is not one letter in God's Word referring to this. Secondly, the efficacy of the sacraments would then not be contingent upon the promises, objectives, and sealing of God, but upon the servant. Then the priest's intent would be of more worth and be more efficacious than that of God, and his intent could nullify God's objective, promise, and seal. Thirdly, no one could then be assured as to whether he was baptized, for he could have no assurance that the person who baptized him had been baptized himself and was a lawful priest (I speak as the Papists) -- and even if such were the case, whether he had the proper intention in baptizing him. It thus follows that this proposition destroys their entire religion. The External Signs of the Sacraments The second aspect which must be found in a sacrament is the external sign. A sign is that which manifests itself to the external senses, thereby signifying something else to the heart. Some signs are of a natural sort, such as smoke being a sign of the proximity of fire; if the sky is a melancholy red in the morning, rain is imminent. Some signs are signs by way of designation. Wreaths found at inns, and the signs found along canals and roadways, prove this to be true from the human perspective. This can also be true from God's perspective, who has instituted religious signs; such is the case with the sacraments which are also referred to as signs.

There is an external, visible, and tangible substance present in every sacrament -- a substance distinct from the Word of God. Wherever such a substance is lacking, there is no sacrament. The church has at all times maintained this, and this is therefore also the basis for the following sentiment: When the Word is conjoined to the element, there is a sacrament. The Word which is conjoined to the element is twofold: There is the institutional formula by which this element is established as a sign and seal, and the Word of promise, assuring that the promised benefits of the covenant of grace will be given to the believing partakers of the sacraments. That there is the presence of a visible, tangible substance in each sacrament is evident in all sacraments.

(1) In circumcision there was the removal of the foreskin; in the Passover there was the lamb; in baptism there is water; and in the Lord's Supper there are bread and wine.

(2) The very nature of a sacrament requires this. Something cannot be a sealing sign unless it be visible and tangible. This must be noted in reference to the Papists who, in order to justify their seven sacraments, maintain that the hearing of the Word can designate something to be a sacrament. However, then there would 1) be no difference between the Word and a sacrament, and 2) either the sound of the words would then constitute the sacrament -- however, there would then be no agreement between a sign and the matter signified -- or else that which one wishes to convey by the sound of the voice would constitute the sacrament; but there would then be no external sign. It thus remains certain that a tangible and visible substance must be present in each sacrament. There is also the interaction with the elements by the minister who sprinkles the water, breaks the bread, pours the wine, and passes around the poured wine and the broken bread; and likewise by the communicant, who receives, takes, eats, and drinks them. These actions themselves also have their meaning and application. The Matter Signified in the Sacraments The third aspect to be noted in each sacrament is the matter which is signified. This is Christ and all His merits. It is evident in the following passages that the external signs point to Christ. "Know ye

not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:3); "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27); "Take, eat: this is My body ... this do in remembrance of Me. ... This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). It is also evident that the sacraments point to the merits of Christ. "... be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16); "... which is broken for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24); "For this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

These two -- the external sign and the matter signified -- are not one and the same, but are distinguished from each other. They are distinguished in nature, 1) the one being earthly and the other heavenly, 2) the one being enjoyed with the body and the other with the soul, and 3) the one pertaining to the body and the other to the soul. The Relationship Between the Sign and the Matter in the Sacrament

Fourthly, there is a relationship between the sign and the matter signified. These elements are not to be considered as merely water, bread, and wine, but as referring to something else: Christ's body and blood, broken and shed to make satisfaction. The elements are entirely and purely representative in nature, so that by way of representation the sign is united to the matter. This is not a physical union such as exists between substance and form, and soul and body. It is not a local union, as when two bodies are joined together, so that the body and blood of Christ would be physically united to the water, bread, and wine. It is also not a spiritual union, as if the efficacy of the matter signified were infused and would in actuality bring about the forgiveness of sins and regeneration in the communicant. It is rather a representative relationship, only consisting in applying the sign to the matter signified and the matter signified to the sign with the mind and faith -- and then as determined by God in His Word, and not by way of mere contemplation or imagination. This representative relationship does not exist in the nature of the element nor in the exercise of faith and the believing use of the element. It is also not established as a result of the minister's pronouncement of the institutional formula and promise. Instead, this relationship exists by reason of divine institution, and the communicant accordingly uses the signs (given by the minister) by faith. By faith in Christ's institution and promise, the communicant thus, in a sealing manner, makes application of Christ's suffering and its efficacy unto the forgiveness of sins, Christ being truly present, albeit not bodily. When a bride receives the wedding ring and subsequently views it, she considers it to be a representation of the love and faithfulness of the absent bridegroom, and her love to him is thereby strengthened and stimulated. In like manner, the communicant partakes of both the sign and the matter signified simultaneously. This is true for circumcision (Genesis 17:7; Genesis 17:11), the Passover (Exodus 12:14), holy baptism (Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:27), and the Lord's Supper. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Papists and Lutherans are not satisfied with such a representative relationship. They maintain that in the Lord's Supper there is a local and physical representation of Christ, although not in baptism. However, they each view this differently -- a difference we shall discuss later. When we insist that the relationship is representative, it is their opinion that we do not truly unite the sign with the matter signified, but that we only imagine something which does not exist. They ought to and indeed do know, however, that -- apart from this instance -- there are other real relationships

besides those which are purely physical in nature. A spiritual relationship is as genuine as a physical relationship. Does not Christ dwell in believers (Galatians 2:20)? Does not Christ dwell in their hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17)? Do not believers have fellowship with each other, the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3), or is all this also only imagination with them?

We maintain, however, that this relationship is real, as Scripture states it to be. Furthermore, this spiritual relationship has as its basis the institutional formula and promise; this relationship is therefore not imaginary but true and certain. The relationship between the water in holy baptism and the blood of Christ -- signified by the water -- is that they cleanse and purify. As water removes the pollution of the body, the blood of Christ likewise washes and purifies from the spiritual pollutions of sin. "And from Jesus Christ, who ... washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5). The relationship between bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and the body and blood signified by this bread and wine, consists in that they nourish, strengthen, and yield refreshment. As bread nourishes and strengthens the body, the crucified body of Christ -- that is, His meritorious suffering and death -- likewise nourishes the soul. Wine rejoices the heart of man; this is likewise true for the blood of Christ when partaken of by faith. "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; ... For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him" (John 6:35; John 6:54-56). This representative relationship and resemblance between the sign and the matter signified have engendered a variety of expressions relative to the sacraments. First, it occurs that the sign bears the name of the matter signified. Circumcision is called the covenant: "This is My covenant ... every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Genesis 17:10); the Lamb is the Passover: "... it (the lamb) is the Lord's passover" (Exodus 12:11); the bread is Christ's body: "This is my body" (Matthew 26:26); the wine is the New Testament: "This cup is the New Testament in My blood" (1 Corinthians 11:25); and the water is "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5).

Secondly, the matter signified bears the name of the sign. Christ is called the Passover: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). He is also called the Lamb: "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36); the manna (John 6:51); also the Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Thirdly, the efficacy of the matter signified is attributed to the sign, the removal of sin: "... the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him" (Numbers 5:8); "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16).

Fourthly, the matter signified is attributed to the ceremony associated with the sign. It is said that Christ's blood is sprinkled, which in fact was true for the sign: "... the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24); "... unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). The Purpose of the Sacraments The fifth aspect to be noted in each sacrament is its purpose. The highest purpose of all things is the glory of God. This is therefore also true for the sacraments. "The cup of blessing which we bless ..." (1 Corinthians 10:16). The believing soul rejoices since all the benefits of the covenant of grace have been sealed to him and he acknowledges and praises God for His goodness and mercy. He gives Him the honor and glory, as it is all out of Him and through Him. Having nothing wherewith he can repay the Lord for all His benefits, he thanks Him with his heart, mouth, and deeds. The other

purpose of the sacraments in regard to the true partakers is to represent Christ and all His benefits spiritually, to signify all this, and to bring to mind all that pertains to the suffering and death of Christ as Mediator. David did this in the ministry of shadows: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalms 27:4). Therefore the sacraments are called signs, since they visibly represent that which is invisible. The Sacraments are Also Seals The sacraments do not only signify, but they above all seal to true communicants that they are partakers of the promises of the gospel, all the benefits of the covenant of grace, and of Christ and all His fullness. This applies to true believers only; for them the sacrament is a seal. The unconverted, however, not having true faith, do not benefit from the sacraments due to their sin and unbelief; and therefore, instead of having a sealing function, the sacraments make their judgment all the heavier. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body ... (and) shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:29; 1 Corinthians 11:27).

Socinians, Anabaptists, and Papists are in error here. They agree in their denial that the sacraments are seals; however, they differ as far as the purpose of the sacraments is concerned. Socinians and Anabaptists maintain that sacraments:

(1) are mere external signs by which faith (concerning the nature of which they are also in error) is only stimulated, maintaining that sacraments display the suffering and death of Christ in the signs and are merely a symbol and illustration of grace; and

(2) serve as a symbol of mutual union, thereby distinguishing believers from Jews and Gentiles. The Papists deny the sealing function of the sacraments. In their opinion, the sacraments themselves have the efficacy to engender grace. The church, on the contrary, holds to God's Word, maintaining that the sacraments are seals whereby the covenant of grace is sealed to true believers. This is first of all evident from Romans 4:11, "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith." It is stated expressly that the sacrament of circumcision was a seal, and that this was received by faith and imputed to Abraham by God, thereby sealing to him the righteousness of Christ.

Evasive Argument: This is only stated in reference to circumcision.

Answer: The circumstances of the sacraments are indeed different, but in essence they are all one and the same as far as purpose and efficacy are concerned. That which is essentially true of an individual is essentially true for such individuals. If rationality is an essential characteristic of John, Peter, and Paul, it is so concerning all men. If one sacrament is a sign, it is true for all; and if one sacrament is a seal, all are seals.

Secondly, the Passover also had the efficacy of a seal. "It is the Lord's passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. ... And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:11-13). Furthermore, consider 1 Corinthians 10:3-4, "And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Sealing efficacy is also attributed to baptism: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?"

(This is for confirmation that Christ's death is for us.) Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). This conveys that baptism does not only seal that one is a partaker of Christ, but also that he will be a partaker of sanctification. Sealing efficacy is also attributed to the Lord's Supper: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). How else can the cup and the bread constitute communion with Christ, except that one is sealed as being a partaker of His suffering and death? The blatant evasive argument advanced by the Papists will be answered at the appropriate time.

Thirdly, other symbols of God's promises, which are not sacraments of the covenant of grace, have a sealing efficacy; therefore, this is much more true for the sacraments. Consider the rainbow, for instance: "And I, behold, I establish My covenant with you ... and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you ... neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood ... I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant (that is, of My immutable promise) between Me and the earth" (Genesis 9:9-13). Observe this likewise with Gideon's fleece (Judges 6:37, etc.). The dryness and wetness was a sign whereby the defeat of the Midianites was sealed. Likewise, Christ washing the feet of the apostles symbolized their spiritual cleansing (John 13:6-10).

It is evident that the sacraments seal much more than that, for they are signs of the covenant of grace. "And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you" (Genesis 17:11). Nothing can be a sign of the covenant, however, except that it be sealed by this covenant. Since all sacraments have an external sign (as has been demonstrated above), all evasive arguments have been unravelled and it remains certain that the sacraments are signs which seal.

Objection #1: If the sacraments seal the grace and merits of Christ, grace would be sealed to many who are no partakers of this grace, such as all hypocrites and unconverted persons.

Answer: Such an argument would be valid if, as the Papists maintain, the sacraments would have an inherent efficacy. However, since no one is sealed by the sacraments except those who partake of them by faith, this objection is without validity. The engagement ring seals faithfulness; this, however, is neither true for all, nor for the one who steals it. This is only true for the bride who is engaged to be married, to whom it was given as a confirmation of faithfulness by the bridegroom.

Objection #2: If the sacraments had a sealing function, the sacraments would be more efficacious than the Word of God -- that Word which irrefutably supersedes everything in efficacy and infallibility, and is fully sufficient to render assurance to all. A sealed contract is more efficacious than a bad contract.

Answer (1) Word and sacraments are of equal certainty and infallibility, since they both originate in the true God; we therefore believe the one as well as the other.

(2) The manner in which assurance is wrought differs. Even though the Word of promise is sufficient, one must nevertheless deem it to be an act of unsearchable wisdom and goodness that God assists man in his weakness by granting assurance in a variety of ways, doing this in a

manner which is most appropriate for man consisting in body and soul.

(3) One could likewise object before the Lord that the divine oath was unnecessary, the Word being sufficient. Such persons, however, are rebuked and refuted by the apostle. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:17-18). The Signs Do Not Communicate Grace

Since the Papists deny the sealing function of the sacraments, viewing them as being operative by way of infused efficacy, it is necessary to consider this matter somewhat more closely.

Question: Is grace physically inherent in the signs of the New Testament sacraments and do they function *ex opere operato*; that is, do these signs bestow, work, and communicate this grace to those who receive them?

Answer: Papists are very divided about the manner in which grace is inherent in the sacraments and is communicated to the communicants. They agree in essence, however, and answer this question in the absolute affirmative.

Several Lutherans also lean in that direction when they refer to the sacraments as vehicles, vessels, channels, troughs, and as true and essential causes whereby grace, merited by Christ's death, is rendered and communicated to the communicant. The Reformed church answers negatively upon the question, but maintains that the sacraments function *moraliter* (in a moral sense), that is, uniting the communicants to the matter signified by faith on the basis of the institutional formula and the promise. This is applied to their soul as they partake of the sacraments, and they are sealed as being partakers of Christ and all His benefits.

Since this question actually pertains to baptism, and since the Papists maintain that Christ is personally present in the Lord's Supper, thereby rendering the sacrament efficacious, we shall deal with this question in the next chapter. A Comparison of the Sacraments of the Old and New Testaments

Having discussed the five requisites for each sacrament, we shall also discuss the resemblance and the difference between the sacraments of the Old and New Testaments, and between the Word and the sacraments, and consider the number of sacraments in the New Testament. The covenant of grace, being first revealed in the first promise made to Adam, is and will remain immutable until the last day; however, the administration of this covenant differs. Prior to Christ it was administered differently from how it is administered after His coming. In both cases it is confirmed by means of sacraments, which differ in the same manner as the modes of administration differ. In the Old Testament, prior to the coming of Christ, and during the time period from Adam to Abraham, the church was gathered indiscriminately from a variety of nations. Little is recorded of this time period. We know, however, that the covenant of grace was sealed by means of sacrifices, sealing to believers the atonement of the Messiah by reason of His suffering and death. Subsequently, God called Abraham and incorporated the church in his seed, giving her, in addition to the sacrifices, the distinct sign of circumcision as a seal of the covenant. When this nation with which God had established the covenant of grace -- which is therefore called a national covenant -- journeyed from Egypt to Canaan, God appointed the sacrament of the Passover for

them, while the sacrifices continued which the church had from the beginning. This external administration, which typified the future Messiah, changed after Christ's coming. This was also true for the sacraments, which are now only the sacraments of holy baptism and the Lord's Supper.

These sacraments, those of the Old and New Testaments, agree in some points and differ in other points. They agree in the following four matters:

(1) They have both been instituted by the same Author: God.

(2) The matter signified is the same in both: Christ.

(3) The means of application is the same in both: faith.

(4) They both have the same purpose: to signify and to seal. The differences are as follows:

(1) The external sign is different. In the Old Testament they were the circumcision of the foreskin, sacrifices, and a passover lamb; now they are water, bread, and wine.

(2) The point of reference differs. In the Old Testament it was Christ who would come, and now it is Christ who has come.

(3) They differ in clarity. In the Old Testament they were more obscure but now are more clear. This was not due to there being lesser resemblance, but due to all future matters being more obscure to us than the present.

(4) They differ in the ease of use. In the Old Testament circumcision was painful, the sacrifices and passover lamb were more costly, and everything was more cumbersome as far as the body is concerned; now the sacraments require less effort. The Papists, in order to exalt the sacraments of the New Testament, belittle those of the Old Testament and maintain that the difference consists in this: The sacraments of the Old Testament had no inherent grace, but only typified this; however, in the sacraments of the New Testament grace is inherent and in actuality works and bestows grace. This we resolutely deny. Their error is evident for the following reasons:

First, the sacraments of the New Testament are without inherent grace and do not in actuality apply this grace; this already has been proven and will again be proven. Therefore, this cannot constitute the difference.

Secondly, the sacrifices sealed the forgiveness of sins by Christ, which is to be seen in the letter to the Hebrews. Circumcision was a sign and seal of the covenant (Genesis 17:10), and a sign and a seal of the righteousness of faith (Romans 4:11). The passover lamb was a sign and seal of the spiritual deliverance by Christ, our Passover (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7; Exodus 12:11). They therefore were not merely shadows of grace, for a seal grants a right to the matter which it seals, and assures one of being a partaker of grace.

Thirdly, "And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:3-4). What resemblance is there? There is not a resemblance as far as the sign, but as far as Christ is concerned -- which is now also true in baptism and the Lord's Supper. Therefore there is no such difference between the Old and New Testaments.

Objection #1: The sacraments of the Old Testament are shadows and thus they are not the matter itself.

Answer: They were neither shadows of the sacraments of the New Testament, nor of the grace to be given in the New Testament; rather, they were shadows of Christ and of all His benefits. Not only were they shadows, but they were also signs and seals of it, such as is true for the sacraments of the New Testament.

Objection #2: The following passages deny all value and efficacy of the sacraments of the Old Testament: "Circumcision is nothing" (1 Corinthians 7:19); "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything" (Galatians 6:15).

Answer (1) The apostle refers to the New Testament time in which all the ceremonies of the Old Testament -- and thus also circumcision and the Passover -- have been abolished. Therefore they are of no benefit to us; yes, they are even detrimental, since they imply that Christ has not come as yet.

(2) The apostle considers the external matters as divorced from the matter which is signified, that is, from the essence of all shadows and sacraments in both the Old and New Testaments. He states that all external matters and privileges have no value, but that all salvation is in Christ, and is received unto justification and sanctification.

Objection #3: In the New Testament we have better promises and a better covenant. "For finding fault with them, He saith ... when I will make a new covenant" (Hebrews 8:8); "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" (Hebrews 7:22).

Answer: The word "better" does not pertain to the promised benefits; this ought to be proven before using these texts as an argument. These benefits are identical in both Testaments, since there is but one covenant between God and man, and since Christ is the same yesterday and today. Rather, the word "better" pertains to the fact that Christ had not yet come, and now, He indeed has. Everything is now clearer, and the Holy Spirit is poured out upon His people in a more abundant manner. A Comparison of the Word and the Sacraments There are also some resemblances and differences between the Word and the sacraments. The Word of God and the sacraments resemble each other as follows:

(1) They both have God as their Author.

(2) They both hold forth Christ unto justification and sanctification, and both lead the soul to Christ.

(3) They both are to the comfort and assurance of true believers. Their differences are manifold:

(1) The Word is the means unto faith and repentance; the sacraments are not instrumental in conversion, but rather require repentance and faith prior to use.

(2) The Word is addressed to all, converted and unconverted alike; the sacraments are only for believing converts.

(3) The Word is operative without the sacraments; however, the sacraments are not operative without the Word.

(4) The Word is only for those who have the ability to understand; the sacrament of baptism is also for children.

(5) The Word promises and the sacraments seal.

(6) Without the Word there is no salvation; however, salvation is possible apart from the sacraments.

(7) The Word functions in reference to hearing, and the sacraments function in regard to hearing, vision, smell, taste, and feeling. The Number of Sacraments

There are two sacraments in the New Testament: holy baptism and the Lord's Supper. That these two are sacraments is evident:

(1) from the five matters which must be present in all sacraments: its institution as a sacrament by God, the presence of a visible and tangible element, Christ as the matter signified, the agreement between the sign and the matter signified, and the fact that they signify and seal the covenant of grace to believers -- all of which has been discussed above.

(2) Scripture conjoins these two: "And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink" (1 Corinthians 10:2-4); "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). It is not necessary to elaborate about this since these two sacraments are acknowledged by everyone. The Papists, however, not being satisfied with these two, have contrived five other matters which they also have designated as sacraments. They are: Confirmation, Confession, Holy Orders, Marriage, and Extreme Unction. It is evident that they are not sacraments since the five requisites of a sacrament, discussed above, are absent. With the one this mark is missing, and with the other different marks are absent. Even though some are mentioned in the Word of God, they have nevertheless not been appointed to be sacraments, and that is the essential point here. We therefore reject them as inventions of men and deem Matthew 15:19 to be applicable here: "But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

044. Chapter 39: Holy Baptism

----- CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE -----

Holy Baptism The Word Baptism Defined The first New Testament sacrament is holy baptism. The Greek word baptizo means “to baptize”: “... be baptized every one of you” (Acts 2:38). It also means to insert or to immerse into water: “... that he may dip [Note: In the Statenvertaling the word “dope” is used, which is the subjunctive of “dopen.” This verb is the equivalent of “to baptize.”] the tip of his finger in water” (Luke 16:24). Since the insertion into water occurs for purification purposes, it is also translated as “to wash.” “And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not” (Mark 7:4).

Consequently, the words baptismos, baptisma mean “baptism”: “Of the doctrine of baptisms ...” (Hebrews 6:2). It also means “washing”: “... the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables” (Mark 7:4). The word “baptism” has various connotations. It first of all can refer to doctrine. “This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; ... knowing only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25). The ancients referred to this as the baptism of light.

Secondly, it refers to heavy suffering, to be overwhelmed with suffering, and to be immersed in suffering as one would be immersed into water. “But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luke 12:50). This is referred to as the baptism of blood.

Thirdly, it refers to the abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit, whereby the soul is purified and is made to burn with spiritual zeal.

“He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matthew 3:11). This is referred to as the baptism of fire.

Fourthly, it refers to being showered upon, to be immersed in water, to be sprinkled with water, and thus to being washed. As such, it is used 1) in a civil sense for the cleansing of the body and of other things; 2) for ceremonial washings in the Old Testament: “... and divers washings (baptisms)” (Hebrews 9:10); and 3) in reference to the New Testament's first sacrament which we shall now consider. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). In our treatment of this subject matter, we shall follow the same order which we have pursued in the previous chapter. We shall consider: 1) the Author, 2) the external sign, 3) the matter signified, 4) the relationship between the sign and the matter signified, 5) the purpose, and 6) the subject -- who are to be baptized. **The Author of Baptism** The Author of holy baptism is God, that is, Christ, the Bridegroom of His church. This is evident in the following passages: “... but He that sent me to baptize with water” (John 1:33); “The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?” (Matthew 21:25). The Lord Jesus concludes from this, and convinces them by their own faith, that the baptism of John was from God. Christ gave the following command to His disciples when He was about to ascend to heaven: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). The instrumental causes, the administrators of baptism, are men commissioned by God to baptize. The first of these was John;

he was therefore called the Baptist and his baptism, the baptism of John (cf. Matthew 3:1; Matthew 21:25). Afterwards Christ's disciples baptized upon His command. "... that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples)" (John 4:1-2). After His resurrection He commanded His disciples (and thus all ministers) to baptize, giving them the promise that He would be with them until the end of the world (Matthew 28:19-20).

Question: Is there an essential difference between the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ, or are they the same?

Answer: Socinians, Anabaptists, as well as Papists maintain -- albeit with different objectives -- that they differ essentially. We maintain that there is some difference in the circumstances: 1) John baptized as the forerunner of Christ and sealed the forgiveness of sins by Christ, who had already come and was engaged in His atoning work, but had not yet finished all things. 2) With John's baptism there was no outpouring of extraordinary gifts. 3) It was less clear in nature. We do maintain, however, that they are of one and the same essence. This is first of all evident because all that belongs to the essence of a sacrament is equally true for the baptisms of both John and Christ. 1) They both have one and the same Author (John 1:33); 2) they have the same sign, that is, water (Matthew 3:11); 3) they signify the same matter: Christ's blood unto the forgiveness of sins (Acts 19:4); 4) the relationship between the sign and the matter signified is the same: the washing away of filth -- in the one of the body, and in the other of the soul; 5) they have the same purpose: incorporation into the church, the sealing of the forgiveness of sins (Acts 19:4), and conversion (Matthew 3:11). All these matters are identical in the baptism of Christ, which will subsequently be demonstrated in this chapter. It is consequently one and the same baptism.

Secondly, the baptism with which Christ was, and believers are, baptized, is one and the same baptism. "... one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5); "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Christ was baptized with no other baptism but the baptism of John. Therefore the baptism of John and of Christ are one and the same baptism.

Thirdly, there is but one baptism in the New Testament. The baptism of John was a New Testament baptism, for he preached Christ who had already come (although He had not yet died) as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). And all the prophets and the law have prophesied until John. The baptism of John and of Christ are therefore one and the same.

Objection #1: A very clear distinction is made in Matthew 3:11, for John baptized with water, and Christ with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Answer (1) The baptism of the apostles is administered with water until this present day; by the same argument this would then also not be the baptism of Christ. The invalidity of this argument should be obvious to everyone.

(2) There is a distinction here between the external sign, which John could only administer, and the matter signified, which only Christ could give.

Objection #2: John did not baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity, which the apostles, however, did upon Christ's command. It is therefore not one and the same baptism.

Answer (1) The doctrine of the Holy Trinity did not have as many opponents as is presently the case, and it was therefore not necessary to state this expressly each time. Not everything John said is recorded; from the fact that it is not recorded, one can therefore not conclude that it did not transpire.

(2) He had been sent by a triune God, and John knew Him who had sent him. Knowing Him, he also preached Him and therefore also baptized in His Name.

(3) The Holy Trinity revealed itself in the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:16-17). The Father spoke from heaven to the Son who was being baptized, and the Spirit of God descended.

(4) Nowhere is the baptism of John disqualified, which would have occurred if John had not baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity.

(5) Then Christ and all others would not have been baptized in the correct manner.

Objection #3: Those persons who were baptized by John were later rebaptized, as is to be observed in Acts 19:4-5, "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Answer: This misunderstanding is a result of separating the words of Acts 19:4 from those in Acts 19:5, and by acknowledging the words of Acts 19:4 to be the words of Paul, but deeming the words in Acts 19:5 to be those of Luke, the writer of this history -- as if he were recounting what followed upon the instruction of Paul. This, however, would have to be proven. These words integrate very well when one conjoins Acts 19:4 and Acts 19:5, and considers them to be the words of the apostle Paul. He instructed the disciples in Acts 19:4 about the manner in which John baptized and taught, and thereupon declared that all who heard it were obedient and believed John's preaching, were baptized by him.

(2) Even if one admits that these disciples who were baptized by John were rebaptized, it therefore does not follow that John's baptism differed from the baptism of the apostles. Neither here nor elsewhere is this baptism disqualified. From this it could only be alleged that the disciples of John were baptized twice; this, however, is denied.

Then the point of contention remains whether or not one may be baptized twice. We maintain that this generally ought not to occur. There is no need for repetition since it is the sacrament of regeneration and incorporation into the church, which indeed only occurs but once. Moreover, an example of such repetition is lacking.

If one considers grace to be inherent in baptism, causing regeneration in the baptized person by reason of this efficacious power, then it could not be repeated, for whoever is regenerated remains regenerated. Since, however, baptism is only a seal of regeneration, there is no objection as such if someone were to be sealed twice in reference to the same matter. If someone, having been baptized in his youth, does not know and cannot ascertain whether he was baptized, and is nevertheless very desirous to be baptized, what objection would there be if he were rebaptized?

This concern issues forth from the Papist position concerning the efficacy of baptism; it is, however, contrary to the practice of the apostles and the church.

These disciples of John could have had a strong desire to be baptized by the apostles, for at that time it was generally accompanied by the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. In these early times Paul, being cautious, was very lenient as far as the ceremonies were concerned, and he would also have been lenient toward the disciples of John by baptizing them again. Even if he has done so to a few at a special occasion, we nevertheless do not admit that it thus follows that the baptism of John was repeated to everyone. This was neither true upon the day of Pentecost, nor thereafter. Much less is it true that the baptism of John is essentially different from the baptism of the apostles, and that thus the baptism of the apostles was rejected. The Qualifications of Those Who are Authorized to Baptize

We have thus demonstrated that the baptism of John and Christ are essentially one and the same baptism. We shall now proceed to consider the qualifications of those who are permitted to administer baptism. They must be men who have been lawfully commissioned to preach and baptize. This is first of all evident from common practice since the time of Christ. Secondly, Christ has conjoined preaching and baptizing; the apostles -- and thus all ministers -- have been commissioned to baptize. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them" (Matthew 28:19). Thirdly, baptism must be administered in the name of Christ; that is, upon the command and according to the institution of Christ. "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38).

Therefore no one may baptize unless he has been commanded by Christ to do so -- and thus is a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1).

Here we differ with the Papists.

Question: In case of emergency, when an unbaptized person -- whether young or old -- is at the point of death and there is no ordained minister at hand, may not a private individual (be it a man or a woman) administer baptism to such a dying person?

Answer: Papists answer affirmatively, since they deem baptism to be absolutely essential unto salvation, and declare an unbaptized person to be damned. We, however, answer this question negatively. One who is not ordained may, under no circumstances, administer baptism. Salvation is not contingent upon baptism, and a believer can indeed be saved without baptism. We prove this as follows:

First, as we have shown above, it is just as necessary to be divinely commissioned to baptize as it is to preach. Private individuals, however, are without such a commission and thus they may not baptize.

Secondly, since salvation is not contingent upon baptism and baptism has no inherent power to bring about regeneration in those who are baptized -- which has been shown in the previous chapter and will be demonstrated in this chapter -- then such a case of emergency never exists. Consequently, a private individual may not baptize. Even those parties who permit this at no other time but in case of emergency, concur in this.

Thirdly, the Lord's Supper may under no circumstances be administered by a private individual, and this is therefore also true for baptism. The sacraments are of one and the same nature. The one does not require a different person for its administration than the other.

Objection #1: To be instrumental in the salvation of souls is a work of love to which all Christians are obligated. To baptize someone in case of emergency is equivalent to saving a soul. It is thus the duty of every Christian to baptize in case of emergency.

Answer: Such a case of emergency does not exist; baptism is not the saving of souls. This argument has thus been rendered invalid.

Objection #2: In the New Testament, we read of several private individuals who have baptized. Philip baptized the eunuch (Acts 8:38); Ananias baptized Paul (Acts 22:16), and those who belonged to the household of Cornelius were baptized by private individuals (Acts 10:48).

Answer (1) This argument would prove more than is the intent of the opposing party, for private individuals would then always be able to baptize without their imaginary case of emergency; there was no such case of emergency in these examples.

(2) We deny that the individuals mentioned above were without a divine commission; let this be proven. Philip was a deacon (Acts 6:5), whom both parties consider to have been commissioned to baptize, and furthermore, he was an evangelist (Acts 21:8). Ananias was a disciple who received an express command from God (Acts 9:10-11; Acts 9:15). It is not mentioned who baptized the family of Cornelius; Peter himself was present there, and thus, there was no emergency. Baptism was administered in obedience to a command, and thus, whoever baptized was commissioned to do so.

Objection #3: Zipporah circumcised her son (Exodus 4:25), and therefore women are also permitted to baptize.

Answer (1) They contradict themselves, for when a priest is present, they will not permit a woman to baptize. This is the case here, for Moses belonged to the tribe of Levi.

(2) This is an isolated example and was performed by a woman who did this with a violent temper and in a fit of anger; this is not to be imitated.

(3) The Levitical ministry had not yet been instituted.

(4) Papists maintain that there is an essential difference between the sacraments of the Old and New Testaments.

One, therefore, cannot draw a logical conclusion from the one to the other upon the basis of this argument.

Additional objection: God was pleased with this act, for His wrath was pacified by it.

Answer: God's anger was pacified by this act because the child had been circumcised -- but not because Zipporah had done it, and had done so in anger. God likewise blessed the Egyptian midwives for having helped the Hebrews in saving their children, but not because of their lies (Exodus 1:20-21).

Question: Are heretics permitted to baptize? Are baptisms performed by heretics true baptisms?

Answer: First, baptism must be performed in the true church of Jesus Christ, for by baptism the baptized person is incorporated into the church in which the baptism is administered. Secondly, it must be administered by an ordained minister. If someone has therefore been baptized in an assembly which is heretical in doctrine, and whose ministers consequently are not lawfully ordained, such a baptized person, upon becoming a believer, must be baptized. This is not rebaptism, for the first baptism was not baptism. A particular church can be in error in many points; however, as long as its doctrinal foundation remains pure, it remains a true church, and the veracity of baptism is not negated by impurity in doctrine. This is also true if the minister is personally unconverted and secretly espouses heretical views, for the efficacy of baptism is not contingent upon the person who administers it. The External Sign of Baptism The second thing to be considered in reference to baptism is the external sign. In this respect we need to consider the element as well as the ceremony, that is, the manner of administration. The element is water, that is, common, clean water, without any distinction. John the Baptist and the apostles used this. "I indeed baptize you with water" (Matthew 3:11); "... He that sent me to baptize with water" (John 1:33); "... because there was much water there" (John 3:23). This is also true for the apostles: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized" (Acts 10:47); "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized ... and they went down both into the water ... and he baptized him" (Acts 8:36; Acts 8:38). Baptism is therefore called "the washing of water" (Ephesians 5:26). The Papist additions of exorcisms, making of crosses, papal saliva, oil, salt, flour, and other such concoctions are human fabrications which are sacrilegious and therefore are to be rejected with abhorrence. The Ceremony or the Manner of Administration: Immersion or Sprinkling In early times, and in countries with a warm climate, immersion was used most frequently. The Lord Jesus was baptized by immersion (Matthew 3:16), as was the eunuch (Acts 8:38). The apostle also refers to this: "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death" (Romans 6:4). Subsequent to this, however, sprinkling has come into use, just as sprinkling is now generally in use, be it once or three times. The Greeks and Russians still use immersion. One need neither argue about this nor be concerned, however, since it is one and the same as far as the matter itself and the assurance it yields.

First, the verb "baptize" can also be translated as "sprinkle." "... except they wash, they eat not" (Mark 7:4). The washing of hands generally occurs by allowing water to be poured upon the hands. "... Here is Elisha ... which poured water on the hands of Elijah" (2 Kings 3:11).

Secondly, the matter signified, namely, the blood of Christ as cleansing the soul, is expressed as sprinkling. "And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling" (Hebrews 12:24).

Thirdly, the relationship between the sign and the matter signified is expressed both by sprinkling and immersion, for one cleanses the body by both methods. Concerning sprinkling or pouring out we read, "Then shall I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean" (Ezekiel 36:25).

Fourthly, it is obvious that the apostles also have used sprinkling in baptizing the three thousand upon the day of Pentecost, the jailor, as well as at other occasions.

It also makes no difference if one sprinkles the person to be baptized once or three times. If one sprinkles but once, the reference is to the Trinity of the divine Being; if one sprinkles three times, the reference is to the three Persons. In considering the ceremony or manner of sprinkling, one may also consider the pronouncement of the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," as belonging to this since 1) Christ in issuing His command to baptize uses these words; 2) it is a certainty that one must be baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, for there is no other God but Hebrews 3:1-19) the person baptized is declared to be the property of a triune God; 4) the pronouncement of these words has at all times been used in the church; 5) there is a special relationship between each Person and the person being baptized: that the Father is his Father, the Son is his Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit is his Comforter and Sanctifier; and 6) the Holy Trinity is expressly confessed in this manner. One must therefore preserve the pronouncement of these words.

If, however, the church acknowledges and confesses the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and if the adult to be baptized does likewise, I would neither consider such a baptism to be unlawful nor deem it to be null and void, even if the words in question were not expressly pronounced at his baptism. I neither consider the pronouncement of the words to be relevant to the essential nature of baptism, nor does it validate baptism as such. I do not know, however, if such a case has ever transpired, for the baptism of heretics is not baptism, regardless of whether they mention the Trinity or not. When the apostle exhorts the people in Acts 2:38 to let themselves be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and when it is related in Acts 8:16 that those of Samaria were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, this neither proves that baptism was administered upon the pronouncement of the words, "I baptize thee in the name of Jesus Christ," nor that the names of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost were not used; rather, these expressions only indicate that baptism was administered upon the command and according to the ordinance of Christ. Baptism in the name of Christ does not exclude, but includes, the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The Matter Signified in Baptism The third particular to be considered is the matter signified; that is, that which the water and the manner of administration typify: the blood of Christ as washing away the filth of the soul, that is, sin.

The Relationship Between the Sign and the Matter Signified The fourth matter to be considered is the relationship between the sign and the matter signified. This consists in the fact that as water cleanses the body from filth, so the blood of Christ cleanses the soul from sin. The first is verified by experience, and the second is taught by Scripture. "... Jesus Christ, who ... washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5). The water of baptism signifies and seals the washing of the soul; this is evident in the following passages: "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26); "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). The filth of the soul pertains to both the guilt and the pollution of sin; the washing away of both is sealed in baptism. Concerning the removal of guilt we read, "... be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16). Concerning the removal of pollution we read, "... He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

The Purpose of Baptism The fifth matter to be considered is the purpose of baptism, which consists in the assurance and sealing of the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and incorporation into the church. Concerning the forgiveness of sins we read, "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith" (Romans 4:11). If the Old Testament sacrament functioned as a seal, this is much

more true for baptism in the New Testament, which came in the place of circumcision. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in baptism" (Colossians 2:11-12). As far as regeneration is concerned, refer to Titus 3:5. Concerning incorporation into the church we read, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Concerning the purpose of baptism several questions need to be answered.

Question: Was baptism nothing more than a symbol of separation between Jews and Christians and between believers and unbelievers, this being the case only during the apostolic period?

Answer: This is the sentiment of the Socinians who deny the holy Trinity and the atonement of Christ, and thus any sealing function of the sacraments. We do indeed consider baptism to be a symbol of separation between believers, as it constitutes incorporation into the church. This, however, was not merely true at the outset of the New Testament period, but rather for the entire period. We furthermore maintain that baptism seals the forgiveness of sins in all ages until the end of the world. This has been confirmed above (cf. Romans 4:11; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Ephesians 5:26). Add to this Matthew 28:19-20, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It must be noted here that teaching is expressly distinguished from baptizing, and that the distortions of the Socinians, suggesting that in this instance baptizing is synonymous with doctrine, are contrary to the express words of the text. It must furthermore be noted that baptism was not -- as they say -- only a symbol of separation between the unconverted and the Jews who had been converted to Christianity, but that baptism had to be administered to all believing Gentiles of all manner of nations. It must also be noted that the administration of baptism had to continue until the end of the world, for the apostles had to teach all nations to observe whatsoever He had commanded them. This also included the command to baptize as expressed here. Christ also promises to be with them until the end of the world, which cannot have reference to the persons of the apostles, for they would not live that long. Rather, it pertains to the administration of baptism to their descendants by means of ministers.

Objection #1: There were several things in the original church which were but temporal, such as abstinence from eating of things which were strangled, the washing of feet, and the anointing of the sick with oil.

Answer (1) What conclusion does one wish to draw from this -- that baptism was only valid for that time? That is as illogical as concluding that the Bible was also for that time only, and that there is now no need for preaching.

(2) The reference to that which was strangled could only be for that time since it then gave offense to the Jews who were weak in the faith. The washing of feet was a civil labor of love in those countries where one travelled on bare feet. The anointing with oil was a ceremony which belonged to the gifts of healing; these having ceased, this likewise had to cease.

Objection #2: All ceremonies have come to an end; religion is now spiritual in nature, and therefore there can be no baptism.

Answer (1) The ceremonies which typified Christ have been eliminated by His coming.

(2) Religion in the Old Testament was also spiritual in nature.

(3) To be directed to spiritual matters by way of physical matters does not negate the spirituality of man's religion, for he consists of body and soul.

(4) It has pleased God to institute the sacraments and therefore foolish man must be silent.

Objection #3: Paul himself testified that he was not sent to baptize (1 Corinthians 1:17), and thus there is now no baptism.

Answer (1) If Paul indeed had not been sent to baptize, does it follow that none were commissioned to baptize -- also not those who were addressed by Christ in Matthew 28:19?

(2) Did Paul then baptize those whom he did baptize without a divine commission (1 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Corinthians 1:16)?

(3) "Not being sent to baptize" is not stated in the absolute sense of the word, but rather comparatively speaking. His primary commission was not to baptize, since baptism by immersion required much more time than preaching. Such expressions are used several times in God's Word. A Refutation of the Error that the Water of Baptism is Efficacious unto Salvation

Question: Does the water of baptism have inherent power to remove sins and to regenerate man ex opere operato (that is, by means of the external administration of the water to the person being baptized) and thus physically bring forth these said graces in the person being baptized? Can the water of baptism also be an actual and ordinary means unto regeneration in young children, apart from the hearing of the Word?

Answer: The Papists, together with the Socinians, deny any sealing function. The Socinians do so because they deny the atonement of Christ, and the Papists do so because they attribute the efficacy of baptism to the external signs. They therefore answer the question presented in the affirmative. We, however, answer this question resolutely in the negative.

First of all, a physical object cannot interact with the soul -- which is a spirit -- in a physical or natural manner, nor can it bring forth anything in it that is spiritual. The external sign, that is, the water of baptism, is of a physical nature; therefore the first proposition can be observed in nature. The second proposition is answered by Scripture, by the experience of all senses, and is admitted by the opposing parties themselves. For they themselves maintain that the water of baptism is and remains water and is not changed into the blood of Christ. Our conclusion thus remains in force.

Evasive Argument: Although a physical object of itself cannot interact with a soul, this can nevertheless occur by reason of the power of God, who can give a physical object an ability as He pleases.

Answer (1) It is first of all certain that it needs to be proven that God has given such efficacy to water in baptism; this never will, nor can possible be proven.

(2) If such efficacy had been communicated to water, namely, that it could engender such spiritual graces in the soul, water should then have spiritual characteristics, for the operations of any cause

are directly related to its qualities or characteristics. As are the qualities, so is likewise the efficacy of the operations; the efficacy of the operations agrees with the qualities. To be a physical object and yet to have spiritual qualities by which spiritual things are engendered in a spirit is contradictory in nature; a physical object would then be transformed into a nonphysical object. To be a physical object while simultaneously not being a physical object is as contradictory as “yes” and “no.” God is, however, a God of truth who works in His creatures in harmony with their nature; He does not reverse their nature.

Secondly, Scripture expressly denies that the sign has the efficacy to work grace. “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me ... shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matthew 3:11). Here the persons and their work and the efficacy of their work are placed in distinction to each other. John and Christ baptized with water, and baptizing with the Holy Spirit and with fire is being energized by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is denied that John, the water, and his baptism have this efficacy, but it is attributed to Christ. Therefore the baptized person receives saving graces, not due to the efficacy of the water, but from Christ through the Holy Spirit. This is also evident in 1 Peter 3:21, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” The apostle drew a parallel with the flood. Noah was saved by virtue of the water which caused the ark to float. Peter applied this to baptism, declaring that it also saves. He added to this the manner in which it does and does not save. He denied that it is the water of baptism which saves by saying, “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh”; but he posits salvation as being in Christ’s resurrection after His suffering, which is received by faith and sealed in baptism. Thereby the believing soul receives freedom to come to God with a conscience having been cleansed in the blood of Christ, and to ask if she is then not justified and has peace with God, a matter of which the soul becomes conscious while asking for it and perceives the efficacy while appropriating it.

Thirdly, whatever functions as a sign and a seal does not bring about the matter itself of which it is a sign and a seal. It is common knowledge that the entire thrust of a sign is to identify and to indicate something, and the entire thrust of a seal is to confirm and to guarantee. The rainbow does not have the capability of preventing a flood, the fleece of Gideon did not conquer the enemies, and the turning back of the shadow did not render health to Hezekiah. It is thus that the water of baptism is a sign and a seal, as has been demonstrated above from Romans 4:11. Consequently, the water of baptism does not beget grace.

Fourthly, since it is faith which renders baptism spiritually efficacious, it is thus not the water which does so due to inherent efficacy. Faith is not to be found in the water, but rather in the baptized person. This efficacy proceeds from faith. This is evident because the element is not a sacrament apart from the institutional formula and the promise. When the word is joined to the element, it then becomes a sacrament, and the Word of God cannot be operative and beneficial except it be received by faith (Hebrews 4:12); furthermore, one neither may nor can receive baptism except by faith: “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” (Acts 8:37; cf. Mark 16:16). Thus, the efficacy of baptism is not related to the water, but is due to faith which unites the sign to the matter signified, and is operative in reference to the institutional formula and promise.

Fifthly, if the water of baptism -- due to inherent efficacy -- would beget grace in the persons baptized in a physical, that is, natural manner, all who are baptized would be the recipients of the grace of justification and sanctification. Whatever has the inherent efficacy to be operative and is indeed operative, will be operative toward all objects which are within its sphere of influence. Fire warms the good as well as the evil. It would not matter whether a person were a Jew, Muslim, hypocrite, or heathen, or whether he was desirous for grace and to be a partaker of this grace; if such a person were baptized, even against his will, he would be the recipient of the grace of the removal of sin and regeneration. If he were to be killed at that every moment, he would then be saved, and it would thus be easy to get many of the most abominable among men into heaven. Shameful is such a doctrine! Scripture demonstrates the contrary and affirms that one who is baptized can go lost. Peter said to the baptized Simon the sorcerer, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:21). Paul says concerning the unqualified partakers of the sacraments that they make themselves guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:27). From all this it is very evident that the water of baptism does not have the inherent efficacy to beget grace.

Objection #1: The efficacy to remove sins, to regenerate, and to save are attributed to baptism and thus it must have this efficacy. Consider the following passages:

(1) "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

Answer: This text refutes their proposition, for water is denied such efficacy there; instead, efficacy is attributed to the Spirit of Christ which God gives His children.

(2) "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Answer 1) Two matters are joined here in reference to one result; which, however, are not equal as far as efficacy and necessity are concerned. Without faith no one can be saved; however, salvation is possible without being baptized. If faith is absent, baptism can be of no benefit, which is evident in the following: "... but he that believeth not [it does not say, "he that is not baptized"] shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

2) Baptism is conjoined to faith as sealing the veracity of the promises, thereby strengthening faith.

(3) "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Answer: There is no reference here whatsoever to the sacrament of baptism, but only to the Holy Spirit with His purifying power. He is therefore frequently compared to water and to fire due to the energy attending His operations (Matthew 3:11).

(4) "... be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38); "... be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16).

Answer 1) It is not stated here that either the water of baptism or the external deed of sprinkling forgives and washes away sin. This is the point that needs to be proven.

2) The reference is here to being baptized for the remission of sins. The remission of sins is God's pronouncement to men, acquitting them on the basis of the merits of Christ. This is applied to the

heart by faith, whereby one has peace with God (Romans 5:1). This faith is strengthened by baptism which seals God's promises concerning the remission of sins, and thus baptism is administered for the remission of sins, sealing this to believers.

3) The apostle addresses believers about baptism and the remission of sins. The entire difference pertains to the manner in which baptism washes away sin -- whether this be due to a physical or natural operation, or by reason of a moral or sealing efficacy, which is rendered efficacious by faith. The first we deny; the text presented does not speak of it with one letter, but rather, of being cleansed by the blood of Christ, which is received by faith and sealed by baptism.

(5) "That He might ... cleanse it with the washing of water" (Ephesians 5:26); "... the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

Answer 1) Again, there is not one word here which states that water and its external administration have the efficacy to cleanse and regenerate, and that this comes about in a natural way by virtue of inherent efficacy. This would have to be proven, and it is this which we deny. We readily admit and defend the fact that baptism purifies the heart; however, it must be understood in the sense in which the apostle states it: as sealing the washing away of sins by Christ's blood, whereby faith, being strengthened, purifies the heart the more powerfully from pollution (Acts 15:9). We also wish to safeguard the principle that the Holy Spirit renews and regenerates man. He does so by means of faith which, by the washing of water -- that is, baptism as sealing regeneration -- becomes stronger and thereby engenders comfort and sanctification. Concerning all these quoted texts it can be concluded that they speak of the sealing efficacy of baptism, and not of an inherent efficacy, whereby through the act of sprinkling, sins would be remitted unto justification and sanctification in a natural sense.

Objection #2: Small children are baptized who do not as yet have understanding and are as yet unable to be believingly exercised with their baptism in order to be sealed by it. Baptism either has no efficacy -- and is thus administered to them in vain -- or by reason of inherent efficacy must beget grace in a natural sense. Since the first concept is absurd, the second is therefore confirmed.

Answer 1) The children in the Old Testament were circumcised and their circumcision was not in vain; it nevertheless had no inherent efficacy to circumcise the heart. It is thus evident that a child's reception of a sacrament can be of benefit, even though the sacrament has no inherent efficacy to beget grace.

2) Since baptism functions as a sign and a seal, a child can likewise be sealed. God, the congregation, and thus also the parents, view him as being sealed. The parents derive their comfort from this, and the baptized child, upon coming to the years of discretion, derives from his baptism its sealing efficacy to his comfort and sanctification.

Having rendered the arguments concerning the presumed efficacy of baptism invalid, the three propositions founded upon this presumed efficacy are automatically rendered invalid as well. We can therefore refute them with a few words.

Question: Does baptism remit all past and present sins, not only in the sense that they are not imputed to those who are baptized, but that they have been utterly eradicated as far as guilt and

pollution are concerned?

Answer: The Papists answer in the affirmative and we reply in the negative, because 1) baptism has no inherent efficacy whatsoever to remove sin by way of a natural process;

2) if baptism were to remove sin in such a manner as to eradicate them fully, man would be as Adam was before the fall. Scripture says, however, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Proverbs 20:9).

Question: Is baptism absolutely essential unto salvation?

Answer: The Papists answer in the affirmative and we reply in the negative. We believe that baptism must be used because the Lord Jesus has instituted it, and one who despises the institution is condemned. This [that is, the errors of the Papists -- Ed.] is evident for the following reasons:

First, since baptism has no inherent efficacy to remove sin physically -- as has been confirmed already -- it is also not absolutely essential unto salvation.

Secondly, the Lord Jesus denies such an absolute necessity since He, after conjoining faith and baptism, does not threaten condemnation upon those who are not baptized, but upon those who do not believe (Mark 16:16).

Thirdly, one can be a believer and be converted prior to baptism; indeed, in adults it is required prior to their baptism. Such a person has eternal life (John 3:36), and therefore the absence of baptism cannot keep him outside of heaven. Consequently, baptism is not absolutely essential unto salvation. As shown above, the quoted text, John 3:5, makes no mention of baptism.

Question: Are all unbaptized children subject to condemnation and therefore never able to get to heaven?

Answer: The Papists answer in the affirmative. We are repulsed by such a dreadful judgment, which is entirely contrary to the covenant of grace, for 1) as shown, baptism does not have the efficacy they suggest it to have; and

2) someone, without any fault of his own, could then be condemned due to the laxity or cruelty of someone else. This is contrary to Ezekiel 18:20, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." Then the issue as to whether a child would be saved or condemned would be in the hands of man, who could kill a child either prior to or after its baptism.

We have thus held before you baptism and its essential nature. It is evident that baptism is the first New Testament sacrament, a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, instituted by God, and its administration commanded by the Lord Jesus to His apostles -- and in them to all ministers. This administration consists in the act of immersion or sprinkling with clean water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, thereby signifying and sealing to believers the cleansing of the soul from the guilt and pollution of sin by the blood and the Spirit of Christ, as well as the incorporation into the congregation of Christ so that through faith, love, and holiness, they may glorify God, be an ornament to the church, convict the unconverted, and stir up believers. The Subjects of Baptism In addition to that which has been said, it is necessary that we also consider

the subjects of baptism; that is, those to whom baptism must be administered. These are not clocks or similar objects which the Papists baptize, thereby dreadfully desecrating baptism. Rather, the objects must be men, and then the true believers among men. Only true believers are entitled to the use of the sacraments. However, since the church is not authorized to require assurance of the probability of regeneration as the foundation upon which the minister may administer the sacraments to someone, all who have made confession of their sins, of their faith in Christ, and of their determination to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and to lead a life which is in harmony with their confession, may rightfully and in good conscience be baptized. If the persons who are baptized are either unconverted or hypocrites, they are responsible and baptism is not a seal to them. They are neither partakers of the covenant nor are they entitled to its benefits. This is confirmed in the following passages: "And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: ... Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:6-11; Matthew 3:8); "Repent, and be baptized every one of you" (Acts 2:38); "... if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" (Acts 8:37).

If someone has therefore entered into the covenant -- whether it be in truth or in an external sense -- and has been baptized, they are also obligated to surrender their children to Christ by way of the covenant and thus permit them to be baptized, as the covenant has also been made with their children. Before we prove this, we must, for a further exposition of infant baptism, make a few prefatory remarks. The Baptism of Children

First, children to be baptized must 1) not be children of Jews, Muslims, heathens, or heretics, even if a member of the covenant has adopted them as children, for such adoption does not change the fact that they were not born within the covenant; 2) not be abandoned children in a country where the true church is not found, or if the true church is present, is filled with Jews, Muslims, heathens, Socinians, and other heretics, for such children can belong to the latter as well as to members of the covenant; 3) not be children of parents who have both been excommunicated -- having been born subsequent to this excommunication -- since such parents must be considered as heathens (Matthew 18:17); and 4) not be children who as yet are unborn, or who are miscarried -- as the Papists do.

Instead, they must be 1) children of members of the covenant; that is, one or both must be members of the covenant (1 Corinthians 7:14); 2) they may also be children of members of the covenant who are born as a result of adultery; or 3) children of those who are under censure, for the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father.

Secondly, the place where children ought to be baptized has not been determined by Scripture and does not belong to the essence of baptism. However, where the church conducts public worship services, it is edifying that it take place during a worship service.

Thirdly, subsequent to the breaking of the covenant of works, God established a covenant of grace with man. Never, that is, neither in the Old nor in the New Testament has He established an external covenant wherein both converted and unconverted alike would be members on equal footing, such that God, upon external obedience, would have promised some external benefits -- regardless of what name may be given to this covenant, such as a national, typical, worldly, or external covenant. One may therefore not baptize children in reference to an external covenant, but only in reference to the covenant of grace.

Fourthly, one can view elect children either as they are from God's perspective, or as they are in themselves. God knows them as being elect, as heirs of eternal life, and as being redeemed through the death of their Surety, Jesus Christ. As they are in themselves, they are identical to all other children, missing the image of God, having the image of the devil, without the seed of faith, without regeneration and the least gracious inclination, without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and thus, hateful and worthy of condemnation. Therefore, the basis for their baptism is neither a measure of grace which they have within themselves, nor eternal election, which is hidden for us.

Fifthly, God could either partially or fully sanctify children from infancy on. All children would have entered the world as being perfectly holy if Adam had not sinned. This was the condition in which Christ was born (being perfectly holy), and in which elect infants are, who at their death are sanctified as perfectly as an adult believer is sanctified. God generally does not do this, however. Even if He does so with certain persons by way of exception, it is neither a precedent nor clear proof of this. Therefore, we state again that the basis for the baptism of children is not some inherent quality.

Sixthly, baptism is a sign and a seal, and thus has no other function but a signifying and sealing function. It neither works grace by way of inherent efficacy, nor is it an external sign whereby, whereupon, or wherewith God works regeneration. It is not comparable to what Christ did to make the miracle very obvious, availing Himself of something tangible in the performance of His miracles; nor is it comparable to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit being communicated by the laying on of hands. Thus, the gracious operations of the Spirit are not bound to the time or the administration of baptism. Baptism also does not bring the child into an internal state other than was previously the case, and God does not love the child with the love of His delight any more than before. Rather, the entire efficacy of baptism consists in this -- that it seals the covenant of grace and all its promises to the child. This is not to suggest that the child has them already, but rather that the child is entitled to them and that God will accomplish this in this child. It is thus similar to the manner in which future benefits are sealed to adult believers.

Seventhly, all children of members of the covenant (irrespective of whether these members are converted or unconverted) who die in infancy -- be it prior to or after the administration of baptism -- must be considered as saved by virtue of God's covenant in which they were born and in consequence of which they are children of the covenant. If the parents are unconverted and unfaithful to the covenant, this will be imputed to their account, for the son will not bear the iniquity of the father. One must also consider them to be true partakers and children of the covenant as they grow older, until they show by their deeds that they are unfaithful to the covenant and thus are no partakers of its promises. [Note: On the basis of this statement, if taken out of context, one could conclude that à Brakel espouses what would later be called the Kuyperian doctrine of presumptive regeneration. However, the reading of this chapter in its entirety will negate such a conclusion.] They then do not fall out of grace, nor is the seal nullified; rather, it is a proof that baptism was not a seal for them and that they have never truly been in the covenant. When, however, some are converted after leading a sinful life, baptism was a seal unto them, and they were thus truly included in the covenant and in very deed are partakers of its benefits, being entitled to them already since their childhood. This is true, even though between their baptism and conversion there was but an external resemblance to members of the covenant -- in reference to both their personal spiritual state and sound judgment of others. Baptism only seals the elect.

Eighthly, the form for baptism asks of parents and witnesses, "Whether you acknowledge ... that they (their children) are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His church ought to be baptized?" In order to understand this question correctly, it must be noted:

(1) This form addresses members of the covenant and speaks of their children.

(2) To be sanctified does not imply that the children at that moment are in truth possessors of the principle of faith, regeneration, and sanctification. It also does not imply that all baptized children are, and particularly, that my child is elect, will be converted, and be a partaker of salvation. Rather, it means in a general sense that children of members of the covenant, by virtue of the covenant made with them and their children, are entitled to its benefits and will become partakers of them. This is in distinction to the children of those who are not members of the covenant and for whom there are no promises in the Word. The salvation of the latter, if they die in infancy, is a matter which pertains to the sovereign and secret dealings of God, there being no foundation in regard to which something can be stated about them. And as long as children of members of the covenant manifest nothing which is either in their favor or disfavor, we may not discriminate among them, but by reason of the promise must deem them to be children of God until the contrary manifests itself. Therefore, to be sanctified in Christ means to be a partaker of Christ. [Note: In view of the first part of this paragraph it seems evident that à Brakel is here speaking of federal holiness and federal membership in the covenant of grace, rather than personal holiness and a saving relationship to this covenant. He makes an explicit statement about this on p. ###509.]

(3) To be sanctified does not mean to be included in an external covenant, for there is no external covenant. The parents have the salvation of their child in view, and not something of an external nature. The sacraments are not seals of an external covenant, but only of the covenant of grace, and signs and seals of the righteousness of faith. Also the child is acknowledged as being sanctified in Christ, which cannot be said in reference to an external covenant.

It is furthermore acknowledged that the child is sanctified prior to baptism, and therefore ought to be baptized. The child therefore does not become a member of the covenant by virtue of baptism; he was already a member prior to baptism, and prior to the child's baptism there was also no other covenant but the covenant of grace.

(4) Some wish to change the form and say, "to be sanctified in Christ, or those who are sanctified, must be sanctified in Christ." This is the result of ignorance and misunderstanding concerning this matter. If they wish these words to mean something different than to be in the covenant of grace (which appears to be the intent), I cannot understand on what basis they let their children or other children be baptized, since there is no other foundation for baptism but the covenant of grace, of which baptism is a seal. The Scriptural Defense for the Baptism of Children Having said this by way of introduction, we must now consider the following question:

Question: May and must children of members of the covenant be baptized?

Answer: Anabaptists, Socinians, and Brownists answer negatively, but we answer in the affirmative for the following reasons:

First, in the Old Testament children of members of the covenant had to be circumcised; therefore they must also be baptized in the New Testament. The first part of the statement is above

controversy. The argument for the conclusion is as follows:

(1) Since there is one and the same covenant in both testaments, and this identical covenant also pertains to the children of the Old Testament who were obligated to receive the seal of circumcision, this is also true in the New Testament and they must therefore be baptized.

(2) Baptism has come in the place of circumcision; the external sign has changed, but the seal is the same. "In whom also ye are circumcised ... buried with Him in baptism" (Colossians 2:11-13). He who is baptized is said to be circumcised, since they are in essence one and the same sacrament.

(3) In both sacraments the same matter is signified and the purpose is identical: cleansing by the blood and the Spirit of Christ. If children had to be circumcised then, they must also be baptized today.

Secondly, children were baptized in the Old Testament. "... that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). It is irrefutable that all their children were included here (Exodus 10:24). In a manner comparable to being baptized by immersion in water, they were all in the sea, and the water in the cloud which was always above them, covered them. This baptism was a seal of their spiritual deliverance, having escaped from the hands of Pharaoh by the water of the sea. They were overshadowed by the cloud -- and thus protected against the heat of the sun and the Lord Jesus was present in this cloud (Exodus 14:24). If children were then baptized as members of the covenant, they must also presently be baptized, for they are as much members of the covenant now as they were then.

Thirdly, the children of members of the covenant are in the covenant, and they therefore are also entitled to the seals of the covenant. Their inclusion in the covenant is evident in Genesis 17:7, "And I shall establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations." This was not only true in the Old but also in the New Testament, for believers from among the Gentiles also are Abraham's seed and are thus included in that covenant. "... that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised" (Romans 4:11). Peter also confirms this: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:25). Add to this 1 Corinthians 7:14, where we read, "... else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." They do not have internal holiness, as has been proven in the above; rather, they are called holy because one of the parents is a believer, thereby being in the covenant. The holiness of such children is therefore a covenantal holiness. [Note: See footnote #2 [p. ###506]. It is critical to bear this in mind when reading the remainder of this chapter.] An external covenant does not exist, for there is but one covenant between God and believers: the covenant of grace. The children of members of the covenant are therefore in the covenant. In this respect the Lord calls them His children. "Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto Me ... that thou hast slain My children" (Ezekiel 16:20-21). If they are in the covenant, they must also indeed receive the seal of the covenant. This is evident in Acts 2:38-39, where we read, "... be baptized every one of you ... for the promise is unto you, and to your children."

Fourthly, children are partakers of the benefits of the covenant, the merits of Christ, the promises, and salvation itself. "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). These were not children in the spiritual sense of the word, characterized by humility, but rather natural children who were brought to Jesus, and who were kept away from Him by others, since they were deemed to be too unimportant. The Lord Jesus declares them to be partakers of the kingdom of heaven, of which one cannot be a partaker except through Christ. Who then would dare to exclude those children from heaven who die in infancy? Consider also Acts 2:39, where we read that the promise is to your children. Those who are partakers of the promises of the covenant are also entitled to the seal of the covenant and its promises.

Objection #1: Nowhere is a command found to baptize children.

Answer (1) Scripture has been given to rational people who know that all must be understood to be members of the covenant who are in the covenant -- whether this is the husband, the wife, or the children.

(2) It also is not written: Baptize a man, or baptize a woman, nor are they mentioned by first and last name.

(3) We read in Genesis 17:12, "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations." In Acts 2:38-39 we read, "... be baptized every one of you ... for the promise is unto you, and to your children."

Objection #2: Children cannot benefit from this; they do not understand it, and they frequently cry when they are baptized.

Answer (1) One must not be wiser than God who has thus commanded it.

(2) Any additional objections would also be applicable to the circumcision of children.

(3) The parents are comforted by baptism. It obligates and stimulates them to view their children as members of the covenant and to raise them as such. And when children come to the years of discretion, they may derive as much benefit from it as persons who are baptized as adults.

Objection #3: Christ was not baptized until he was thirty years old; we must therefore also wait with baptism until children come to the years of discretion.

Answer (1) We would have to conclude from this that one cannot be baptized before thirty years of age. This is refuted by their own practice.

(2) The institution of baptism was not until that time. (3) Christ had been circumcised in His youth.

Objection #4: One ought first to be instructed, repent, and believe before being permitted to be baptized (cf. Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:37-38; Mark 16:16).

Answer (1) It is also written, "... if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Should we then deprive children of food? Who does not see that in both cases the reference is to adults?

(2) We may not baptize any children except those of members of the covenant. Therefore, parents must first become members of the covenant, and as far as they are concerned, instruction, repentance, and faith must precede. These texts therefore do not run counter to the baptism of children of members of the covenant.

Various Conjectures About 1 Corinthians 15:29 Examined and Refuted

There are also conjectures about 1 Corinthians 15:29, where we read, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" This text has been debated very much. Also here it is true, "So many heads, so many opinions." What benefit is there in adding another opinion to this? Everyone chooses an opinion, not because he is convinced that it expresses the correct meaning, but only because he knows of no better one. Being currently engaged in expounding this letter for the congregation, we have come to this verse, and this gives us the opportunity to consider these words somewhat more carefully so that we may discern their correct meaning. We shall therefore add that which we have previously put in writing concerning this as an appendix to the doctrine of baptism before proceeding with the practical application.

We shall first present various sentiments and give our rationale as to why they cannot be approved; subsequently we shall seek for a different exposition. From among all these sentiments we shall only bring up these particular ones and examine them; the others are too farfetched and thus necessarily negate themselves.

Conjecture #1: This conjecture originates with the Papists. We shall present this, not because it has a semblance of truth, but in order to convince them of their error. They are of the opinion that after death, souls are gathered in a place which they refer to as purgatory, to be purged there prior to arriving in heaven. They furthermore believe that souls can be assisted in this by merits, prayers, masses, etc. They use this text in defense of their sentiment, and interpret to be baptized for the dead to mean to be baptized for the benefit of the dead.

Answer: No comment can be made, however, upon something which does not exist. They themselves show by their behavior that they neither put any stock in this, nor trust their own interpretation, for they do not baptize daily for such souls, for whom they do celebrate daily masses (cf. vol. 3, chapter 51, p. 195).

Conjecture #2: Must one not understand "to be baptized for the dead" to refer to dying as a martyr for the truth? Severe and frequent suffering are typified in Scripture by water. "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me" (Psalms 42:7); "We went through fire and through water" (Psalms 66:12); "The waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me" (Psalms 69:1-2). Furthermore, baptism signifies dying a violent death and thus, to be inundated and baptized with blood. "But I have a baptism to be baptized with" (Luke 12:50); "... be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with" (Matthew 20:23). That these words must be interpreted as referring to the baptism of blood is also evident from the following text, "And why stand we in jeopardy every hour ... I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:30-31). The thrust of the argument is this: if there were no resurrection of the dead, why would one permit himself to be killed as a martyr? That would be useless and foolish. Since it is not useless and foolish, however, there must of necessity be a resurrection of the dead.

Answer: Much needs to be said in response to this exposition.

(1) Even though water is used to typify suffering, baptism never signifies suffering.

(2) The Lord Jesus indeed expressed His being put to death as being baptized and also applied this to the two sons of Zebedee. However, apart from this, being put to death is never expressed as being baptized. To apply this to all suffering and to the death of all martyrs is unacceptable. Since Christ here refers to His death as being baptized, Paul would also imply death when referring here to being baptized. This conclusion is incorrect. It would first have to be proven; however, this is not possible.

(3) The verses in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 which follow speak of Paul's suffering and therefore do not confirm this sentiment. These verses are not related to this verse; they furnish new evidence in and of themselves.

(4) It also does not agree with the expression to be baptized for the dead, which at best could mean to be baptized with death rather than for the dead.

(5) It also does not harmonize with the objective of the apostle, which is to prove the resurrection of the dead by means of these words. To die the death of a martyr does prove that the person is clearly convinced in his conscience of the truth of the gospel, and that he will not deny it, but desires to confirm it with his death. This would not prove, however, that there is a resurrection from the dead on the last day, which it was the apostle's objective to do.

(6) Furthermore, such an explanation does not harmonize with the text. Paul is not speaking here of martyrs; there is no semblance of this being the case. Rather, he speaks of those to whom he refers as "they" and not as "we," "you," or "the congregation." He speaks of those to whom he has referred in verse 12 as some among you, who maintained that there was no resurrection of the dead. It is not probable that they would die for Christianity, for such persons could not have the resurrection of the dead in view with their martyrdom, as they denied this resurrection. This sentiment is therefore without foundation.

Conjecture #3: Must one not understand the words "to be baptized for the dead" to refer to the washing of dead bodies prior to burial? Such was the practice among the Jews. One reads in Acts 9:37 that the dead body of Dorcas was washed. Roman history also bears witness to the washing of dead bodies. Such washing was an indication of purification, and the resulting perfection of soul and body in the resurrection.

Answer (1) Even though the washing of dead bodies was customary among Jews and Romans, one does not know whether this was practiced among the Greeks and Christians in Corinth. That would first have to be confirmed.

(2) It is well known that the heathen and Sadducees among the Jews denied the resurrection of the dead and that their washing of dead bodies was not indicative of the resurrection of the dead; it was merely a civil custom. The Old Testament washings performed after having touched a dead person did not signify the resurrection, but rather sanctification in this life.

(3) This was indeed a baptizing of the dead, but not a baptizing for the dead. Therefore, this sentiment is also without foundation -- yes, it does not have a semblance of validity.

Conjecture #4: Are not the words of the apostle “to be baptized for the dead” a reference to the custom of the first Christians who administered baptism upon the cemeteries of martyrs and Christians, doing so as it were before the countenance and in the presence of the dead, thereby expressing their hope in the resurrection?

Answer (1) During the time of Paul Christians had neither churches nor church burial grounds, nor separate cemeteries; how then would they be able to baptize there? Did they secretly gather the dead, half-burned bodies of martyrs, and did they bring them together to bury them secretly and then baptize at those graves? Would this have been the practice during Paul's time? This is not probable and we do not have any early records which would indicate this. Such baptisms would have had to be performed very secretly, a practice which was not as yet performed in secret during the time of the apostles. Public baptisms upon the graves of the martyrs would have caused a great commotion among the people, and therefore such a practice was in all likelihood not in vogue.

(2) Furthermore, if such baptisms upon the graves of martyrs indeed occurred (a practice which is not believed to have been done during the time of the apostles), this would indeed give an impression of our mortality, and would also teach them to promote the Christian faith faithfully and to seal the truth with their death. This would not be a proof, however, for the resurrection of the dead, which is what Paul here endeavored to prove.

Conjecture #5: Does not the apostle refer to the baptism of dying persons when using the words “to be baptized for the dead”? Many postpone their baptism to the very last moment of their life, so that they may be kept from aggravating their sins, believing that sins committed after baptism are of a much more serious nature than those committed prior to it. There was also caution as far as the administration of baptism was concerned, since many, due to persecution, readily apostatized after baptism. They would be under probation and instruction for a long time; they were called catechumeni, that is, pupils. When such became ill and appeared to be dying, and if they were desirous to be baptized before their death, one would baptize such bedridden persons -- called clinici -- upon their deathbed. They were thus baptized prior to death, or as if they were dead. Therefore, the baptism of the dead is the baptism of the dying.

Answer: This long postponement of baptism is of a later date; it was a sinful abuse. The apostle would not have tolerated that in his time and would have earnestly opposed it. There is therefore not the least indication that the apostle would have had this in view with the words “to be baptized for the dead,” since there neither was such a practice during his time, nor was there even a remote possibility of its existence. Also, the expression “to be baptized for the dead” does not harmonize with being baptized at the end of one's life. The one could not use the word *huper* and also not *ton nekron*, that is, for the dead. This is not the meaning of the Greek rendering. This conjecture is therefore also unsatisfactory. Since these five conjectures are unacceptable, one must seek something else -- something which is well-founded and will be satisfactory to everyone; that is, if one indeed can find such upon close examination. A Doctrinal and Contextual Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15:29

We shall thus seek to arrive at a logical conclusion. First, holy baptism, when administered by way of immersion, vividly depicts death, burial and the resurrection from the dead. “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory

of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Here we do not have burial in view, but rather, resurrection.

Secondly, holy baptism, moreover, seals the resurrection from the dead and, as is true for circumcision, is a sealed sign. "In whom also ye are circumcised ... buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him" (Colossians 2:11-12). I do not expect anyone to deny that holy baptism is a sign which seals the resurrection. We shall soon demonstrate this more extensively.

Objection: The apostle speaks in these texts of spiritual resurrection by regeneration, rather than physical resurrection, to which the reference is in this text. There is therefore nothing in these texts to confirm that the apostle is here speaking of bodily resurrection.

Answer: First, it is true that the apostle is referring here to spiritual resurrection. However, 1) this also implies the bodily resurrection of believers which cannot occur apart from spiritual resurrection and is a sure consequence of this resurrection. 2) The apostle also says that we are buried with Christ and risen in Him, so that baptism seals our union with Christ. Since believers are one with Christ, their experience must be identical both in death and in the bodily resurrection. The apostle shows this clearly in Romans 8:11, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." It is an irrefutable fact that the resurrection of the dead is inherent in the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:12-13). There Paul conjoins them in such a fashion that the one either implies or denies the other. If Christ is risen, the dead will rise; if there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ has also not risen. It is thus evident that holy baptism typifies and seals the bodily resurrection for believers.

Secondly, holy baptism seals to the person being baptized that God is his God, for they are baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Just as the Lord Jesus proves the resurrection of the dead from the fact that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob -- God not being a God of the dead but of the living (Matthew 22:31-32) -- it is thus evident that baptism, in which is sealed that God is the God of the persons being baptized, seals the resurrection of the dead.

Thirdly, it is beyond controversy that baptism is a seal of the covenant of grace and all its promises. However, to these also belong the resurrection of the dead and eternal life. "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I shall raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40).

Because of these three arguments it is an irrefutable fact that baptism seals the bodily resurrection of the dead. If we apply them to this text, the argument of the apostle is as follows: If there were no resurrection from the dead, one would be baptized in vain and baptism would not seal the resurrection of the dead. However, one is not baptized in vain; baptism does seal the resurrection of the dead, and thus, the resurrection of the dead is a certainty.

It now remains to respond to two more difficulties.

Difficulty #1: The apostle refers here to a few individual persons and their activity. Prior to this he uses the words "we" and "you"; however, here he uses the word "they," and this causes one to wonder whether the apostle indeed refers to the sacrament of baptism, since all are partakers of

baptism.

Answer: It is true that the apostle here speaks of some individuals, and this strengthens our argument and explanation. One only needs to investigate to whom the apostle refers with the word "they." He refers to them in verse 12, where we read, "... how say some among you ..." (1 Corinthians 15:12). They were the "some" who denied the resurrection of the dead. They were baptized, still belonged to the church, either administered baptism themselves or approved of baptism by their presence when it was administered in the church, which in turn sealed the resurrection of the dead. Such indeed could not deny the resurrection of the dead, for they would refute themselves by their own action. Such persons the apostle opposes in this chapter and in this verse, using their own behavior as a proof against them. If there is no resurrection of the dead, why are they themselves baptized, this being a seal of the resurrection?

Difficulty #2: This difficulty is the greatest and is the cause for various sentiments. The problem is this: Isn't something special and of great emphasis concealed in the words "for the dead"? If not, the apostle could merely have said, "Why are they then baptized?" However, the apostle adds the words "for the dead," and thereby something different and special is being said. What it is cannot readily be explained. What is it?

Answer: It is true that the words "for the dead" have not been added in vain; they have special emphasis and they do not ascertain something else. On the contrary, they render the apostle's proof for the resurrection of the dead clear and forceful as long as one adheres to the argumentation of the apostle. In my judgment, the darkness and misunderstanding is the result of conjoining the dead and *huper*, this being the reason that these words are governed by the genitive, since the word *huper* demands a genitive. I am of the opinion, however, that *ton nekron* is not governed by *huper* (=for), but by a word which is not mentioned here, and which, by way of conjecture, must be added and be deemed as being present. This manner of speech is referred to as an ellipsis: a concealed matter or an omission. This is very common in all languages. One asks, for example, "What is the price of grain?"; to which one answers, "Wheat is so much, barley so much, and rye so much." Everyone will perceive that the word "price" is omitted each time, but must be understood to be there. One can likewise say, "The mayors of Rotterdam went to The Hague the day before yesterday, of Gouda yesterday, and of Delft today." There is a double omission of both the word "mayors," and of the word "went." A common person realizes without difficulty that these additional words are implied and to be understood without this creating any problem or obscurity. This manner of speech is also frequently found in the Bible. Every language has its own peculiarities which do not flow very well in other languages and which become obscure upon translation. Our translators have therefore included that which is omitted, have placed it between brackets, and have printed them with different letters. Observe such omissions in Luke 3:1-38 where the word "son" is frequently omitted and included by the translators. Also in Ephesians 2:1 something is omitted which is expressed in verse 5, and is completed with these words, "And you hath He quickened." Without adding this, the omission would be difficult to understand in our language; in Greek, however, one is as it were taken by the hand and guided to this. Consider also Romans 6:5, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Here the words in the likeness have been omitted and have been added and placed between brackets by the translators. For scholars it is sufficient to say here that this is an ellipsis; we, however, needed to explain this more extensively

for the unlearned. It is somewhat difficult to cause the unlearned to understand this technicality. As we now consider these words, we deem that *ton nekron*, the dead, is not governed by *huper* (= for), but by an omitted word which also governs by way of the genitive. This is an ellipsis, that is, an omission, or something which is concealed. We need not seek far to find the omitted word. In this chapter, and also in this verse, the apostle repeatedly speaks of the resurrection of the dead (to be resurrected and to be raised are identical in meaning), and also mentions the word "resurrection." "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" "But if there be no resurrection of the dead ..." (1 Corinthians 15:12-13); "For if the dead rise not ..." (vs. 16); "... if the dead rise not at all" (vs. 29). Thus the apostle as it were puts the omitted word in our mouth: resurrection. If you mentally add this, the text reads as follows: "What shall they do which are baptized for (the resurrection) of the dead?" Why are they then baptized for (the resurrection) of the dead? [Note: This sentence reads as follows in the Dutch: "Dus, de boeken der boeken; zoo opstanding, niet de dooden, maar der dooden." à Brakel argues here that use of the Dutch genitive pronoun "der" would have resulted in a more precise rendering of the genitive construction in the Greek text. Since there is no English equivalent for the Dutch genitive pronoun "der," we enlarged the translation a bit by inserting the omitted word "resurrection," which harmonizes with what à Brakel has already done prior to this sentence. Our intention here is to preserve his argument that the grammatical construction in Greek supports his claim that the word "resurrection" is implied in this text.] In the Greek it would read: *huper (anastaeos) ton nekron*. And thus the genitive proposition *huper*, for, and *ton nekron*, of the dead, is governed by the genitive of the omitted word resurrection, *anastaeos*. The use of "of the" in this construction rather than "the" does not change the meaning. It is common knowledge that we use "of" or "of the" to indicate the genitive; thus we say, "the book of books." It is therefore not for (the resurrection) the dead, but rather for (the resurrection) of the dead. In Greek there is no change; it reads "of the." Whether I say *huper ton nekron*, or *huper (anastaseos) ton nekron*, in both cases we have a genitive. If our translators had written for (that which is) of the dead as it is expressed in Greek: *huper ton nekron*, everyone would have perceived that the word "resurrection" must be understood with it. If one therefore understands these words with an ellipsis, that is, an omission, everything proceeds with ease, and is in harmony with the words, the meaning, and the objective of the apostle. Then there is no diversion, and no difficulties remain. One will then observe that those words for the dead, that is, for the resurrection of the dead, give emphasis to the apostle's argument, which is: How can they who are baptized for the resurrection of the dead maintain that there is no resurrection whatsoever? Why then are they baptized for the resurrection of the dead? Baptism seals the resurrection, which the apostle expresses more clearly when he adds to this, to be baptized for the resurrection of the dead.

Objection: Such a manner of expression referred to as ellipsis, that is, omission, is indeed used both outside of and in Scripture. How can one prove, however, that there is such an omission here, and that the word "resurrection" must be implied here, for then one would be certain.

Answer: One must deduce this omission from the verbal and doctrinal context which, without this ellipsis, would either be unintelligible, confused, or obscure; whereas with an ellipsis it is clear, intelligible, and coherent, expressing the intent of the speaker or writer well.

It is in this fashion that one must proceed here. If one does not acknowledge the presence of an ellipsis or an omission here, the meaning remains unintelligible and obscure and one will deviate

toward sentiments which are without foundation and which can neither satisfy one's self nor another. The one espouses this view and another person deems another opinion to be the better one. Because neither is convinced of the truth, but merely because they know of no better opinion, they opt for what appears to be most probable. On the contrary, if one acknowledges the presence of an ellipsis here, all is smooth and consistent in reference to the context of the words, the meaning of the text, the objective of the apostle, and the thrust of the argument. In one word, everything readily fits together and there are no obstacles. As far as the insertion of the omitted word is concerned, it is used repeatedly throughout the entire discussion found in both this chapter and this verse. The subject matter at hand, the context, and the apostle's objective lead us to the word resurrection, and they, so to speak, spontaneously yield it to us. The apostle mentions the word more than once, and he is dealing with the resurrection. I believe that no one will either desire, be able, or be willing to think of another word here, being fully satisfied with this fitting word.

Further proof for the presence of an ellipsis (omission) cannot be demanded. I deem that which has been said to be satisfactory. I am satisfied and have endeavored to satisfy others as well. We shall now proceed with the practical application.

Exhortation to be Spiritually Exercised with Baptism

It is not sufficient that one understands the essence of baptism. It is furthermore needful that one make proper use of and be exercised with it; that is, regarding his own baptism, the administration of baptism, and his children who are to be baptized or who have been baptized.

First, one needs to be exercised with his own baptism. If someone is not baptized, he must endeavor to be baptized. If he is of non-Christian or heretical parentage, he needs to know that what is written in Ephesians 2:12 is applicable to him: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Therefore repent with your whole heart, believe in the Lord Jesus, and desire to be baptized, in order that thereby the washing of sins may be sealed, and you may be incorporated into the congregation of the living God and into the kingdom of Christ -- for it is a command, "Be baptized every one of you" (Acts 2:38). If you despise baptism and refuse it, you shall bring the wrath of God upon yourself. "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of Him" (Luke 7:30).

If you are baptized, consider how you experience the reality of your baptism. If you live an ungodly, natural, careless, and worldly life, you must with terror reflect upon your baptism, for your parents brought you to the congregation of God, and have there surrendered you publicly to the Lord Jesus. There, as a member of the covenant, you received the seal, were baptized in God's Name -- that is, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost -- and as a fellow-member of the covenant you were incorporated into the congregation of God. All of this obligates you to live a holy life as a true member of the covenant, and to walk as Christ has walked. Behold, however, you are an apostate, a reprobate, and one who has run to the enemy. You have departed from God, despised Christ, and contemptuously rejected your baptism. You were esteemed to be a true child of the covenant as long as you did not manifest the contrary. Now you manifest the contrary, however, and thus I must say: You have neither part nor lot in Christ, nor in all the promises of the covenant of grace. It will be more dreadful for you in the day of

judgment and in hell, than if you had never been baptized. By your life, you cause the congregation of God and the truth to be slandered, and Christ to be dishonored, for it is as if Christ and the congregation had such ungodly members. Is it not sufficient for you to live an ungodly life unto yourself and to bear your own punishment? Must you besides cause the congregation to be slandered and Christ to be held in contempt? Choose one of the two: either live a godly life and walk worthy of the gospel, or if not, come again before the pulpit and publicly recant your baptism before the congregation, declaring that you are displeased with the fact that your parents have had you baptized. Then depart and live as ungodly as you will, for then you will no longer be a disgrace to the church. However, what will then be your end? Your end will be what is recorded in Hebrews 10:29, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" "But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you" (Luke 10:14). A Special Exhortation Addressed to True Believers

If you are a believer, and if the principle of spiritual life is to be found within you, it is especially your duty to make good use of your baptism.

First, be reminded of your baptism as often as you hear your name mentioned, use it, or write it yourself. Meditate upon the following: "By that name the Lord has appropriated me to Himself, and in the public gathering of the congregation my name was pronounced loudly for the first time as being a fellow-member of the covenant. The name of my earthly father was not mentioned, but instead the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost was pronounced over me. By that name I am recorded in the church's baptismal registry." Approve of this deed of your parents, confirm it with your entire heart, rejoice in it, and may your baptism continually be as a binding relationship between you and the Lord.

Secondly, make use of your baptism to your comfort. God's children are indeed very negligent in this, and in a very special sense are guilty here. For many it is as if baptism were but an external ceremony, as if there is no benefit in it, and as if it had been administered in vain to them. Many, when they think on occasion about their baptism, do so but for a moment, and then in a very aloof, superficial manner, without penetrating to the efficacy of their baptism. No longer proceed this way, nor deprive yourself of that which is declared in your baptism. The apostle Peter says of baptism, "(... the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). Therefore, in reference to your baptism, continually ask: "Has Christ died for me? Has not His blood been shed for the washing away of my sins and unto my reconciliation with Thee? Art not Thou my Father and I Thy child? Is not baptism a seal to me? Can this seal be broken? Of course not; thus the forgiveness of my sins, reconciliation with Thee, and all the benefits of the covenant of grace are my portion. I shall hold fast to this and thus will go my way with joy and courage." Strive to be exercised in this and it will greatly strengthen you that, without your knowledge, you have already been sealed in your infancy. Yield not to unbelief by being tossed to and fro continually, asking yourself: "Am I regenerated, am I already a believer, and is baptism indeed a seal to me?" How this will injure you and rob you of the efficacy of baptism! You are indeed conscious that sins -- even the sins of your heart -- are a bitter grief and a heavy burden to you. You know indeed that your heart yearns for and desires reconciliation with God, for the blood of Christ unto reconciliation, and to be continually in the presence of God and to live in His fear.

You know that for this reason you make Christ your choice time and again, receive Him, and surrender yourself to Him, so that He may work all things in you by His Spirit. It is also your objective not to sin, but rather, to live a life pleasing unto the Lord. You know that it is truthfully so; this is now an evidence of grace, and thus also that baptism is to you a seal of the covenant. Therefore apply this to yourself and rejoice.

Thirdly, make use of your baptism unto sanctification. Baptism is the seal of regeneration (Titus 3:5) and of repentance (Matthew 3:11). How forcefully the apostle exhorts to sanctification by way of baptism in Romans 6:1-7! He does so particularly in verse 4: "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Therefore reason continually with yourself in the following manner: "Shall I who have been buried with Christ in baptism; who have been planted together with Him in the likeness of His death; who have been washed in His blood; who have been ingrafted into Christ and into His congregation -- shall I yet continue in sin? Far be it from me! I desire therefore to arise from my sin, and I wish to manifest myself as being alive and as having been washed. I wish to be an ornament of the church and to bring honor unto Christ." When you perceive your sin and your helplessness against sin, make renewed use of your baptism in order to be strengthened and stirred up, and esteem it to be the seal of the covenant in which the Lord has promised to remove the stony heart and to give a heart of flesh in its place, and cause you to walk in His ways (Ezekiel 36:26). Take these and similar promises, together with the seal of baptism, and come thus to the Lord, saying, "Lord, behold, here are Thy promises, and here is the seal of the promise, that Thou wouldest fulfil them in me. I now prayerfully expect this, namely, that I, being cleansed, may walk in all purity and holiness. I believe Thy truth, I expect the fulfillment of the promises, and rely upon it."

You must in the second place be exercised with the administration of baptism. When baptism is administered, you must neither leave the sanctuary, speak with others, nor think about or do something else, as if baptism did not pertain to you at all. Rather, you must attentively take note of the entire proceedings.

(1) Here you must observe the wondrous goodness of God that the Lord of heaven establishes a covenant with poor man and with us and our children, while passing others by -- and that He now seals that covenant.

(2) Consider the magnitude of this matter. What precious and great truths are sealed, in which a member of the covenant will most certainly participate. When a child is baptized, he is exalted by God to a much higher level than an earthly king, so that more than a king is inaugurated.

(3) During the administration of baptism everyone must meditate and reflect upon his own baptism and consider: "In such a solemn manner, I also was once brought before the Lord and surrendered to Him, and the covenant was also sealed to me."

(4) You must also think of your baptized children who, as is true for you, bear the seal of the Lord, and whom you have promised to raise in such and such a manner; this will bring conviction and stir you up.

(5) One must pray in the meantime that the Lord would make these children partakers of that which is sealed.

(6) And let your heart go out in love to the baptized children who are now members of the Lord Jesus, the congregation, and partakers of that same covenant. In the third place there is also a special task for parents as far as their children are concerned -- those who are to be baptized and those who have been baptized. They must not present their children for baptism out of custom or for a popish reason, as if baptism conveys salvation to the child. They should rather do so in consequence of their knowledge of this mystery, out of obedience to God's command, and with a longing for the privilege that the covenant might also be sealed to that child. They should in sincerity of heart surrender that child to the Lord as being its sole proprietor. They should pray much for that child, asking that the Lord receive him, making that child a partaker of the matter signified. The child should not be presented for baptism by just anyone; that is, by anyone who is able or willing to say "yes." Rather, the witnesses should be of such a disposition to instruct the child, while growing up, concerning the mystery of baptism, and exhort him to godliness in light of his baptism and the promises made to him. One must not make a show of the child as if he were being sacrificed to the world and the devil, but his appearance should rather be sober and modest. The child should be given a good name. The child should not receive a name of Christ or of one of the angels, such as, Immanuel, Michael, Gabriel, etc. Rather, they should be family names (thereby holding them in esteem), scriptural names, or names which have a special meaning whereby one expresses a wish by means of the name. One thus hopes that the child may indeed become a partaker of the meaning of that name, or one wishes to obligate the child to something by means of that name. The child, having now been baptized, must be received again as from the Lord to whom one has surrendered him. One must consider him to be a child of God, [Note: See footnotes 2 [p. ####506] & 3; [p. ####507] that is, a child of God in a federal sense. God Himself refers to the small children in Israel as "My children" (Ezekiel 16:21; cf. Form for the Administration of Baptism).] and as a nurse, raise him as such, doing so according to the rules which the heavenly Father has prescribed. "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). One must teach the child the significance of baptism, to what he is sealed, and to what he is bound and obligated. Blessed is such a man. Blessed are such families. There the Lord shall command His blessing, even life forevermore. They will experience the blessing of Psalms 128:1-6, which is generally sung at wedding ceremonies or at wedding receptions. Amen.

045. Chapter 40: The Lord's Supper

----- CHAPTER FORTY ----- The Lord's Supper In the natural realm, one is first born, and afterwards is continually in need of food in order to grow and be strengthened. This is also true in the spiritual realm: A person is first born again, and afterwards he is continually in need of nourishment. The Word of God is the means for both, and the Lord has also given signs and seals in addition to that Word. The first sacrament is baptism which seals regeneration, the washing away of sin, and the incorporation into Christ and into His church. We have discussed this in the previous chapter. The second sacrament is the Lord's Supper, by which the spiritual life received in regeneration is nourished and strengthened. We shall now consider this sacrament. The Scriptural Names for the Lord's Supper

Scripture denominates this sacrament as the Lord's Supper: "... this is not to eat the Lord's supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20). It is called a supper since it was instituted in the evening. The Passover lamb had to be killed between two evenings and between light and dark, this being the latter part of the previous day and the beginning of the next day. This, according to Jewish calculations, began at sundown. By the time it was prepared and eaten, it would already be far into the evening. Upon having eaten the Passover (that is, the Old Testament sacrament), the Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. It could not have been instituted any earlier since the Lord's Supper replaced the Passover, and two sacraments of identical nature could not have been observed at the same time. It could also not have been instituted later, for the Lord Jesus was captured that very night and put to death on the next day. Therefore, the chronological circumstances have nothing to do with the essence of the matter. The early church frequently celebrated the Lord's Supper in the evening, as formal meals were then served in the evening. (Cf. Matthew 25:12-13, etc.; Acts 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:7.) Furthermore, persecutions later forced them to gather during the night. Then they would have their agapai (or love meals), at which time they partook of this sacrament (1 Corinthians 11:1-34). These love meals -- due to the increase of the congregation and abuses which had crept in -- were discontinued, and only the use of the sacrament remained. The apostle also refers to this sacrament as the table of the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:21), signifying the food which one placed on it for consumption. The celebration of the Lord's Supper is referred to as the breaking of bread (Acts 2:46), and the cup is referred to as the cup of thanksgiving (1 Corinthians 10:16). These denominations are indicative of the loving and familiar fellowship of believers among each other, and with Christ, for the nourishment of spiritual life. The soul's inner communion with Christ is therefore also expressed by the word "supper" (cf. Revelation 3:20; Luke 14:24; Revelation 19:9). The Papists, not being satisfied with this scriptural designation, use an unscriptural word for their unscriptural fabrication: the mass. We shall let them quarrel among each other as to the origin of the word "mass"; we shall hold to Scripture. In our consideration of this sacrament we shall maintain the same order as we did with the previous sacrament. The Lord's Supper: Instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ The first matter to be considered is the Author of this sacrament; He is the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. the historical record in Matthew 26:1-75, Mark 14:1-72, and Luke 22:1-71). The apostle repeats this institution in 1 Corinthians 11:23-27. We

must note Christ's actions and His words relative to this. The actions of Christ are four:

(1) He took the bread into His hands, and after this the cup.

(2) He blessed and gave thanks, as all nourishment must be sanctified by prayer (1 Timothy 4:5). As Christ blessed the nourishment which He distributed to others (Matthew 14:19), He likewise has also blessed this bread and this wine -- and thus also gave thanks for it -- so that the efficacy for the communicants would be such as was intended by its institution. In doing so, that bread and that wine are set apart from common bread and wine for sacred use.

(3) He broke the bread, whereas we cut our bread; however, in those countries (which is still true in many countries) the bread is broken with the hand when it is eaten. When instituting this sacrament, the Lord likewise took bread and broke it, and thus gave such a fragment to every disciple.

(4) He gave it to His disciples; that is, not into their mouths, but into their hands, as is customary at ordinary meals. The words of Christ are both imperative and expository in nature. The imperative words are three in number:

(1) Take, that is, extend your hand, take hold of it, and help yourself.

(2) Eat, that is, I give it to you -- not to preserve it, or to recline with it as having been sufficiently satisfied by the eating of the Passover, but I give it to you to eat it in the presence of everyone.

(3) Do this in remembrance of Me, that is, do this individually; and as I have commissioned you to preach and to baptize, I likewise obligate you to commit this sacrament to My church and to command her to keep it, so that My suffering and death may thus be continually depicted before her eyes, and she keep in remembrance My merits on her behalf and My love toward her. Maintain this practice. The expository words (which simultaneously yield the motive for compliance) are, "this is My body," and "this cup is the new testament in My blood." It is the symbol and representation of My suffering and death, and a seal that My body has thus been broken for you, and that My blood has in this manner been shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.

These words, "this is My body," are not the essence of the institution itself; rather, the entire history related to it constitutes the institution. These words also do not have a sanctifying influence, much less do they change the bread into Christ's body -- a matter to be discussed further on. The sacraments are rendered sacred by thanksgiving and blessing. Thanksgiving is expressed toward God for the work of redemption on the basis of Christ's suffering and death. The blessing upon the bread and the wine occurs by way of prayer -- the prayer being that God would impress these signs as seals upon the heart of believers in order that they may be strengthened and encouraged thereby. This prayer of thanksgiving and blessing implies the consecration of the common bread and wine for holy usage so that they may be signs and seals. However, the benediction and the blessing had already been pronounced prior to Christ expressing the words, "this is My body," for Christ did not say this until after He had taken, broken, and given, or was taking, breaking, and giving the bread. Also, these words are neither a prayer nor a benediction, nor are they of an imperative or ordaining nature, but they are narrative and expository in nature. They convey the manner in which this bread and wine must be viewed and used: as signs and seals of His suffering and death for believers. The text itself also contradicts the Papists, since the word "for" is not

found in the text -- they have added this. If this word had been uttered by Christ, then the words "this is My body" would give the disciples reason to take and eat the same, so that the bread would already have been Christ's body prior to expressing these words.

Moreover, if these words "this is My body" had the power to bring about a change, one would have to relate them as Christ did -- and thus not add a word as they do by adding the word "for." Also, the words which pertain to the cup are recorded variously by the evangelists. Matthew says, "... for this is My blood"; Mark omits the word "for," and Luke says, "... this cup is the New Testament of My blood." It is thus evident that the power to bring about change is not inherent in the usage of these words -- indeed, no essential change occurs in the Lord's Supper. In the entire Bible there is not one word to be found about such a change. From this institution it is also evident how the ministers of the Word must administer the Lord's Supper today, and must consecrate the bread and wine. This is not to be done by muttering under one's breath and by pronouncing the words "for this is My body" while blowing and hissing as the wizards do. "... Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter" (Isaiah 8:19); in this they are imitated by the Papists. Rather the act of consecration, that is, setting wine and bread apart for sacred use, occurs by way of benediction and blessing, thereby requesting that God, who in His great goodness has given Christ, would also bless these signs so that they may be efficacious to the sealing and strengthening of true faith. After this the minister breaks the bread, and gives and distributes it to the communicants, doing likewise with the cup thereafter.

The External Signs of the Lord's Supper

The second matter to be considered in reference to this sacrament is the external signs. We must here take note of the signs and the ceremonies associated with them. The signs are identical to those used in meals in order to nourish and refresh the body: bread and wine. One is to be neither superstitious nor concerned regarding the kind of bread and wine. The bread and wine which Christ used were such as were available and in common use. It is credible that in light of the Passover Christ used unleavened bread; but that was incidental, for leavened bread was neither permitted to be used nor was it available in Jerusalem at that time. It is therefore not necessary to follow suit in this respect. It must be bread which one commonly uses for nourishment, thus to typify the spiritual nourishment of the soul. The wafers of the Papists and the Lutherans consist more of foam than of bread, and are not suitable for nourishment and strengthening. This is contrary to the institution of the Lord's Supper; Christ had no wafers, but took bread, broke off fragments, and gave them to the disciples. He did not give a wafer to anyone. As we may not be superstitious relative to the bread, so we must not be superstitious relative to the wine; that is, whether it be pure or diluted with water. The latter is customary in warm countries to prevent it from being overheated. However, it must be the "fruit of the vine" (Matthew 26:29). It is also immaterial whether one drinks the wine from a cup or a glass; likewise the manner in which it is done. Common substances must be used without superstition. The ceremonies associated with these signs are of express significance, and therefore are to be implemented as Christ has exemplified in the institution of it. Christ broke the bread, thereby signifying the breaking of His body, that is, His death. The apostle passes on to the congregation the ceremony of breaking; he refers to it as "the breaking of bread," and "the bread which we break" (1 Corinthians 10:16). The apostolic church did likewise, "... breaking bread" (Acts 2:46); "... when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). Therefore today the minister also must break the bread and give it as such to the communicants. The Papists and the Lutherans do this in an entirely different manner by giving a wafer to everyone without breaking it. No mention is

made of the pouring of the wine. At mealtimes this is generally done by those who serve the table, and therefore in many localities the wine is poured by the deacons at the Lord's Supper; however, it is, as is necessary, given to the communicants by the hand of the minister.

Question: Must the cup be given to the communicants, as is true for the bread?

Answer: The Papists, motivated by blind superstition, fear that wine could spill out of the cup, or that some of it might cling to the lips or to the beard -- and thus something of Christ's blood would be lost. Therefore, as an act of ecclesiastical robbery, they have deprived the common man of the cup, which until the year 1415 was given to each communicant along with the bread. In that year, however, the Council of Constance, in its thirteenth session, denied the common man the cup, with the knowledge and conviction that such is contrary to Christ's institution and gift to His Church.

They do not hesitate to state this boldly, and therefore we read, "This council declares, decrees, and determines that it be known that, although Christ has instituted this worthy sacrament as the Lord's Supper by means of both signs of bread and wine, it must nevertheless be known that in spite of this ..." A bit further we read: "Even though in the original church the sacrament was received by believers by way of both signs," etc. Contrary to this, we maintain that the cup, as well as the bread, must be given to believers. This is, first of all, evident from the institution of the Lord's Supper by Christ, who, according to their own confession, instituted it by way of bread and wine which He distributed to the apostles. "Drink ye all of it" (Matthew 26:27); "... and they all drank of it" (Mark 14:23).

Evasive Argument: Christ gave the cup to the apostles and not to others, and therefore the priests must have the cup, but not the common man.

Answer (1) By the same argument, then bread must also be withheld from the common man. He should then be deprived of the entire sacrament, and it be reserved for the priests only, as Christ also gave bread to all the disciples and not to others.

(2) The apostles were here not present as apostles, but as communicants. Secondly, the apostle, upon Christ's injunction to him, instituted the Lord's Supper among the Corinthians by way of bread and wine, and commanded them both to drink and to eat. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup ... wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily ... but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (1 Corinthians 11:26-28). Here the apostle addressed the entire congregation of the Corinthians, which primarily consisted of common folk; he commanded them to drink. Therefore the common folk must have the cup as well as the bishops.

Thirdly, the apostle proves that believers have communion with Christ and each other -- urging them to exercise this -- by the fact that they all share the cup and drink from it. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16); "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Therefore all who have fellowship with Christ must thus as well drink from the same cup as they eat from the same bread and are baptized with one baptism.

Objection #1: The church is authorized to legislate and to make changes in reference to many matters. She has thus replaced immersion by sprinkling in baptism, and the church is therefore also authorized to administer the Lord's Supper by means of bread alone.

Answer (1) Sprinkling in baptism is founded upon God's Word.

(2) Scripture makes no restrictions as far as immersion and sprinkling are concerned.

(3) Immersion and sprinkling do not pertain to the essence of baptism, but are external circumstances.

(4) The church has no right to add to or take away from the Word of God. If an external aspect of religion is not legislated in Scripture -- be it in reference to time, place, or circumstances -- then there is no restriction as far as the Word of God is concerned. If, however, there is a restriction, command, or prohibition in that regard, the church may not make a change whatsoever.

(5) The giving of the cup is not circumstantial but belongs to the essence of the sacrament, Christ having commanded and instituted it. That is the end of all arguments, and whoever deviates from this, opposes Christ who says, "Drink ye all of it" (Matthew 26:27); "... this do ye" (1 Corinthians 11:25).

Objection #2: The Lord's Supper has often been celebrated by partaking of the bread only; it is thus not necessary to give the cup to the common man. "And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them" (Luke 24:30); here the cup is not given. "... if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh" (John 6:51). In the following passages the reference is only to bread. "And they continued stedfastly ... in breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42); "... continuing daily with ... breaking bread" (Acts 2:46); "... the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7).

Answer (1) These texts, advanced by the Papists, are a rebuke to themselves when they do not break the wafer which they give out.

(2) Luke 24:30 does not refer to the Lord's Supper; these disciples did not recognize Jesus and would not have received the sacrament from a stranger; it was but a daily meal to which the disciples had invited their unknown guest.

(3) John 6:1-71 also does not speak of the Lord's Supper which as yet had not been instituted. Furthermore, in this chapter the reference is to the drinking of Christ's blood, as well as to the eating of His flesh.

(4) In Acts 2:1-47 and Acts 20:1-38 we have a very common manner of speech; bread refers to divers foods, and the eating of bread with someone means to have a meal with him, at which there is both food and drink. "... as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread" (Luke 14:1); "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11; cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; Genesis 43:25; etc.).

Objection #3: In Christ's body there is also blood; he who therefore eats bread, that is, Christ's body, also partakes of the blood of Christ.

Answer (1) The bread is not Christ's body, but it is and remains bread.

(2) One must not pretend to be wiser than the Lord Jesus who has instituted and commanded the use of the cup.

(3) Even though there is blood in a body, one does not drink this -- and here one is commanded to drink.

(4) The bread does not signify Christ's blood, but His body; the wine does not signify His flesh, but His blood. Each must be partaken of individually.

(5) Why then are the priests not satisfied with bread only? Who has given them the privilege of the cup above the common man? The Matter Signified in the Lord's Supper

Thirdly, we must reflect upon the matter signified in the Lord's Supper. The signs have not been instituted for the purpose of serving God by partaking of them, for God is a Spirit who must be served in a spiritual manner. These external signs conceal spiritual matters. Christ has instituted bread as a sign and symbol of His body, and the breaking of it as a sign of the breaking of His body by His suffering and death. "This is My body which is given for you" (Luke 22:19); "... this is My body, which is broken for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24). The wine is a symbol of Christ's blood which was shed in consequence of a violent death. "This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). When seeing these signs, the communicant must not end in them mentally, but must proceed to the matter signified, that is, to the body and blood of Christ -- broken and shed to satisfy God's justice for the sins of believers. Thus, he must unite the sign to the matter signified. One must not do so on the basis of his own imagination, for then he would be able to ascend to the suffering and death of Christ by way of the physical; rather, one ought to do so upon the basis of Christ's institution. It is thus not a union established by way of human imagination, but it is a union in the true sense of the word. However, it is not a local or physical union, but a spiritual union which is founded upon and derives its veracity from Christ's institution. This union therefore does not relate to the substances of bread and wine as they are in the dish and in the cup at that moment; that is, apart from being used in the sacrament.

Instead, this union comes about when the communicant, by virtue of Christ's institution, exercises faith, taking note of the instituted relationship between the sign and the matter signified. This is similar to a stone which, taken from a pile and placed as a boundary marker upon the land, is not changed as far as its nature is concerned, but as to how it is viewed. The Harmony Between the Sign and the Matter Signified The fourth matter to be considered is the harmony between the sign and the matter signified, this being nourishment and refreshment. God has granted believers a twofold life: There is a natural life, which they have in common with all men, and they have spiritual life, which consists in the union of the soul with God. God also gives His people a twofold nourishment for this twofold life. He gives them food and drink for the maintenance of natural life, of which bread and wine are the most prominent. God also gives food and drink for the maintenance of spiritual life. Christ is this food and drink. By way of natural food and drink, that is, bread and wine, the Lord signifies the spiritual: Christ's body and blood. Thus as bread and wine have a nourishing and invigorating power when one partakes of them, Christ's body and blood (His suffering and death) upon being received by faith likewise nourish, strengthen, and invigorate spiritual life. "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song of Solomon 5:1).

Since these signs are not only symbolic, but also sealing, the believer thus accepts them as seals and, upon the basis of the promise, presses them upon his heart, believing that Christ's body has been broken for him, and His blood has been shed for him. He believes that thereby he has the forgiveness of sins and is a partaker of Christ and all the benefits of the covenant confirmed in Christ's death. A believer thus receives Christ while partaking of the signs and uniting the sign to the matter signified. He considers the signs as tokens of Christ's love for him, His merits on his behalf, and of His immutability in making him an eternal partaker of these benefits. It is thus that this spiritual food and drink nourish and refresh him in his spiritual life. The Purpose for the Institution of the Lord's Supper The fifth matter to be considered is the purpose for which the Lord's Supper was instituted. This consists in these three particulars:

First, there is the remembrance; that is, the declaration and confession of Christ, His suffering and death, and of what He has merited by reason of this suffering and death. "This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19); "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). This was not only true for the initial period of the apostolic church, as if -- as some erring spirits maintain (having shown this in the previous chapter) -- its intent was to remember that in Christ all types have been fulfilled, and to distinguish the Christians from the Gentiles and their sacrifices to idols. Rather, this is a sacrament given by Christ to His church and passed on by the apostles, doing so without any chronological restriction and thus for as long as the church will exist -- until the end of the world (which also has been shown earlier).

Secondly, there is the sealing function. Previously we have also shown that the sacraments are sealing in nature. Thus, the bread and the wine seal to the believer that they are partakers of Christ and all that He has merited by His suffering and death; they are not merely signs of the mutual communion of believers, as is the view of the Anabaptists and Socinians. This is confirmed in the following passages: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16); "... this is My body" (Matthew 26:28); "... this is My blood" (Matthew 26:28). It is the goodness of God that He not only promises the forgiveness of sins to believers, nor only depicts by whom and how they receive the forgiveness of sins, but He furthermore gives them an earnest and seal, in order that they would believe that God indeed is, and will eternally remain, a reconciled God and Father to them in Christ, so that by this knowledge they may live in comfort and joy. Since the Lord Jesus has instituted this sacrament as a seal, believers must use it as such, and they, upon receiving the sacrament, must consider themselves as being sealed and rejoice in their temporal and eternal blessedness.

Thirdly, there is the mutual communion of believers. "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). Communion does not occur with all who go to the holy table, for the communion which believers have with the unconverted does not go beyond a common confession. There is only communion with the godly -- with those they know as well as those they do not know, and with those that are present as well as those who are absent -- and thus not only with those of this particular church, but also with all who are dispersed over the entire world, for they unite themselves with Christ, and in Him with His body which is the church. Their love extends toward them all, and being thus united with them, they are in agreement with all of them in their confession of Christ and His truth. The Lord's Supper and the

Popish Mass

Until the year AD 800 the doctrine of the Lord's Supper remained pure and all that was verbally expressed regarding it referred to its usage, the relationship between sign and signified matter, and its sealing efficacy. From that time forward, however, there was a gradual departing from this truth, and foundations for the most dreadful idolatry were laid. The Papists fully deny the sealing function of the Lord's Supper, since they consider the bread and wine to be Christ's body and blood, and thus Christ Himself. Furthermore, they also maintain that every communicant, with his physical mouth, partakes of the entire Christ in His flesh -- that is, God and man as He was born of Mary and crucified upon Golgotha -- and swallows Him bodily. To afford this a semblance of veracity, they maintain that the priest performing the mass -- by mumbling under his breath these words, for this is My body -- changes the bread and the wine, in very essence to the natural body and blood of Christ (His soul and Godhead included), and thus makes God from that piece of bread. Consequently, as many Christs come into existence as there are wafers over which he mutters these words. Being not yet satisfied with this, they transform the Lord's Supper into a sacrifice -- not of praise and thanksgiving, but as an atoning sacrifice in the literal sense of the word. Thus no one has the forgiveness of sins by the suffering of Christ unless Christ's body is daily broken and sacrificed for them. They do not dare to say that His blood is shed daily; but since the body of Christ is being broken, His blood must also of necessity be shed. They break the wafer -- which to them is Christ -- without Christ Himself being broken. How can the wafer be broken, however, without Christ's body being broken, if the wafer is Christ Himself? This they call the mass, in which the celebrant (whom they call the priest) stands before a table (which they call an altar) decorated with silver, gold, and other physical ostentations, and with images, crosses, and burning candles (even during the middle of the day). He furthermore performs many ridiculous and ludicrous ceremonies such as the removal of a book from one location to the other, the making of knee-bends, the repeated overturning of stones, the ringing of bells, and a muttering behind his garment which he has lifted up from behind him. Last of all, he makes a Christ, that is, a God, out of his wafer, which he then lifts above his head and shows to those who are present for the purpose of worship. This they do while bending their knees and smiting upon their breasts with great reverence. After the bread-god has been worshiped, he breaks him in pieces with a feigned trembling of his limbs -- as if he were terrified. He then consumes him, upon which he empties the cup with one draught, having made its wine into the blood of his God. This then is a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, be it for the living or for the souls in purgatory who are strengthened by it as a hungry person is strengthened who dreams that he eats. Having concluded this, he declares, "Ita missa est," that is, this is in return for your money.

They always have a supply of such created bread-gods at hand. They place them in a glass enclosure and occasionally they will carry this bread-god with great pomp along the street, obliging every one on the street to kneel before this god and to worship him. They daily carry these gods, having been worshiped along the way, in such enclosures to the sick. They then give this bread-god to sick persons who swallow him as their last meal or, when incapable of doing so, vomit him into a water basin; and there lies their god.

They pronounce the anathema -- that is, the curse, which is as powerful and as much to be feared as their breadgod himself -- upon those who cannot believe this and who will neither bow before this bread-god nor honor him in any form. Yes, not being satisfied with the pronouncement of

curses, they kill and, by a thousand different methods of torture, bring to their end all who do not wish to honor this bread-god and will not join them in the commission of this most dreadful idolatry. Thus, this great harlot of Babylon with all her cannibals and drinkers of blood has become drunk with the blood of holy martyrs. This is the abomination of anti-Christianity. This is the "strong delusion to believe lies" which God has sent them, not having received the love for the truth in order to be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11). He who does not wish to be eternally damned must abstain from this most dreadful idolatry and should rather die a thousand deaths than that he would deny Christ and be a partaker of their idolatry -- lest he come with them into the eternal pool of fire prepared for all idolaters. "... idolaters ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). The Error of Transubstantiation In order to uncover the abominableness of this idolatry, we shall raise some questions and answer them. Transubstantiation (or a change of essence) is the foundation for this error. Once we refute this, everything founded upon it will necessarily topple.

Question: Does the proclamation of the five words, for this is My body, change the substance of the bread and wine into the substance of the natural and essential body and blood of Christ (His soul and Godhead being included), and thus into Christ Himself?

Answer: The papists answer resolutely in the affirmative; however, they are very much at odds with each other as to how this change transpires, and by the arguments which they use to refute each other's arguments (which from both sides are equally powerful and irrefutable) they unravel the very doctrine of transubstantiation which they seek to establish from both perspectives. The one party maintains that the bread is annihilated and removed, and that the body and blood of Christ instantly descend from heaven to replace the bread and the wine. The other party maintains that the body and blood of Christ issue forth from the substance of the bread and wine. Some call transubstantiation a preserving change and others call it a creative change; some call it a unifying change, and others are of a different opinion. It is no wonder that they are so divided and attack each other so vehemently, for a lie cannot be corrected -- and in order to cover this up, they should be in agreement, lest they make it all the more evident. They are also not in agreement about the timing of this change. The one maintains that this change transpires when the priest says the word *hoc* (this); the second party maintains that it is when he says *est* (is); and the third party maintains that it is when he says *meum* (My). No one maintains that it is when he says *enim* (for), since they know that this is not recorded in the Bible, but has been added by them. It can be easily deduced from this that if all the words which together engender the efficacy of transubstantiation are not to be found in the Bible -- if one of the five words were to be left out, this change would not occur -- this doctrine would be entirely extra-biblical.

We indeed admit that

- (1) the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper change in a relative sense and are appointed as signs of Christ's body; this is indeed not true for other bread;
- (2) the bread and wine have been instituted as seals to assure believers that the body of Christ has been broken for them and that His blood has been shed for the forgiveness of their sins;
- (3) believers, in partaking of it, unite the sign with the matter signified by an active faith, doing so upon the basis of Christ's institution.

Thereby they spiritually receive Christ, unite themselves with Christ, and become a partaker of Him, doing all this in very deed and in truth. We resolutely deny, however, that this change is one of essence. We shall prove this.

Proof #1: A matter of such importance whereby a man becomes an idolater if there is no such thing as transubstantiation (that is, a change in essence), should expressly have been made known in Scripture, the only rule for doctrine and life. There is, however, not one word or letter to be found concerning this in the entire Word of God. Let one single text be shown which expresses that the bread and the wine are transformed into the essential body and blood of Christ upon the pronouncement of the five words in question, and that the bread and the wine are also changed into both the soul and Godhead of Christ. They are not satisfied with the bread being transformed into Christ's body, for they know that if the soul is absent, there can be no sacrifice which is pleasing to God. They also know that if the bread were not to have become God, then it would be a most abominable act of idolatry if they were to worship it. I repeat, let one single text be produced. They have to this time not been able to respond to this, however, and they will not be able to do so unto all eternity, for there is neither a word nor letter concerning this to be found in the entire Bible. Thus, whatever they say and practice in this respect is but a human fabrication, which therefore must be rejected with abhorrence and the greatest aversion.

Proof #2: It is expressly contrary to Christ's institution of this sacrament which is recorded in Matthew 26:1-75, Mark 14:1-72, Luke 22:1-71, and 1 Corinthians 11:1-34. One will not find the words transubstantiation, change of essence, and transformation, but the contrary. The institutional formula is clear and evident; a plain person who reads the words of the institutional formula can understand them at once. It is stated clearly that Christ took bread, and that He blessed that which He took (as He always did when He partook of food). It is evident that He broke this bread which He had taken and blessed, that He gave this broken bread to His disciples, and that He commanded them to eat this bread. One will observe that all this had transpired prior to His pronouncement of the five words (Christ, however, only said four words), "for this is My body," and thus the bread could not have been changed by the pronouncement of these words -- or else it should, after breaking and giving it, have been changed in the hands and mouths of the disciples; thus they contradict themselves.

Concerning the words this, is, and My body, the following is to be noted. One even without education will be able to see with a glance that the word this refers to the bread which He had taken, broken, and given. Paul states this clearly: "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16); "... the Lord Jesus ... took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you. ... For as often as ye eat this bread ... let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread" (1 Corinthians 11:23-28). Anyone who does not pretend to be blind will readily observe that it is bread rather than the body of Christ which is being broken, given, and eaten. Furthermore, by the giving of the cup it is said, "this cup" (Luke 22:20). This is likewise true for "this bread." Also, in each transformation there is something which changes and there is something into which it changes, and therefore there is either no change or the word this must be understood to refer to bread. Furthermore, what a peculiar statement this would be if one were to understand the word this to refer to Christ's body, for then it would be, "this body is My body; this is My body and the communion with My body."

Christ says, "This is My body." A plain person will first of all be able to see that the word is does not mean to change or to become, but that in this context it means as much as to say "Christ's broken body," that is, His suffering and death. This manner of speech is very common in social conversation, in Scripture, in speech unrelated to the sacraments, and in the sacraments. One can say of a painting: "This is the king of England, and that is the king of France." The bride says about her engagement ring: "This is my fidelity." Everyone knows that in such cases the word implies that this is the image or the likeness of this king, and that this is the token and the seal which the bridegroom has given as a confirmation of his fidelity. This manner of speech is equally common in Holy Writ. We read there as follows: "The seven good kine are seven years" (Genesis 41:26); "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy ... is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels" (Matthew 13:38-39); "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches" (Revelation 1:20); "The seven heads are seven mountains ... and the woman ... is that great city" (Revelation 17:9; Revelation 17:18). It is also used in reference to Christ: "I am the door" (John 10:9); "I am the true vine" (John 15:1); "... and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). No one is so foolish as to take the word in its literal sense; the most simple person would be able to see that it means as much as to say it signifies. The word is even understood to mean signifies relative to the other sacraments. This was true for the Passover, "It is the Lord's passover" (Exodus 12:11). Passover means to pass by. It signified the passing by of the angel who killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. However, he passed by all the houses of the Israelites at whose doors the blood of the slain lamb had been applied, and did not kill the firstborn. The children of Israel, while being prepared to journey, had to eat the slain lamb with girded loins, shoes on their feet, and staffs in their hands -- for it, that is, the Lamb, is the Lord's Passover. No one will be so foolish as to maintain that the lamb was the Passover itself. Everyone knows that it means as much as to say, "the lamb signifies the Passover." This is also confirmed by the expression to eat the Passover, which occurs frequently in the Old Testament, and refers to the eating of the lamb. We thus have here a manner of speech which is figurative in a twofold sense. First, it means signifies, and then the lamb is called the Passover, signifying Christ. "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

We have the same expression relative to circumcision, "This is My covenant" (Genesis 17:10). It is irrefutable that the word this refers to circumcision, and that it is not the covenant itself. Rather, it means as much as to say, "This is a sign of the covenant" -- it signifies the covenant. We have the same manner of speech when saying, "this is My covenant," or "this is My body." This is also true for holy baptism, which is called "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). Baptism is neither the washing nor is it changed into this. Baptism is also not regeneration; however, baptism -- as performed by either immersion or sprinkling -- is a sign and seal of regeneration.

We must yet consider the last words, My body. It is not a point of contention that the words, "this bread is (signifies) My body," refer to the natural body of Christ, as being born of Mary and crucified upon Golgotha. Rather, the question is how this must be understood. It must not be understood as referring to the vital union of His body with His soul and Godhead, that is, the Person of the Godhead, but as being broken and crucified, so that it must be understood to refer to the suffering of Christ.

(1) For the Lord Jesus says this Himself: "This is My body which is given for you" (Luke 22:19); "... this is My body, which is broken for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24). It is also written about the wine, "For this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many" (Matthew 26:28).

(2) It is likewise confirmed by the fact that in the Lord's Supper the bread and the wine, signifying the body and blood of Christ, were each consecrated separately, were each passed out individually, and in like manner consumed -- all of which naturally is expressive of the death of Christ, which also must be commemorated and declared in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:26).

(3) Since these signs are also seals of the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28), and since the forgiveness of sins has been merited by Christ's death (Romans 5:10), the bread as it is present therefore signifies the body of Christ as being crucified and not as being glorified. The bread signifies the death of Christ and not Him who is now in heaven at the right hand of God. From that which has been said, we draw the following conclusion:

(1) If neither at the institution of the Lord's Supper, nor anywhere in the Word of God, mention is made of transubstantiation, that is, of an essential transformation of the bread and the wine into the natural body and blood of Christ;

(2) if the institutional formula clearly states that Christ took bread, blessed bread, broke bread, gave bread, commanded to eat bread (all of this coming prior to the statement, "this is my body," as well as the words pertaining to the cup), and if after the blessing and also after the pronouncement of these words, the bread remains and is bread upon being eaten (1 Corinthians 11:1-34);

(3) if among those words the relative pronoun this refers to the bread, and the word is cannot and is not to be understood to have any other meaning than signifies -- it being understood as such in general conversation, in Holy Writ apart from the sacraments, and as used for the other sacraments where the word is means as much as signifies -- and the word body is to be noted as being broken and crucified, then neither is the bread transformed into Christ's body, nor the wine into His blood. Since the first part of the argument is true, as we have presently shown, the latter part is also true.

Proof #3: It is irrefutably true that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament. If such a change of essence from bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ did indeed occur in the Lord's Supper, it would be no sacrament, for in all sacraments these five matters must be true: 1) its institution as a sacrament; 2) the presence of an external, physical sign; 3) the signification of a spiritual matter which points to Christ; 4) a relationship between the sign and the matter signified; and 5) its purpose -- which is to signify and to seal. All of this has been proven above. Such an essential change thus nullifies all this.

(1) It eradicates the external, physical sign, for it implies that the bread and wine are removed and do not exist when they are consumed.

(2) It eradicates the matter signified, for if the sign ceases to exist, this is likewise true for the matter signified. If the bread is the body of Christ itself, it would not signify anything. It furthermore would destroy the body of Christ itself, since it robs the body of Christ of its magnificence, visibility,

tangibility, and unity.

(3) It eradicates the relationship between the sign and the matter signified, for there is no longer a sign and no longer a matter being signified.

(4) It eradicates the purpose of the sacrament, for in the absence of a sign there is also no seal -- which it nevertheless is, as it seals the suffering and death of Christ to believers. Since the body and blood of Christ itself would be present, it eliminates the remembrance of them, for remembrance relates to something which is absent. It thus follows that there is no such essential change.

Proof #4: Such a change does not occur in any of the sacraments; no one maintains that this is so. Yet the same manner of speech is used relative to the other sacraments: This is the Passover; this is My covenant, baptism, the washing of regeneration. The lamb remained a lamb and did not become Christ; circumcision continued to be the cutting off of the foreskin; and the water in baptism remains water. Since all sacraments are of one and the same nature, however, all have the five requirements just mentioned, and if such a change neither occurs relative to the two sacraments of the Old Testament, nor to baptism in the New Testament, there is also no such change for the Lord's Supper; sacraments are identical in nature.

Proof #5: Transubstantiation unravels several articles of faith confessed by the parties themselves, for such an essential change:

(1) Eradicates the truth concerning the human nature of Christ, whereby He became like unto us in all things. A human body without actual dimensions, capable of being represented by a crumb of bread, is not a human body. That which is separated in thousands of millions of places is not singular, but multiple in nature, and thus cannot be the one body which was born of Mary. That which is invisible and non-tangible is not a true human body. Therefore, if such an essential change indeed took place, Christ would not have a true human body as we do.

(2) Eradicates the one sacrifice of Christ by His death, for it intimates that Christ dies thousands of times each day, and that His body is broken and His blood is shed many times.

(3) Eradicates and conflicts with the ascension of Christ, which teaches that Christ's body, which visibly ascended into heaven, is indeed there and will remain there until the last day, "For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest" (Hebrews 8:4). Transubstantiation implies, however, that this body continues to be on earth and is preserved by the church in special containers.

(4) Eradicates and conflicts with His second return unto judgment when we expect Christ from heaven. This could then not be true, for He would already be upon earth -- and if He is already bodily present in all the churches upon earth, one would be expecting Him in vain. This proves the falsehood of this pretended change.

Proof #6: In addition to the proofs from Scripture, we shall also add one or two from the natural realm. First of all, God is a God of truth, who has implanted truth in His creatures and has given man the understanding to know this truth and to steadfastly walk therein. God, however, has ordained that an object can only be at one locality and that each object has its own location. Thus, the location occupied by the one object cannot simultaneously be occupied by another or many other objects. Each object has its own proper size and dimensions so that a thousand elephants

cannot be in the same location as a small fly. An existing object, being one and the same object as long as it exists, can neither be created nor produced thousands of times. Also, an object or substance cannot be without its own proper qualifications and essential attributes. One and the same body, being alive at one location, cannot be dying and be dead at another location. As far as occurrences are concerned, an occurrence cannot transpire independently from a substance, for the occurrence would then no longer be an occurrence but a substance. Also, one particular occurrence cannot transpire in relation to one substance after the other. These truths are inherent in the realm of nature, and man acknowledges them as infallible truths.

Transubstantiation thus is entirely contrary to nature and eradicates the law of nature in respect to independent entities as well as incidents. It teaches

1) that one and the same body of Christ is daily present at hundreds of thousands of localities, each miles apart from each other. The Papists maintain that there are as many bodies of Christ -- and thus also as many Christs in the world -- as there are wafers which are consecrated and which daily are being consecrated, while yet maintaining that it is but one and the same body of Christ;

2) that the entire body of Christ -- its size being as it has hung on the cross -- with all its members occupies the space of a small crumb of bread, and that the feet are where the hands are -- the head and all other members also occupying the same space -- while yet preserving the identical size and dimensions of the body;

3) that the body of Christ, while being and remaining in heaven, is generated thousands upon thousands of times by the act of consecration, and yet remains one and the same body;

4) that the same body of Christ, while living in glory in heaven, is broken upon earth, is trampled upon by human feet, and can be eaten by rats and mice;

5) that the same visible and tangible body of Christ to which He referred (Luke 24:39) was simultaneously invisible and intangible, etc.; and

6) that the characteristics of bread and wine -- smell, taste, and its ability to feed and to make drunk -- remain without their being bread and wine, for the latter are removed in their opinion. Observe therefore that transubstantiation is utter foolishness as well as a lie. One can hardly believe that people are capable of subscribing to such nonsense; however, God has sent them a strong delusion to believe the lie, having rejected the love for the truth. As foolish as their doctrine is, they yet endeavor to protect it by some evasive arguments.

Evasive Argument #1: The sacraments obligate one to believe, and wherever faith is exercised, reason must yield.

Answer (1) That faith which is required in the sacraments consists in believing that Christ has ordained bread and wine to be signs and seals of His crucified body unto the forgiveness of sins. Faith, however, does not relate to the nature of the bread and wine, any more than it does to the nature of the water in baptism; the nature of both is infallibly known.

(2) God never commands us to believe something which inherently is a lie and unravels His truth established in nature -- all this is true for transubstantiation. God does indeed command us to believe something that is beyond the reach of reason, but never in that which is contrary to truth

and which is contrary to reason; that is, when the truth of the matter is correctly understood.

(3) Sometimes faith relates to invisible things conjoined to physical objects, such as is true for all sacraments. Faith must then be exercised toward those matters which are invisible and transcend reason, while yet maintaining the true nature of the physical objects. Faith is not exercised toward that which one can see (Romans 8:24).

Evasive Argument #2: God is omnipotent and can do whatever pleases Him, and He is thus indeed able to do all the above-mentioned matters.

Answer: (1) Although God is omnipotent, He nevertheless cannot lie (Titus 1:2). To do these contradictory matters mentioned before, is to lie, for this would be contrary to the truths God has assigned to these matters. He, therefore, cannot do this. Thus, truth, not omnipotence, is the issue here.

(2) Even if God were able to do it -- which He nevertheless cannot do, it being contrary to truth -- it nevertheless does not follow that God necessarily wishes to and actually does do so.

Proof #7: All men at all times -- by way of touch and due to the nourishing and inebriating efficacy of bread and wine -- have by their external senses of smell, taste, and touch verified that after the consecration, not the least essential change has occurred in the bread and wine -- considering that all senses function normally, internally as well as externally, as far as the required circumstances are concerned. It has been verified that, rather than being a human body and human blood, it truly is and remains bread and wine, just as it was prior to this moment. This cannot be refuted. It is thus certain that there is no such thing as transubstantiation and that it is a matter of the utmost foolishness and dishonesty to maintain that the bread and wine are transformed into Christ's body and blood by the pronouncement of five words.

Evasive Argument: Against this no response is made other than that 1) one is required to believe here as stated in the answer above; 2) one can be deceived by his senses.

Answer (1) That which can be does not necessarily have to be.

(2) That which has been experienced in identical fashion by all the senses of all healthy people at all times is according to truth and cannot be deceptive. Everyone is certain of this, and he who would refute this would rightfully be considered insane. From all this we conclude with certainty and assurance that the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are not changed into the body and blood of Christ. Let us now answer their objections.

Objection #1: The words of Christ, "this is My body," must be understood literally, and thus the word this does not refer to bread. It is evident that its gender does not agree with that of the word "bread," but rather with that of "body"; it thus refers to "body." The word "body" literally refers to Christ's body, as born of Mary and crucified upon Golgotha. The word is must also be interpreted literally as to mean "to be so naturally and in very deed."

Answer: First, this objection does not pertain to the point of contention. The point of contention is whether or not the bread and wine upon the pronouncement of these words, "for this is My body," are changed into the natural body and blood of Christ. These words, however, do not contain one letter or dot pointing to transubstantiation or change of substance, nor do they imply that this

change would occur upon the pronouncement of those words. It is thus very evident that by using these words as an argument one misses the point of contention. Herewith we have answered this objection. To provide ample proof, however, we shall follow this argument step by step.

Secondly, the word this does indeed refer to the bread which Christ took, broke, and gave; this has been proven above. The argument advanced by the opposing parties, namely, that the word this refers to the body rather than to the bread since its gender does not agree with the latter, is automatically invalidated.

(1) The word this cannot be viewed here as adjectival, but must necessarily be considered as a substantive. If it were adjectival, the words would read as follows: This My body is, that is, it exists. This is nonsensical, for the disciples saw that Christ was indeed bodily present, and the repetition of the word "body" would be illogical -- for then it would read this my body is my body.

(2) If one relates the word this to the body, they themselves overthrow their transubstantiation; for then there would be nothing that was changed, since in every change there is something which changes and there is something which is the result of the change. That which is to come forth from the change is the body, but if the word this does not refer to bread, there is nothing which is changed into Christ's body. Some parties perceive this and they are therefore very much in disagreement among themselves.

Thirdly, they maintain that the words, My body, must be understood as referring to the natural body of Christ. However, this can immediately be refuted with many arguments, and it can be demonstrated that the text itself refutes them. Christ's body was present at the table, and Christ, with His hand, took the bread and not His body. He broke the bread and said, "This is My body which is broken for you." Thus, the body of Christ was declared to be broken, crucified, and put to death while He stood before them alive and uninjured. And, if the body of Christ at that moment had been broken and sacrificed unto the forgiveness of sins, all would already have been finished and Christ would not have had to suffer and die, for He has perfected everything with one sacrifice (Hebrews 10:14).

Fourthly, they wish to understand the word is as declaring that the bread is the natural body of Christ. That it is not the natural body of Christ and that this is not expressed by the word is has also been proven above. We repeat once more that the words, this is My body, must be taken and understood in harmony with Christ's objective. He expresses His intent to rational people by a manner of speech which is most apparent, clear, common, and understandable. If the word is must be taken for to be in a natural sense, then it could neither have been understood nor comprehended by the disciples, nor by any rational creature; for this would result in a thousand absurdities and a complete reversal of the order of nature. However, when we understand is to mean signifies, then the language is most common, apparent, clear, and understandable. It is an irrefutable fact that it is just as common to understand the word is to mean signifies as to understand its meaning to be in a natural and essential sense. The word must therefore be interpreted according to the context and the matter about which this is said. If one says of a painting, "This is my father, and this is my grandfather"; if one says of an engagement ring, "This is my fidelity"; and if one says by way of a metaphor, "Dan is a serpent, Naphtali is a hind, Issachar is a strong ass, Joseph is a fruitful vine (Genesis 49:1-33), Asshur is a rod, Herod is a fox, and the ungodly are blots, clouds without water, dead trees and wild waves of the sea," would one then not

rightfully be considered a fool in interpreting the word is to mean to be and consequently to exclaim, "Dan, Naphtali, Issachar, and Herod are beasts," for it is written, "is a serpent, is a hind, is an ass," etc. Everyone knows, however, that one cannot take these expressions literally; a child will be the judge here. Consider the following as well: Seven kine are seven years, seven heads are seven mountains, and the woman is the great city. It is very obvious that it means as much as to say, signifies. This is much more true concerning Christ: "I am the door, and I am the vine." It is also written, "Christ is our Passover; the Rock was Christ." From all this we establish the irrefutable fact that one in actuality must not conclude the word is to refer to natural existence, but that it means as much as to say, signifies.

Evasive Argument: This is indeed true apart from the sacraments, but here we are dealing with a sacrament, and therefore one cannot reason from the first to the latter.

Answer (1) From what has been said, we have observed what is the meaning of the word is. If it has this meaning in this one instance, it can also mean this in another instance. This is indeed certain: Simply because it says is, one cannot conclude that the bread is the natural body of Christ. Rather, one must show from the context that the word is must be taken literally. Such evidence is lacking, however, and as we have shown above it is evident from the entire text that it is not used in a literal sense by Christ.

(2) In order to satisfy them, however, that this is also a common manner of speech in reference to the sacraments, consider what is written concerning the Passover. "It (the Lamb) is the Lord's passover" (Exodus 12:11). The lamb was not changed by the act of passing by. Consider what is written about circumcision, "This is My covenant" (Genesis 17:10), and about baptism, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us ... but the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21). [Note: The Dutch reads as follows: "... die een vraag is van een goed geweten." The literal translation of this would be, "... which is the answer of a good conscience."] What more is there to be said? -- perhaps the following. Evasive Argument: In matters pertaining to faith and testaments one must not speak obscurely and figuratively, but one must speak clearly.

Answer (1) He who has given man speech should not be instructed as to how He ought to speak.

(2) Christ generally spoke about matters of faith by means of parables and figurative language.

(3) Jacob's testament in Genesis 49:1-33 is replete with figurative expressions.

(4) Figurative expressions are to be distinguished from ambiguous expressions. The latter can engender some obscurity; however, figurative expressions are clear, shed more light upon the matter, and express the nature of the matter more clearly and forcefully -- especially if the expression is known and is as common as the actual matter itself, which is true here for the word is.

(5) The opposing parties themselves must be convinced that Christ uses a figurative expression in the institutional formula of the sacrament. "This cup is the new testament" (Luke 22:20). It first of all follows that not the cup itself, but that which it contains is understood by this. Secondly, this cup is not the New Testament, and also its content is not the New Testament. Rather, it is the confirmation and seal of it, which by the shedding of His blood has been fulfilled and accomplished for believers. Furthermore, they do not take the words which is shed literally, for they deny all

shedding of blood in the mass, since in their opinion, the blood is not separated from the body, and the pouring out points to the shedding of blood at the cross. It means as much as to say that it would soon be shed, of which Christ made demonstration in the Last Supper. They also must admit that in these words, this is My body, there is a figurative manner of speech. They interpret this in their own way, when they understand this to refer to that which is present under the appearance of bread and wine, or is not yet, but upon the conclusion of the pronouncement of these words, it becomes an independent entity in the general sense of the word or an *inviduum vagum*, that is, something undefined and without name, etc. They vehemently disagree, however, about this among each other. Neither do they interpret the word is in its literal sense, but understand this to mean either, is comprehended, shall be, be, bechanged or be transubstantiated. They also do not take the word body literally, considering it to be either a body without size, with size but without dimension, or with both size and dimension but not locally defined, for even among themselves the one holds to this and the other to that view. They must all understand everything in a figurative sense, however, for a literal body is both visible and tangible, and its size and dimensions are local in nature. Does the word body also refer to the soul and the Godhead?

Objection #2: "This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). They insist that one cannot say which, but rather the which -- that is, the cup -- is shed, since the words, is shed, agree in causa not with blood, but rather with cup, and by the cup one must understand that which is in it: the blood of Christ. The meaning would then be as follows: "This My blood, which is shed for you, is the new testament in My blood." From this they wish to conclude that the wine has been changed into the blood of Christ.

Answer (1) This objection refutes itself, for it is certain that the blood of Christ is separated from Christ's body. It is then equally certain that there is also a shedding of blood; however, they do not wish to admit both, calling their mass an unbloody sacrifice.

(2) The word cup must indeed be understood to refer to its content, but there was no blood in it, but rather wine -- Christ calls it the "fruit of the vine" (Matthew 26:29).

(3) Even if one were to associate the words, is shed, with the cup, the meaning is equally clear. The cup, that is, the wine which is in it and which will be poured forth, is the New Testament; that is, it seals to believers the New Testament which is sealed in Christ's blood -- the wine being a sign and a seal of this.

(4) It is common with other writers as well as in the New Testament, that words which agree in causa with another word, nevertheless -- as far as meaning is concerned -- agree with the word upon which one focuses, as is to be observed, for instance, in Matthew 28:19 and Revelation 1:5.

Objection #3: "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56).

Answer (1) This text does not refer to the Lord's Supper, for it neither had been instituted as yet, nor was there any reference or prophecy concerning it. Rather, the reference is to the manna, so that according to the popish argument one could conclude that Christ had been changed into manna, for He says, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).

(2) However, Christ here speaks of the spiritual partaking of Christ by faith, which occurs at all times. He does not refer to a physical eating and drinking, for He says expressly in John 6:63, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life."

Objection #4: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:27).

Answer (1) This text answers for itself, for Paul says that the cup must also be given to the common man, as well as that whatever is eaten and drunk is bread and wine; it is consequently not the body and blood of Christ.

(2) The unworthy partakers make themselves guilty of the body and blood of Christ since such unworthy eating and drinking is to despise and have contempt for the suffering and death of Christ. It is like someone who, in indignation, mars the king's seal or image, thereby demonstrating that he despises and has contempt for the king himself. It thus remains unmovably true that the wine and bread in the Lord's Supper are not the literal body and blood of Christ, but rather that they are signs and seals of Christ's suffering unto the forgiveness of sins. The Error of Consubstantiation Question: Does consubstantiation occur at the Lord's Supper?

Answer: The Lutherans maintain that the bread and the wine do indeed not change into the body and blood of Christ, but remain bread and wine. Instead, they maintain that Christ's body and blood are in, with, and under the bread and the wine, and that relative to the words, this is My body, the word this refers to both the bread and the body of Christ together. This they refer to as consubstantiation. We deny this and prove this with the same arguments by which we have refuted popish transubstantiation.

First, this is evident from the history of the institution which relates clearly that:

(1) Christ was bodily, locally, and visibly present at the table, and was not injured, broken, dead, but alive. Christ took the bread, broke and gave it, and the disciples ate the given bread. Christ said of this bread, "This is My body," so that the word this cannot refer to anything else but the bread only.

(2) Paul understood it thus when he says, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). The body of Christ was not the communion of the body of Christ, but only the bread was the communion of Christ, signifying and sealing it.

(3) This is also evident when considering the other sign. Concerning the cup Christ says, "This cup is the new testament." The word this cannot but refer to the cup, for this cup is added, that is, this wine in the cup. Therefore the word this cannot refer to anything else but the bread, and not simultaneously to Christ's body as well. For it would then necessarily follow that Christ had two bodies -- one body that was alive and was visibly, tangibly, and locally at the table which took the bread, brake and gave it; and another invisible body which was taken, broken, and given. Or else the one body would have to be simultaneously visible and invisible, and entirely whole, while at the same time broken. This is absurdity itself.

(4) They maintain that these words, this is My body which is broken for you, must be taken literally. They do not in the least way want to permit the possibility of figurative speech. The words

themselves will then convince them, however, for they must either agree with the Papists and maintain that it is Christ's body itself, or else they are without any proof -- for in the words, this is My body, there is not the least reference to in, with, and under. Also, when it is stated, "which is broken," they must admit something figurative in this expression, for the body of Christ was neither broken at that moment, nor His blood as yet shed. Rather, it means as much as to say (they themselves being the judge), "which shall soon be broken."

Secondly, the Lord's Supper is a sacrament. A sacrament is not the matter itself, however, but rather a sign and seal of the matter. If Christ's body were in, with, and under the bread, it would be the matter itself and it thus would be no sacrament.

Thirdly, there is no such bodily presence in all the other sacraments, and thus also not in this sacrament, for the identical expressions are used in the other sacraments: This is the Passover, this is My covenant, which is the washing of regeneration, and which is the answer of a good conscience. If therefore identical expressions in the other sacraments are not indicative of the presence of Christ as being in, with, and under, then it is also not the case in this sacrament. These expressions are identical, and all sacraments are of one and the same nature: They consist in signs and seals.

Fourthly, such a bodily presence conflicts with the incarnation of Christ, for it denies that Christ has become like us in all things, and thus denies that He is very man of man. It also conflicts with Christ's ascension and sitting at the right hand of God, which indicate that Christ according to the body is not upon earth, but has left it. It would then necessarily follow that if Christ were still on earth, He Himself would be no High Priest.

Fifthly, such a bodily presence would be destructive of the body, for the entire human body is confined to one place, is impenetrable (that is, the one body does not penetrate the substance of the other), and cannot be in the same place where another body is. A body is tangible, visible, etc. Therefore the proposition of Christ's bodily presence in the Lord's Supper is full of absurdities which contradict both nature and Scripture.

Evasive Argument: God is omnipotent, and therefore He can bring it to pass.

Answer: God is a God of truth, and given truths are part and parcel of the nature of His creatures. It is contradictory to be a true body and yet to be invisible, intangible, and penetrable, etc. Furthermore, from the power of God one cannot conclude the existence of something. However, the existence of something under specific circumstances must be proven from God's revealed will -- from the Word of God. The Word makes no reference whatsoever to the presence of Christ's body in, with, and under the bread; rather, it testifies of the contrary -- and that is the end of all arguments.

It now being a certainty that the bread and the wine are not changed into the body and blood of Christ, and that the body and blood of Christ are not physically present in, with, and under the bread and the wine, the sentiments of both have necessarily been invalidated, namely, that the body and blood of Christ are physically present in the Lord's Supper and are in a physical manner eaten and drunk with the physical mouth. We maintain that Christ, as to His suffering and death, is spiritually present in the signs of bread and wine. These signs, by reason of and on the basis of Christ's institution, are partaken of by faith. Believers are thus united to Christ in His suffering and

death -- this being the matter signified -- and partake of these as seals of the forgiveness of sins. We furthermore maintain that the partaking of Christ by faith is immediately applied to the heart, and that spiritual communion is exercised with Christ by virtue of the operation of the Holy Spirit. Christ is thus truly present and believers truly exercise communion with Christ; however, they do so in a spiritual rather than a physical manner -- for that which is spiritual is as real as that which is physical. We reject with abhorrence, however, the physical presence of Christ, and the physical eating and drinking of His natural body and blood by way of the physical mouth.

First, this is evident from all the arguments whereby we have refuted the errors of both parties: transubstantiation and consubstantiation. The foundation having been eradicated, the entire structure of their argument of necessity collapses -- all of which has been dealt with in the above.

Secondly, this is evident from Christ's ascension. If Christ has ascended to heaven, has left the earth, is with His body in heaven only, would not be a High Priest if He were still upon earth (Hebrews 8:4), and is only expected from heaven upon the clouds on the last day, then Christ is not physically present in the Lord's Supper, and one can thus not eat Him physically with his physical mouth. Or else one must maintain that those texts all pertain to His visible rather than invisible presence. This is a futile argument, for Christ's body cannot invisibly be present elsewhere. It also conflicts with all the expressions of Christ pertaining to His departure and return.

Thirdly, it is furthermore evident from the nature and the objective of the sacrament. It is a sacrament of nourishment, for it is partaken of by way of eating and drinking. However, the objective is to feed the soul, and not the body. The nature of the nourishment is consistent with the manner in which it nourishes. Christ's natural flesh and blood are physical, and if it were indeed eaten and drunk with the physical mouth, it could not do otherwise than feed the body, and it could in no wise penetrate to nourish the soul, which is a spirit. It is the nourishment and strengthening of the soul which is the objective here -- not in reference to the essence of the soul, but rather as far as faith and comfort are concerned. The Lord Jesus speaks extensively of this spiritual nourishment of the soul in John 6:1-71, which the Jews interpret in a carnal sense by saying in verse 52, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Christ, however, refutes them by saying that He did not speak of His physical flesh, but of the spiritual nourishment of the soul. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). It is evident from verse 35 that He did not speak of physical eating with the physical mouth, but of spiritual eating by faith. "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Thus, this entire chapter speaks of spiritual communion with Christ by faith unto the strengthening of spiritual life, and not at all of the Lord's Supper, which had not been instituted at that time.

Fourthly, opposing parties refute themselves when they maintain that to eat physically only without eating spiritually by faith as well, is not only of no benefit, but is also harmful and of a damning nature. Therefore to have eaten Christ's body with the physical mouth is no nourishment for the soul; only spiritual eating by faith nourishes the soul.

Fifthly, this practice mentioned is the most bestial, unspiritual, and abominable idolatry. God, believers, and all who are not wilfully blind, hate and reject it as a loathsome practice. For the holy and glorious body of the beloved Jesus -- and if one were to believe them, Christ as God and man is placed in the unclean mouth of a sinner -- is eaten, swallowed, brought into a defiled stomach,

digested, and secretly excreted; the ungodly tear it to pieces, and dogs, rats, and mice eat it. Let him who loves Jesus beware of such an abomination.

Sixthly, it inverts the entire nature of the body, proposing the existence of a body without size, dimensions, spatial restrictions, and the occupation of location. It furthermore proposes the existence of a body which is invisible, intangible, penetrating other bodies while being penetrated by other bodies in turn -- yes, by being simultaneously visible and invisible, infinite and finite, and in a glorious state as well as being broken and eaten. All of this must be admitted if one adheres to Christ's physical presence and the physical eating of Him in the Lord's Supper. It is an error which a heathen will be able to refute, of which all rational men could be convinced within themselves, and which they themselves would reject if they used their reason and believed the Scriptures.

One will appeal in vain to the omnipotence of God if he wishes to make truth out of a lie, for God's revealed will is silent on the matter.

Evasive Argument: Christ entered the house when the doors were closed (John 20:19). He thus penetrated a door.

Answer: Mention is made of both the time when Christ entered, as well as of His unexpected entry; however, no mention is made of His penetrating the door with His body. Everything must fall away and yield when Jesus wishes to gain entrance. He therefore does not need to bypass the ordained order of nature, nor does He have to make "no" and "yes" to be simultaneously true. When He willed to exit the grave, He did not need to penetrate the stone; He had angels who rolled it away for Him. When He traversed through the heavens (Hebrews 4:14) the thin air had to yield for the more solid substance of His body -- this occurs daily when an object moves from one place to the other. When it is said of Christ that He departed out of their sight (Luke 24:31), this does not intimate a disappearance or His becoming invisible, but rather, a sudden and rapid departure out of their presence. The Worship of the Wafer: An Abominable Heresy

Having refuted transubstantiation, the following most idolatrous error of the Papists is at once invalidated, namely, that a consecrated or blessed wafer over which the five words "for this is My body" have been pronounced, must, as the true God, be worshiped with religious honor. The Papists make a distinction between *douleia* and *latreia*. They worship angels and deceased men with *douleia*; however, no one may be worshiped with *latreia*, except the one, true, and eternal God. They maintain, therefore, that the wafer must be worshiped with *latreia*, that is, with the highest form of religious expression, of which the only true God alone is worthy, since the wafer is no longer bread, but the body of Christ united with the Godhead, and thus God Himself. An ignorant person may think that one would do them an injustice by ascribing such ungodly sentiments to them. The Papists are, however, known for this, want this to be known, and confess and defend it with all their might. Yes, they maintain that it is not sufficient if one worships the wafer in his heart. Rather, one must worship it with the deepest external humiliation and reverence, bowing the knees, folding the hands, removing the hat, etc. This is not only required in the church when the celebrant of the mass lifts the wafer above his head, but also when it is placed in a small enclosure and carried over the streets to the sick. This is especially true on their sacramental day, when the wafer with much pomp is carried about the streets, and also when the wafer at a special occasion is publicly put on display.

We maintain that Christ, being the one, eternal, and true God, must be worshiped, and that believers, during the administration of the Lord's Supper and upon use of the signs and seals, must also lift their hearts to Christ in heaven while eating and drinking; unite themselves by faith with Him; honor, worship, thank, and surrender themselves to Him in order to serve and entrust themselves to Him. We furthermore maintain that one must acknowledge, appreciate, esteem, and value the external signs of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper as signs of Christ's crucified body and shed blood, always distinguishing between the sign and the matter signified. However, we abhor with the highest indignation the worship of the wafer, and therefore let everyone who values his salvation abstain from this most abominable idolatry for the following reasons:

First, the wafer is not God nor is it Christ's body; it is but a piece of bread, or some bread dough. This we have proven above and have answered the objections. Since, therefore, the wafer is not God, one may also not worship it, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

Secondly, in the entire Word of God there is neither a command, example, nor the least semblance of the practice of worshiping the bread of the Lord's Supper. Everyone will have to acknowledge that the worship of the wafer is a matter of the greatest significance upon which the salvation of man hinges, for idolaters will not inherit the kingdom of heaven (1 Corinthians 6:10). Since the worship of the wafer is the entire pith of popish religion, everyone must be convinced that it is a matter of the greatest import; for a matter which is the foundation of an entire religion, and is a daily activity, must be commanded in God's Word with utmost clarity, and one ought not to engage in this without an express command. However, there is neither a word, trace, nor example of this practice to be found in God's Word -- which the Papists themselves know and until now they have not been able to produce one text. Furthermore, since the time of the apostles as well as all the hundreds of years afterwards, the church did not know of the practice of worshiping the wafer. It is thus clear that one must reject the practice of worshiping the wafer as an accursed idolatry (which it is), and desist from founding his salvation upon it.

Thirdly, according to their own opinion, they are always in danger of committing idolatry and of worshiping that which is not God. They themselves maintain that if the priest celebrating the mass is not baptized, then all consecration is nullified, the bread has not been changed into Christ's body, and the wafer is not God. Furthermore, the priest celebrating the mass is not baptized if he was baptized by one who was not baptized; if this priest then in turn had not been baptized ... and so it goes on. Even if he had received the water, and either the one who baptized him or someone down the line did not baptize with the right intent, the baptism would be null and void, which would be true for the consecration as well. Also, if it were not the priest's objective to change the bread into the body of Christ, then the consecration would be null and void and the bread did not become the body of Christ. Furthermore, if he were to omit one of those five words or if he were to add one word, the consecration is null and void -- and there are more such conditions. Who, however, can be assured with a divine assurance that all the conditions in the consecration have been observed? Someone, even if he worships the wafer with the utmost reverence, would then worship ignorantly, and if the wafer by reason of their proposition is not God, he commits the most blatant idolatry by worshiping a piece of bread as his God. Would they be excused by saying, "I worship Thee if Thou art God"? It is an abomination to worship something as God upon the condition that it is God; one must know what one worships. Let them then worship every tree -- yes, even an

animal -- upon that condition, saying, "I worship Thee if Thou art God," and then let them perceive in the day of judgment whether or not they have been idolaters. He who therefore wishes to be saved, let him abstain from worshipping the wafer, for it is not God, and according to their own propositions no one can assure you that it is God.

Fourthly, never has a more bestial religion been contrived, which worships a wafer as God, encloses God in a case, allowing Him to be observed through a window in the front, carries God about and then puts Him down again at His proper place, and carefully preserves God so that dogs, rats, and mice will not find Him and eat Him. Even after they have preserved and worshiped their God long enough, He must then succumb at last and be eaten by them. The Papists will acknowledge all this to be true, and yet they are nevertheless so foolish that they cannot perceive that they are committing idolatry -- albeit that the wise among them acknowledge that, if the wafer is not God, they are then the worst idolaters of the world. Many among them no longer believe in transubstantiation and deem all this to be but ceremonial; they observe it so that they do not give offense or do not suffer. For the sake of personal salvation let everyone therefore abstain from this abomination. And what can they bring forth in support of this their idolatry? Indeed, they can neither find one single Scripture passage, nor an example of the apostles or from the early church. However, in spite of this they advance the following objections:

Objection #1: It is written, "This is My body."

Answer (1) Even if this referred to Christ's natural body, it is not written, "Thou shalt worship it"; this is the point of contention. One may not worship the crucified body of Christ, for the flesh and blood of Christ are not God.

(2) Furthermore, the wafer -- as has been demonstrated above -- is not the body of Christ at all. This is therefore entirely erroneous.

Objection #2: One must worship God wherever He is. Since He is in the host or the wafer, one must also worship Him as such.

Answer (1) One must worship God who is omnipresent; however, not in relation to and as reflected in God's presence in all creatures. Otherwise one would have to kneel before every tree and worship God in that tree, God being present in that tree.

(2) They are not satisfied to worship God as being in the wafer, considering He is in everything, but they insist that the wafer itself be worshiped since, in their opinion, it is God. Their argument is thus not watertight and the wafer is not God.

(3) But, say they, all must be worshiped in which God is to be found; this, however, we deny and they must deny it with us. God is in every tree and God dwells in a believer as in a temple. Who would be so foolish as to say that one therefore ought to worship every tree and every believer? The Lord Jesus was in the grave; ought one therefore to worship the grave? The Lord Jesus is in heaven; ought one therefore to worship heaven? Therefore, even if Christ were in the wafer, one ought not to worship the wafer. It thus remains certain that it is idolatrous to worship the wafer. The Popish Mass is Not a Sacrifice of Christ

Transubstantiation having been eradicated, the entire proposition of the popish mass being a sacrifice has been eradicated as well. This will become all the more evident when we deal with the

following question:

Question: Is the Lord's Supper a new, true, and external sacrifice of Christ's body and blood in the literal sense of the word, and thus a sacrifice unto God of the entire Christ -- that is, God and man -- for the forgiveness of sins of the living and the dead?

Answer: The Papists not only maintain that there is a symbolic and applicatory sacrifice, but that it is even an atoning sacrifice, so that the living and the dead cannot have the forgiveness of sins by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross unless Christ is yet daily sacrificed in the mass.

We do maintain that prayer and thanksgiving must daily be offered -- apart from and during the use of the Lord's Supper. This the apostle calls the offering of praise. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually" (Hebrews 13:15). We deny, however, with the greatest indignation that this sacrifice is a sacrifice of Christ to God for the forgiveness of sins of the living and the dead. This we shall prove as follows: It is a certainty that God has caused the entire scope of religion to be recorded in His Word -- and particularly the most significant points of the faith. One must therefore serve God according to His revealed will only, and all religious practice which God has not commanded must therefore be rejected as contrivances of men. "But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). However, God's Word does not speak one word of a new, repeated, or continual sacrifice of Christ being made unto God subsequent to His finished sacrifice on the cross. It is not stated elsewhere, nor is it included in the institutional formula of the Lord's Supper (cf. Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23; 1 Corinthians 10:16). Rather, the contrary is evident and is as clear as day. Christ Himself was visibly present at the table. Christ took bread, gave thanks, brake it, and gave it to His disciples and not to God -- and afterwards He gave them the cup. He then commanded them to eat and to drink in remembrance of Him. What reference is there here to a sacrifice and to a sacrificing unto God? Furthermore, if this were Christ's sacrifice of Himself to God, His sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins would already have been accomplished that evening; and if it had been a true sacrifice, it would not have been necessary for Him to sacrifice Himself the next day.

Evasive Argument: This is a symbolic and applicatory sacrifice.

Answer: The one sacrifice cannot be symbolized by another sacrifice which differs from this sacrifice to a far greater degree than in relationship and typification only. The Papists are not satisfied, however, with symbolism and application only. They insist that it be an atoning sacrifice -- yes, that it is essentially the same sacrifice which was accomplished on the cross, except that the manner of sacrifice differs. Thus, in essence sin had already been paid for that evening when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper and gave His disciples the bread and the wine. It is very evident, however, that at the institution of the Lord's Supper no mention is made (nor is there the least semblance of this) that Christ sacrificed Himself at that moment, nor that He gave command that He be daily sacrificed until the end of the world. On the contrary, it is obvious that this is not true.

Proof #1: Christ has been sacrificed but once, and this one sacrifice is perfect in its efficacy to remove all sin; therefore a daily sacrifice for sin can no longer be made. "Now where remission of

these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18). It is evident from the following texts -- which cannot be subjected to argumentation -- that Christ has been sacrificed but once and that this one sacrifice is perfectly atoning in nature: "Who needeth not daily ... for this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:27); "Nor yet that He should offer himself often. ... For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:25-28); "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:12; Hebrews 10:14). Behold, there is but one sacrifice of Christ which perfects forever.

Evasive Argument: These texts refer to Christ's atoning sacrifice and not to His symbolic, applicatory, and unbloody sacrifice, which is daily performed in the mass.

Answer (1) If this sacrifice is but symbolic, applicatory, and unbloody, it is certain that the sacrifice of the mass is a different sacrifice from the one which Christ accomplished on the cross.

(2) Scripture knows of no other sacrifice of Christ except that one, and therefore to speak of a symbolic, applicatory, and unbloody sacrifice is but trifling outside of the Word of God. It conflicts with the matter itself -- for a sacrifice is made toward God and an application, man-ward.

(3) Furthermore, they are not satisfied with a symbolic and applicatory sacrifice only, but maintain expressly that their mass is an atoning sacrifice, whereas the texts say that the perfectly atoning sacrifice of Christ did transpire but once, and can only transpire once -- for Christ would then have to suffer as frequently as He would be sacrificed. Therefore, these texts irresistibly refute the sacrifice in the mass.

(4) Also, is the symbolic and applicatory sacrifice of Christ in the mass a true sacrifice, or is it only a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ, depicting it? They maintain that it is a true sacrifice -- and if it is a true sacrifice, then it is a literal sacrifice and therefore identical to the sacrifice which Christ accomplished on the cross. Else it is either a new or different sacrifice, or a repetition of it. No matter how one looks at it, if in the mass there is a true, literal sacrifice of Christ for the purpose of making atonement, this causes Christ to yet suffer daily (Hebrews 9:27), while denying the perfect atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Evasive Argument #2: It is in essence the same sacrifice; however, they differ in the manner in which they are performed. Therefore the texts just mentioned are not opposed to the sacrifice in the mass, but speak of the mass itself; the sacrifice in the mass is none other than the same sacrifice which was made on the cross.

Answer (1) If the mass represents the same sacrifice which occurred on the cross, Christ still suffers and dies daily, be it in a continual or repetitious sense, for Christ suffered and died on the cross. Furthermore, the suffering and death which is repeated cannot be the same as that which occurred prior to that.

(2) If it is the same sacrifice, Christ's sacrifice on the cross was not perfect, for it was not yet finished -- it yet continues and must daily be performed.

(3) Even if there were a sacrifice in the mass (which, however, is erroneous), it is not the same sacrifice. It cannot be the same sacrifice which Christ performed on the cross, for it differs from this sacrifice in every respect.

First of all, there is a difference as far as the priest is concerned. On the cross Christ was the Priest in person and He sacrificed Himself. In the mass, however, a man who calls himself a priest sacrifices Christ, and that for someone else. Therefore this sacrifice cannot give satisfaction because satisfaction receives its efficacy from Christ's high priestly office, in that He offers Himself.

Secondly, the altar differs; it is the altar which sanctifies the sacrifice (Matthew 23:19). "Christ Himself is the altar who by His eternal Spirit has offered himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14; cf. Hebrews 13:10). The mass makes use of a table of wood or stone. Furthermore, they maintain that the cross was Christ's altar, which is thus different from theirs.

Thirdly, the sacrifice and the manner of sacrifice differ. On the cross the body and blood of Christ were broken and shed with much sorrow, this being the essence of a sacrifice which would atone for sin. However, they admit that in the mass, even though Christ is present in His Person, there is not even sorrow, nor the breaking of His body, nor the shedding of His blood. Therefore, this sacrifice not only differs in the manner in which it was performed, but also in essence. We speak here assumptively, for the body of Christ is not present in the mass.

Fourthly, they differ in location. Christ's sacrifice occurred at Golgotha, and it did not occur simultaneously in many other places -- that is, outside of that place. The mass is not performed at Golgotha, but simultaneously in thousands of different localities.

Fifthly, they differ chronologically. Christ's sacrifice, of which He said that it was finished, has been accomplished for many hundreds of years already; the mass, however, occurs daily.

Sixthly, they differ in efficacy, for Christ's sacrifice was atoning in nature -- this was true for the sins which had been committed in the Old Testament from the beginning of the world, as well as for those sins which have been committed in the New Testament. A mass, however, does not have sufficient efficacy to atone for sin. The mass itself lacks the efficacy to bring about the forgiveness of a man's sins. Sometimes, if a person has been rich in his life, a thousand masses are celebrated to help one soul escape purgatory. From all this it is evident to all rational persons (however unintelligent they may be) that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the sacrifice which one fabricates in the mass are not one and the same. Thus, the quoted texts remain fully in force and prove that the mass is not an atoning sacrifice.

Proof #2: Everything which belongs to a sacrifice is lacking in the mass, and thus there is no sacrifice in the mass. Everyone will agree that the following belongs to a sacrifice: a priest, an altar, visible and tangible sacrifices, and the disintegration and annihilation of the sacrifice. None of these are present in the mass.

First, there are no priests present at the mass, albeit that all believers are indeed spiritual priests (cf. 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6 and Revelation 5:10). That is not the issue here,

however. They are not capable of sacrificing an atoning sacrifice in the literal sense of the word. To accomplish that, priests must be present -- in the literal sense of the word. There are, however, no literal priests in the New Testament; no mention is made of this anywhere in the Word of God.

(1) They themselves also know this, and they therefore cannot produce a single text by which they can prove the use of such a title. Where is Peter, Paul, any apostle, or any minister called a priest? Who of them has referred to himself as a priest?

(2) When the apostles enumerate the ministries of the New Testament, they do not place the priesthood among them. "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Would they then not have mentioned the priesthood as being the most significant ministry, if it indeed existed?

(3) If their clergymen were to be priests, they must either be priests according to the order of Aaron, or according to the order of Melchizedek. They are not priests according to the order of Aaron, for they are neither descendants of Jews nor of the tribe of Levi. They are also not priests according to the order of Melchizedek, for only Christ is a priest according to this order. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalms 110:4). Christ has no successors in His priestly ministry, for He lives forever and will always remain Priest. "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable (Greek: without succession) priesthood" (Hebrews 7:23-24). It is thus evident that they also cannot be priests according to the order of Melchizedek -- and if they nevertheless insist on this, they must prove their order, which is impossible. And if they are yet priests in spite of this, albeit neither according to the order of Aaron, nor according to the order of Melchizedek, they must be either priests of Baal or priests of Jupiter (Acts 14:13) -- which we shall not deny them.

(4) Even if we assume that they are priests, they could nevertheless not sacrifice Christ Himself, for no priest has ever presumed to do this. Priests sacrificed something which typified Christ, but not Christ Himself. Therefore at best they would be sacrificing something which is a reflection of Christ, but not Christ Himself. None other than Christ can sacrifice Himself.

Secondly, in the New Testament there are no literal altars consisting of physical matter. The Lord Jesus says that the altar is more than the sacrifice, for it sanctifies the sacrifice (cf. Matthew 23:18-19). None of the Papists would dare to say, however, that their altars are superior to Christ, and that they sanctify Christ and cause the sacrifice of Christ to be pleasing before God; and thus they have no altar.

Evasive Argument: "We have an altar" (Hebrews 13:10).

Answer (1) Here mention is made of one, but the Papists have thousands of altars.

(2) This one altar is Christ Himself upon which we sacrifice a "sacrifice of praise" (Hebrews 13:15). This is also true in Revelation 6:9 : "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God" (Revelation 6:9). This altar is Christ who is their altar and their atoning sacrifice, and it is He who overshadows and refreshes them.

Thirdly, the Papists also do not have an external sacrifice, for bread and wine are no longer present. It is gone (so they say) and Christ's body is not present. Even if it were present, it is nevertheless not visible -- which they themselves admit -- and thus there is no external and visible sacrifice. The appearance of bread is indeed visible, but not the appearance of the sacrifice, and that which appears as visible is not the sacrifice.

Fourthly, according to their own words, Christ's body is also not broken. They maintain that the breaking of the wafer does not break the body of Christ; rather, Christ is and remains whole in every piece of the wafer. They also do not believe that the blood of Christ is shed, albeit that it runs from the cup into the mouth of the priest and is swallowed by him; instead, they call it an unbloody sacrifice. They thus confuse themselves and the one thing contradicts the other. Where there is no breaking of the sacrifice, accompanied with sorrow and death, there is no payment for sin; the wages of which is death. Likewise, where there is no shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness: "... and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). From that which has been said it is therefore evident that in the mass there is neither a priest, an altar, an external and visible sacrifice, the breaking of the sacrifice, nor the shedding of blood. Consequently it is certain that there is no sacrifice.

Objection #1: Melchizedek was a type of Christ, and he sacrificed bread and wine. "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God" (Genesis 14:18).

Answer (1) What proof does this yield that popish priests are priests indeed, and that these priests sacrifice Christ unto the forgiveness of sins? Who will be able to tie these ends together? It is true that Melchizedek was a priest, and it is also true that Melchizedek was a type of Christ. Now what? The argument that he is thus an example for the popish priests is not valid. "Yes, but he offered bread and wine." What does that prove? Does it therefore follow that the popish priests also offer bread and wine? That would be the most logical argument if one were to draw a conclusion on the basis of this; however, they deny that they offer bread and wine -- they maintain that they sacrifice Christ. This argument is therefore neither coherent, nor is it valid.

(2) Melchizedek, the king of Salem, was indeed priest and gave bread and wine to Abraham and to his people as a refreshment; however, he did not sacrifice bread and wine unto God in like manner as all other sacrifices are made unto God. He also was not a type of Christ as far as the bringing forth of bread and wine are concerned. The apostle in explaining the application of Melchizedek as type and Christ as antitype (Hebrews 7:17), makes no mention of bringing forth bread and wine, but he establishes a relationship in reference to other matters; he also did not do this as priest.

Objection #2: The Passover was a type of Christ who is therefore called the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Passover was a sacrifice and thus also Christ our Passover must be sacrificed.

Answer (1) In the sacrifice of the passover Christ Himself was not literally sacrificed, but rather a lamb as a type of Christ.

(2) We cannot conclude that since Christ was typified in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, He must therefore also be represented in sacrifices by way of antitype; the contrary is true. If Christ

was typified in the Old Testament by way of a sacrifice, He must no longer be typified in a sacrifice, since all shadows and types have ended in Him and are fulfilled in Him.

(3) There is also no relationship between the sacrifice of the Passover and the sacrifice in the mass. In the Passover there was a visible sacrifice; in the mass the sacrifice is invisible. In the Passover Christ Himself was not sacrificed, whereas this is held to be true in the mass. In the Passover no bone was permitted to be broken, whereas in the mass the wafer is broken. These matters are too distinctly different to enable anyone to draw a parallel between them.

Objection #3: There are many prophecies which say that there still would be priests, altars, and sacrifices in the New Testament. "Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation" (Isaiah 19:21); "And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 66:21); "And in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering" (Malachi 1:11).

Answer: (1) It is common in God's Word to express spiritual religion in the New Testament by way of terminology pertaining to the religion of the Old Testament. Instead of quoting many texts, consider the following: "... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1); "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19). Believers are thus called God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16), a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5). This is also repeatedly true in Revelation.

(2) The quoted texts themselves indicate that there is nothing in support of the sacrifice of the mass, but that they speak of the spiritual service of the New Testament -- for they speak of an offering, of Levites, and of incense.

Objection #4: "This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). With these words Christ appointed the apostles as priests and commanded them to sacrifice His body, as He did.

Answer (1) There is not a semblance of a reference to priests, sacrifices, and the sacrifice of His body; therefore as quickly as this objection is raised, so quickly is it refuted.

(2) Christ did not sacrifice Himself at that time and He did not command them to do so.

(3) Christ commanded them to eat and to drink in remembrance of Him, to pass this sacrament on to the church, and cause it to be used by them.

Objection #5: "As they ministered to the Lord" (Acts 13:2). In the Greek text it reads leitourgein which means: to celebrate the mass.

Answer: This word means "to serve" in a general sense; it is used to denote the angels as ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:14), and governments as servants of God (Romans 13:6); it also means to give alms (2 Corinthians 9:12; Romans 15:27). Here there is also no support for the nauseating mass. [Note: In the Dutch it reads, "de misselijke mis," which is an obvious play on words.]

We have thus exposed the abominable idolatry of anti-Christianity. How correctly did our forefathers act when, upon the command of the Lord, they departed from the mother of harlots, that great Babylon, and went out from her, so that they would neither be partakers of her sin nor

receive any of her plagues! They thus permitted it to become a habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (Revelation 18:2-4)! The Attending Circumstances of the Lord's Supper

Having considered the nature of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, it remains to consider some of the attending circumstances: to whom, at which localities, in what manner, and at what time the Lord's Supper must be administered.

(1) The Lord's Supper must not be administered for the dead, for they have already reached the destination where they will forever be. If they are in heaven, they possess the matter in its fullness, and thus a seal is not necessary. If they are in hell, they have no promises, and thus also no seal of them. Purgatory is but a fabrication to raise money. The sacrifice in the mass for the benefit of the dead renders them as much refreshment as there is pain in purgatory.

(2) It must not be administered to those who are dying and who are in the agony of death, for they are not capable of uniting by faith the sign with the matter signified and applying it to themselves as a seal. The illusion that one thus infuses Christ into them, and that they thus die in and with Him and therefore most certainly are saved, is as true as the fable of purgatory.

(3) It must also not be administered to children, since they are not able to examine themselves and to make a believing application by means of the sacrament.

(4) Neither may it be administered to the unbaptized, for no one can eat unless they first be born. Also, no one can partake of a meal together with the church unless he first be in the church, has been received as a member of her, and has been sealed as such.

(5) It must also not be administered to those who are ignorant of true doctrine, to unbelievers, and to those outside of the church -- be it that they have never belonged to the church or that they have been excommunicated. This must be enforced as long as they are in this condition, since they are not partakers of the promises, of Christ, nor of the communion of saints.

Rather, it must be administered to true believers. Only true believers have a right for themselves to the promises, Christ, and the communion of saints, and thus also to the signs of the covenant. The church, however, does not judge concerning man's internal state; the knowledge of someone's regeneration is not the basis upon which she admits persons to the holy table, but she admits all who have made a conscious confession of the true doctrine of the gospel, and who lead a life which is in harmony with their confession. The location where this sacrament is administered does not relate to its essence, and is therefore immaterial. It does not matter if it is a public meeting place -- called "church" -- or if it is a private home, mountain, valley, or cave. One must adjust himself to the condition of the church; that is, whether she be in a state of freedom or in a state of persecution. It must, however, occur in the gathering of the congregation, regardless of whether she be great or small. The bringing of the Lord's Supper to the sick borders on superstition. The secret celebration of the Lord's Supper with a few members of the congregation in a secret home is nothing less than schism. The gestures or the external manner of administration of this sacrament must be such as most closely resembles the first Lord's Supper administered by Christ, as well as the administration of the Lord's Supper by the apostles and the apostolic churches as recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Then the Lord's Supper was administered while seated at a table. Since it is a meal, it is therefore proper that it be administered in such a manner as one would

serve either common or special meals. To come, one by one, to that which one calls an altar, to there receive the bread out of the hand of the celebrant -- who time and again takes it from the altar and gives it to the communicant -- to there receive it while kneeling, and to let it be put into his mouth, is superstitious and gives occasion for superstition. To use the sacrament standing and while passing the table is not as edifying. It also does not agree as fully with the first administration as does sitting at the table -- be it that the minister gives the bread and the cup to each person one by one, or be it that he breaks the bread and puts it upon dishes which he passes on to those guests who are partaking, subsequently giving the cup to be passed on from hand to hand.

Both time and frequency cannot be determined and it is of no relevance as far as the essence of the sacrament is concerned. It is most desirable that it be administered upon the Sabbath Day when the congregation gathers, as well as at such a time when one would normally eat a meal, so that as a result of the physical desire for food, one would be that much more fit to partake of this spiritual food symbolized by the bread and wine. Christ instituted it in the evening, since He could not do so any earlier due to the last Passover having to be eaten in the evening. He also could not have instituted it at a later moment since His suffering began during that same night. We have thus considered this sacrament in its nature and attending circumstances. The observance of this sacrament will be considered in the next chapter.

046. Chapter 41: The Practice of the Lord's Supper Consisting in Preparation, Celebration, an...

----- CHAPTER FORTY-ONE ----- The Practice of the Lord's Supper Consisting in Preparation, Celebration, and Reflection

Everything that is of the greatest benefit to a child of God is most severely attacked by the devil and his cohorts; this is also true of the Lord's Supper. A heavy cloud of numerous heresies has ascended from the abyss of hell to obscure the essential nature of this sacrament -- a cloud which we have driven away in the previous chapter by means of the light of the truth. When the devil can no longer obscure the truth, he then endeavors either to prevent or corrupt the exercise concerning this truth. He does this by bringing all manner of riffraff into the church and leading them to the holy table, knowing that this will seriously impede the blessing (Jeremiah 5:25-26). He also does this by most vehemently assaulting believers during the time of preparation, thereby causing them to fall into sin and subsequently into unbelief -- and by diverting them so that they will neglect to spend time and to be engaged in that to which this time of preparation obligates them. Each believer must therefore be especially on guard during this season and strive to use this sacrament to his benefit. To this end it is needful that there be a good preparation for, celebration of, and reflection upon, the Lord's Supper.

Preparation for the Lord's Supper The Need for Preparation

It is of utmost necessity that he who desires to partake of the Lord's Supper should prepare himself to that end, for:

First, believers still carry within them the old Adam as well as an inclination to world conformity. So often they gravitate again toward the earth, as the weights in a clock, and therefore they find themselves unfit when something of a special nature needs to be performed. Consequently, especially at such occasions, believers need to encourage, stir up, and spiritually arouse themselves in order to perform spiritual duties in a spiritual fashion.

Secondly, everyone will be carefully examined at the table as to whether he wears a wedding garment; that is, whether he appears there with the proper frame of heart. "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" (Matthew 22:11-12). It is therefore needful to put on the wedding garment prior to this event in order to be a desirable guest.

Thirdly, it is furthermore a duty of an extraordinary nature. One approaches unto God in an extraordinary manner, that is, in a very intimate manner. One comes to the table as a partaker of the covenant in the presence of other partakers of the covenant, sits at the Lord's table in the light of His countenance, and partakes of the signs and seals of the crucified body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus. And since it is the Lord's will that He be sanctified in those who approach unto

Him, it is needful to consider the following: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" (Micah 6:6). One must therefore prepare himself in an extraordinary manner for this extraordinary duty.

Fourthly, it is also God's command that he who approaches unto God in an extraordinary manner should also prepare himself to that end. When the Lord was about to descend to the people upon Mount Sinai, the Lord gave command to Moses, saying, "Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day" (Exodus 19:10-11). When Israel was about to cross the Jordan dry-shod by a divine miracle, it was commanded, "Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (Joshua 3:5). When Moses approached the burning bush -- a symbol of God's extraordinary presence -- he heard the voice, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). When Samuel invited Jesse and the elders to the sacrifice, he said, "Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice" (1 Samuel 16:5). Whenever the priests would approach unto the altar, they first had to wash themselves. Therefore, we also, when about to approach to the holy table, must first prepare ourselves.

Fifthly, it will generally be experienced that a blessing is received after having prepared one's self. I repeat, generally, for it does occasionally occur that a godly person who neglects preparation until the last moment and ultimately cannot bring himself to be properly engaged therein, in a short time can consciously sink away so deeply in his abominableness, insignificance, and sinfulness; receive the Lord Jesus in such a lively frame, acknowledging free grace; and with such sincerity arise from his sinful state, that he partakes in faith and does receive many conscious encouragements, so that in amazement he exclaims, "Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me?" (Genesis 16:13). On the contrary, it can also happen that a believer who has made much work of preparation, both during the time of preparation and in partaking, remains in the dark, is troubled, and is weak in faith. And even if he received light during the time of preparation, it can happen at the table that a sudden darkness and deadness come upon him, so that he who was encouraged while coming to the table, returns with sorrow to his seat. However, even though this does happen, preparation ought not to be neglected, for it is his duty. One must enter in God's way, and God generally bestows a blessing upon serious preparation, be it that which one had in view or that which is most beneficial for him at that time. To such a person the promise will be fulfilled, "And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). The soul will then not accuse itself of slothfulness, but will find peace in her sincere endeavors. From this, one can perceive the necessity of preparation.

Even though we may perceive the necessity of preparation, we nevertheless allow ourself to be readily hindered and to be kept from it.

(1) This may be done by way of postponement, saying, "Yes, I must, I am willing, and I shall engage myself in preparation; however, I will do it then, at such and such a time when this matter has transpired and after that task has been finished. I am not fit at this moment." Often, the then does not materialize. Meanwhile, the time which we thought would be available slips away, and before having prepared ourselves, we are overtaken by the event itself. One then finds himself unfit to use the remaining time properly, and will have to attend in such an unprepared fashion.

(2) The devil is active in a most subtle manner by providing us with so many activities that it appears we have no time for preparation, or by stirring up our lusts and causing us to fall into sin, so that we are tossed to and fro as chaff in the wind. He thus attempts to captivate the heart, allowing it no quietude to formulate thoughts with composure.

(3) Sometimes one will be in doubt as to whether he ought to attend. One obstacle or the other is in the way, causing him to say, "I am so in the dark, so unbelieving, and so confused. Would it be better if I would not attend this time?" By thus being caught in the middle, whether to partake or not to partake -- as if this were his own decision -- time passes by and the desire fails. If, however, he determines, "I must go and I shall go," he will be all the more motivated to be engaged in preparation.

(4) Having now begun with preparation, this work appears to be of a very difficult nature, and he perceives himself entirely unfit to perform such difficult work: "It is too difficult and impossible for me to make such an effort, to engage in such close self-examination, mourn over sin, pray and weep, and observe a day of fasting." He thus refrains from doing so, or it is postponed from day to day. Or he will, with much hesitation, begin with that which he ought to undertake in an evangelical manner, that is, by quietly waiting upon the Spirit and quietly giving heed to His motions as much as he is able. For here it is true that it is not by might, nor by power, but it must take place by the Spirit.

(5) It can also be that upon engaging in preparation, one experiences himself to be more unfit than he expected to be -- yes, becoming more unspiritual, confused, and in more darkness than was the case previously. A lively frame yields to a dead frame, and a believing to an unbelieving frame, relative to the truth as well as one's spiritual state. This would cause a person to be discouraged and inclined to desist from this work. One must note such a frame, however, as an indication that God will deal with you in a special manner, and is desirous to give you much grace. Therefore do not walk away from this task nor refrain from it. Rather, take courage and wait upon the Lord; He will strengthen thine heart. As we proceed to consider the work of preparation, three matters are to be practiced: 1) a stimulating of desire; 2) an examination of self; and 3) spiritual adornment. The First Aspect of Preparation: A Stimulating of Desire

One must first of all endeavor to stir up a strong desire to be among God's people, to appear before the Lord with the multitude that keeps holyday, to see the good of His chosen, to rejoice in the gladness of His people, and to glory with His inheritance. How David longed for this! "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalms 27:4); "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalms 42:4). How sorrowful he was when he was deprived of this! "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday" (Psalms 42:4); "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" (Psalms 120:5). How he rejoiced when he was permitted to be among God's people in the temple! "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem" (Psalms 122:1-2).

Therefore, may your desires be also thus stimulated. Permit me to arouse a desire within you and to stir you up. The meeting place where the Lord's Supper is administered is at that moment none other than a portal of heaven -- with Jacob one may say of it, "Surely the Lord is in this place ... how dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:16-17). Heaven opens itself in such a place, and the rays of divine glory and grace descend to that place, filling it with the very presence of God. The Father comes to His people with His favor and reveals Himself in a familiar manner to His favorites, addressing them as Ammi, ruhamah! that is, My people, and object of My mercy! I have loved thee with an everlasting love and therefore I have drawn thee with loving kindness. I have come here to meet you in order to make known to you, and to cause you to feel, my delight and my love. The Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom, comes in His love to them to have this supper with them and to cause them to enjoy it together with Him. With love and delight He views them as they surround Him. It is there that the Holy Spirit is active, filling the soul with light, grace, and comforts. There multitudes of angels are present who delight themselves in God's gracious coming to His people. They observe everyone's behavior and investigate as much as possible what the spiritual motions of each person are. Here they observe one who faints for desire; there is one overwhelmed with love; there one who swoons due to the absence of Jesus; there a soul is bowed down in sorrow. There is one in whose eyes can be seen a fearful anxiety due to the heart being so oppressed and so hard that not one sigh to heaven can come forth; there quiet tears trickle down the cheek since the Comforter who should comfort the soul is so far from him. Yonder is one who is strong in the faith and stands firm upon the truths and promises of God as standing upon a rock.

Here is one who follows hard after the Lord, and there is one who is leaning upon her Beloved; there is one who is burdened with sin and who, with this heavy burden, comes to Jesus to be delivered. There comes an infant in grace in all simplicity, and here there are some who receive rivers of grace and comfort, so that they are filled to overflowing. All this longing, yearning, sighing, weeping, and goings forth of love are directed toward Jesus and end in God. Here all that is perceived and experienced in the soul converges in one focal point. All this the angels view with wondrous delight and they glorify God for His grace and goodness toward the children of men. Here is the household of God, and here spiritual friends are gathered together for a moment in order to delight themselves in the presence of their heavenly Father and in Jesus, their beloved Bridegroom. Whose heart, upon observing these manifestations, would not be stirred also to go there, to be part of this gathering, and also to delight oneself in the Lord? Even a barren soul will say, "There I wish to go, for it could be that I may receive a blessing there."

Secondly, consider this gathering as being led into the inner chambers (Song of Solomon 1:4) and into the king's palace (Psalms 45:15), where many wonders are unveiled to the godly which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, which has never entered into the heart of man, and which God has prepared for them that love Him. Oh, what glorious matters the Lord shows them there, and what sweetness He causes them to taste there! There He grants His children a profound insight into the eternal, sovereign pleasure of eternal election: He has known and loved them from eternity and has ordained them to be the recipients of a salvation which passes all understanding. There He reveals to them the covenant of redemption, the Counsel of Peace between Jehovah and the Man whose name is the Branch, together with all the conditions and promises of this covenant, the voluntary surrender of the Son to be a Surety for those elect, and the manner in

which this covenant is their certainty and salvation. There He reveals to them His unfathomable wisdom in the way by which He leads them to salvation by first concluding them under sin and permitting them to come into a state in which they completely miss and are estranged from God, from which He afterwards, demonstrating His wondrous mercy, delivers them again. There He reveals to them the work of redemption; there they behold Jesus coming in the flesh, and they follow Him from the manger to the cross -- in His preaching, His acts of benevolence, and His suffering and death. Not only do they reflect upon this as a truth, but they do so in a lively, intimate manner, considering the very essence of the matters themselves and all the perfections of God which are revealed in them. They focus on every one of them and are in amazement about every one of them. The Lord reveals to them the wondrous ways in which He has drawn them and led them hitherto. There He reveals something to them of future glory, which at times brings them into ecstasy. There He assures them of, and seals to them, His eternal love and the certainty of their state, letting them depart with a loving kiss of His mouth.

Thirdly, consider for a moment the sweet and friendly invitation of the Lord Jesus Himself. He has no need of you; He could have passed you by and have invited others. However, He now says to you, "Come, for all things are ready!" This invitation He accompanies with so many sweet motives -- yes, in His Name He beseeches you that you would come to Him. Furthermore, He Himself stands at the door and knocks, waiting for you to open to Him in order that He may sup with you and you with Him (Revelation 3:20). The bride acknowledged this by saying, "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled: for My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night" (Song of Solomon 5:2). Since He calls and invites you in such a friendly manner to have fellowship with Him, would you then yet walk away or remain standing? No, but allow your heart to be set aflame with love for such a gathering, and let your soul, so to speak, fly there with wings.

Fourthly, at the Lord's Supper a public confession of the Lord Jesus is made. It is then that the celebrating church professes publicly before the entire world, and proclaims that Jesus Christ is the only and sufficient Savior, their Head, and their Lord. She commemorates His suffering and death as the only atoning sacrifice, and she declares the death of the Lord to be the only foundation for peace, comfort, and life. It is God's way to convert men by confessing the Lord Jesus and to thus gather His Church. It is the honor which the Father has awarded the Lord Jesus upon His suffering. A true believer has love for the Lord Jesus, and wherever there is true love, the believer has a desire to say of his Beloved, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend" (Song of Solomon 5:16). The Lord Jesus takes careful notice of those who are not ashamed of Him and whose delight it is, together with the church, to confess Him and to live to His honor and glory. He promises that He in turn will confess them before His Father, before the angels, and before the entire world. Since, therefore, the partaking of the Lord's Supper is a public confession of the Lord Jesus, who would then not be stirred up to be among that people who profess and exclaim that Jesus is King? It is a confession that one would not neglect to make in time of persecution, even if he would have to die for it.

Fifthly, one exercises communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper. Is not that the focus of all your desires, and the essence of your spiritual life? Is not your soul troubled in the absence of such communion? It is there that the Lord Jesus assures believers of being a partaker of Him as well as of His love toward them. It is there that the Holy Spirit generally works in a more perceptible

manner. On the one hand, He reveals the promises to them and the marks of those who are heirs thereof, and on the other hand He reveals to them the graces which are to be found in them. Thus, on the basis of God's Word, He causes them to come to the following conclusion: The Lord promises these specific matters to those who are in such a condition; however, in the presence of God, I perceive such spiritual frames to be within me and therefore these specific promises are for me -- and since the Lord is true, He will also fulfil them for me. Furthermore, believers consider the signs of the Lord's Supper as a seal and pledge by which they are assured that they truly belong to Christ and that Christ is also their portion. At such a moment the Holy Spirit works immediately and witnesses with their spirit that they are the children of God, impressing the Word, the seal, and their conclusion so powerfully upon their heart, that they know that the Lord Jesus loves them. This in turn causes their love to be revived toward Him and they thus exercise intimate fellowship with Christ. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). How all this ought to stir up the believer to partake joyfully of the Lord's Supper!

Sixthly, not only is there a sealing communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper, but there are also times when one may enjoy extraordinary graces which engender ecstasy. A person may at times, with the disciples, be brought to the holy mountain and see Christ in His glory. Occasionally, the believer is there led into the banqueting house, and Christ spreads His love over him as a banner. He and the Father come and make their abode with him. He causes him at times to dip joyfully into the fountain of salvation, and such corn and wine causes even the lips of the young men and the young daughters to speak. He kisses them with the kisses of His mouth and satisfies them there with the goodness of His house, even of His holy temple. He causes them to sing praises with joyful lips. Therefore, "let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

Seventhly, consider furthermore the blessed company which gathers there, for there God's children are gathered together before the countenance of their heavenly Father and their beloved Jesus in order to find mutual delight. There they express their love to each other; there they fully separate themselves from the world and despise its love since they find satisfaction in their mutual love for each other. There they express their love, not only for those with whom they are acquainted, but also toward all believers with whom they are not acquainted. They not only unite themselves with all the godly who are present, but also with the angels and with the souls of just men made perfect. "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling" (Hebrews 12:22-24). Even if the world, as their enemy, hates, despises, persecutes, and oppresses them, there is yet no reason for concern; they can readily miss its love, for they have better company and they refresh themselves in a sweet manner in the exercise of mutual love. They confess this unity in the Lord's Supper by eating of the same bread and by drinking of the same cup. "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). Thus, God's children may here enjoy a prenuptial celebration.

Eighthly, one furthermore gains strength from the Lord's Supper in sanctification, the mortification of sin, and the living of a life that is pleasing unto the Lord -- for the food and drink of this meal

yield strength and refreshment. Here faith is strengthened; love is stirred up and becomes more steadfast; and here is union with Jesus, the very life of the soul, and a willing commitment to serve the Lord. The Lord's Supper obligates one to a childlike obedience and here one becomes enamored with continual fellowship with God -- fellowship impeded by sin, but enlivened by the exercise of godliness. Therefore the soul quietly begins to shine as Moses' countenance did. She is as the bride of Christ, receiving the eyes of a dove to keep her Beloved continually in view and to look away from all that is desirable. It is her desire to please her Beloved, and she therefore yields to His will.

If there be then a stirring within, a believer -- however sluggish he may be and however many difficulties and objections he may be accustomed to bring forth -- ought to be moved to go with longing to the Lord's Supper and to say with Moses, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight" (Exodus 3:3). The Second Aspect of Preparation: An Examination of Self The second requisite for preparation is self-examination, that is, the determination as to whether one is permitted and able to come to the table in order to eat and drink spiritually. To that end we shall consider 1) that selfexamination is necessary; 2) that the unconverted are not permitted to come to the table; 3) that the converted may not stay away from the table; and 4) the manner in which weak believers must encourage themselves.

Self-examination prior to attending the Lord's Supper is a very necessary work, for it is, first of all, an express command. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Secondly, this supper is not intended for everyone; a stranger, an uncircumcised person, and one who was unclean were not permitted to eat the Passover (Exodus 12:1-51). "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth?" (Psalms 50:16). Christ invites friends (Song of Solomon 5:1), and those who hunger and thirst (Isaiah 55:1).

Thirdly, it is a dreadful sin to eat and drink unworthily. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:29). A dreadful judgment hangs over the head of such persons. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:29).

Fourthly, many have a wrong perception of themselves; they measure themselves by themselves. They deem themselves to be fit, for they have no disagreement with their neighbor, are baptized, diligently go to hear God's Word, live in such a manner that no one can say anything about them, and believe that Christ is the Savior -- one must thus not doubt that he will also be saved and that Christ is also his Savior. Therefore all is truly well -- Christ invites and commands us, and I then wish to be obedient to the Lord in this respect. Others add to this the fact that, prior to that time, they refrain from indulging in their bosom sins, read pious books, and pray more frequently. One thus puts himself into a pious mold and peacefully attends, eating and drinking judgment to himself.

Fifthly, many are not capable of examining themselves. They are not familiar with the marks which all must have who will attend the Lord's Supper; they are not acquainted with themselves, nor do

they know that a person must examine himself. They thus attend without self-examination and bring God's wrath upon them.

Sixthly, many do not want to examine themselves, for they know that it would not turn out well. They would then become anxious and doubt their salvation. They perhaps would not dare to go to the Lord's Supper -- but what would people then say of them? Therefore they keep the lid on the pot and peacefully live on in their sins, aggravating all this by eating and drinking unworthily. Is it therefore not very necessary that everyone perceive what his condition is?

Seventhly, if you engage yourself in the duty of self-examination, using God's Word as a touchstone, an earnestness and concern will begin to manifest themselves. If you perceive yourself to be unconverted, or if you doubt your conversion, you will begin to seek, pray, weep, and flee unto Jesus. If you may perceive true grace within yourself, this will engender joy and liberty to partake by faith. It is therefore evident from all this how necessary and beneficial it is to examine oneself. An unconverted person may not attend. A stranger, one who was uncircumcised, or an unclean person, was not permitted to eat the Passover; likewise they may also not eat the bread and drink this cup. For the unconverted there is not a single promise, and thus there is also no sealing function. The unconverted are dead in sins and trespasses; however, dead persons cannot eat; faith is the mouth and the hand of the soul. The unconverted have no faith and thus they cannot eat of that bread which has been prepared for believers only. If they nevertheless do so, they must know that they make a mockery of Christ, make themselves guilty of the body and blood of Christ. With the Jews, they, so to speak, crucify Him anew.

Question: Who are the unconverted?

Answer (1) They are ignorant persons who do not even have an intellectual knowledge of Christ's person, natures, suretyship, humiliation, and exaltation, nor of the necessity of the atonement and the efficacy of Christ's death. They are those who as yet have no knowledge of the essence of faith, regeneration, spiritual life, God's righteousness, and the sinner's state of condemnation; they neither understand the essence of the Lord's Supper, know not how to unite the sign with the matter signified, nor understand its sealing function.

(2) They are not humbled by their sins and can live peacefully without seeking for reconciliation in Christ. They neither long for a conscious knowledge that their sins are forgiven, nor do they long for comfort, the assurance of salvation, sanctification, and a life in the presence of God. They live carelessly and peacefully without being partakers of these matters.

(3) They have no exercise of faith, nor are they engaged in choosing Christ to be their Surety, in longing for Him, yearning for Him, fleeing to Him with prayers and supplications, receiving Him unto justification and sanctification, surrendering to Him, making Him the heart's desire, and living in union with Him.

(4) Their life is entirely in this world. They desire, long for, seek, concern themselves with, love, delight in, and are anxious about earthly things only; that is, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. This can be true whether one lives a civil life in an external sense and is religious, or one, either openly or secretly, indulges in blatant sin.

They who are thus, are unconverted; they must realize this. Such we warn most earnestly that they ought not to be emboldened to come to the holy table, and we declare to them that they are neither partakers of Christ nor of His benefits. The Lord's Supper is not for them, and if they nevertheless attend, we pronounce the wrath of God upon them.

Converted persons (if they are healthy and have the opportunity to partake) may not refrain from partaking, for it 1) is contrary to the friendly invitation of Christ; 2) is detrimental to their own comfort; 3) impedes their growth; 4) contradicts their confession of Christ; and 5) is detrimental to the communion of saints, running counter to all the good things which we have enumerated above. When believers make themselves unworthy of the Lord's Supper by giving offense, living in strife and hatred, or cleaving to a given sin to such an extent that prior to the event they do not wish to make a full resolution to part therewith, they sin in a double measure and ought to humble themselves deeply before the Lord. Let such remain in the sanctuary during the administration of the Lord's Supper, stand afar off, and observe the partaking of the Lord's Supper by believers. Let them thus mourn by themselves and think, "I may not be among them."

Question: What must a person do who, in examining himself, can neither arrive at the knowledge of his state nor conclude whether he is converted? Certainly, such a person may refrain from partaking, may he not?

Answer: One ought never to consider it a privilege if he does not partake; rather, it must cause great sorrow if he is not permitted to come forward, and must refrain from partaking. It is entirely wrong to seek for reasons to refrain from partaking, and thus to pacify the conscience. It is not a requisite for partaking that a person have a complete, steadfast, and active assurance which renders him free from concern as to whether he is in the state of grace -- an assurance by which he reflexively appropriates grace. Rather, it is sufficient for one to be assured of the extrinsic acts of faith and repentance, even if one dare not draw the conclusion: I believe and am converted.

(1) A true believer will perceive within himself that with all his heart -- albeit the one time more perceptibly than at other times -- he yearns for the Lord Jesus in order to be justified by His blood, to be clothed with His holiness as merited by His fulfillment of the law, and to be renewed and sanctified by His Spirit. He will perceive that he yearns for, longs for, cries after, flees to, waits upon, and surrenders himself to Him. He wrestles against unbelief in order that he may bring Jesus into his heart, and to be assured that he believes in Him and is a partaker of Him and His benefits.

(2) He will perceive that he cannot be satisfied with believing that he has received grace. He desires with all his heart the possession, the enjoyment, and the relish of the benefits of the covenant. He will perceive that he is enamored with being truly united to God, with a life in which there is an impression of the Lord's presence, with peace of conscience, and with the love and fear of the Lord. When he misses this, he is troubled, and if he has lost this, he cannot rest until he receives it by renewal; for this is his life, delight, and felicity.

(3) He will perceive within himself a hatred and distaste for sin, a grief when he sins, a repeated rising again and a fleeing to the blood of Jesus unto reconciliation, and a delight and love to live a life which is pleasing to the Lord. He perceives within himself a warfare between the flesh and the spirit. The lusts of the world continually draw him to the world and away from God, whereas the

spirit -- that which has been regenerated, his spiritual life within him -- continually draws him away from sin unto God. He also perceives, to his grief, that the flesh at times has the upper hand in this battle, whereas at other times, to his joy, the spirit prevails.

If someone perceives that these frames and exercises are truly to be found within him, he will be able to come to the table, even if he lacks clear assurance. Many believers lack this assurance either due to ignorance of the Word, weakness of their historical faith, fear of deceiving themselves, or they may see so much sin coexisting with grace. Such may not refrain from partaking, but rather are obligated to come forward with the multitude which keeps holyday, so that by using the signs, the promises -- which are made to such as have just been mentioned -- may be sealed to them. The Third Aspect of Preparation: Spiritual Adornment The third requisite for preparation is spiritual adornment. When someone is to attend a wedding, he adorns himself with the very best that he has. A bride will adorn herself in a most excellent manner so that she may be desirable to her husband and honor him. Much more must a believer do this in order that the King may delight in his beauty. The guest who also sat down, but was without a wedding garment, was soon identified and cast out (Matthew 22:12-13). This is meant as a warning, but also as an exhortation to put on a wedding garment. This spiritual adornment consists, first of all, in an enlivening of historical faith by a quiet meditation and reflection upon the entire work of redemption, together with approval of and joy over the goodness, wisdom, righteousness, power, and truth of God which manifest themselves in the work of redemption.

(1) In your thoughts ascend to the fountain of all this: eternal election. Consider that from eternity it has been God's good pleasure to reveal His righteousness and mercy, in order to give reason for adoration, joy, thanksgiving, the magnification of God, and thus for felicity. Consider that He has furthermore determined that to that end some angels and human beings be punished for their sins, and has ordained others, due only to His grace and sovereign good pleasure, to be the recipients of eternal blessedness.

(2) From there proceed to a reflection upon the covenant of redemption, or the Counsel of Peace: The Son would be Surety for the elect who due to their own wantonness would fall away from God and subject themselves to a temporal and eternal curse. Consider how it was determined that He would assume the human nature in unity of His person, and as Surety would take upon Himself their sins as His own, satisfying the justice of God by His suffering and death, accomplishing everything which was needful to bring them to felicity.

(3) Then descend to the creation of man and to the breaking of the covenant of works. From there, proceed to the promises of the Mediator, to all the shadows and sacrifices by which God's people were taught how the promised Savior would deliver and save them, taking note how believers yearned for the fulfillment of the promise.

(4) Furthermore, consider that the promised Messiah came into the world after approximately four thousand years, assuming the human nature from the Virgin Mary in unity of person, and thus entered into a state in which He could execute His Suretyship. Consider how the Lord Jesus, from His birth, has taken upon Himself with such willingness and love the curse which was upon the elect, and therefore immediately had everything against Him. He was born in poverty, and as an outcast was laid in a manger in the rear of a stable. He had to flee from the persecution of Herod, and in the sweat of His brow He ate His bread. Upon the initiation of His public ministry, He was

first violently assaulted by the devil in the wilderness. He traversed the entire country, preaching with great power to bring men to repentance and salvation. Moved by deep compassion He healed those who had various sorts of misery; He healed the blind, deaf, dumb, and lame; He cast out devils and resurrected the dead, to the comfort of those that mourned. However, He also immediately experienced the wrath and slander of the Pharisees and scribes who endeavored to make Him despised, and subsequently conspired to put Him to death.

(5) Having finished His course, the wrath of God was poured out upon Him in such measure -- due to the sins of the elect which He had taken upon Himself -- that He became sorrowful, even unto death. He prayed with strong crying and tears, and the bloody sweat dripped from His countenance to the earth; He indeed went to His disciples, but none supported Him. He was betrayed by His own disciple, Judas, captured by His enemies, dragged away cruelly as a murderer, placed before the ecclesiastical council, falsely accused, and condemned to death as a blasphemer. Furthermore, He was mocked, spat in the face, beaten with fists, delivered to the Gentile judge, Pilate, brought to Herod, and led along the streets in a robe of mockery. His crucifixion was demanded by the people (having been stirred up by the chief priests). He was crowned with a crown of thorns as an act of mockery, and beaten over the head with sticks. He was condemned to death, led from Jerusalem to Golgotha while bearing the cross, nailed to the cross -- the nails being driven into the wood through His hands and feet -- and was raised up along with the cross, thus being suspended between heaven and earth. There hung this beloved Jesus -- covered with blood from head to toe, experiencing the most excruciating pain, and enduring the greatest shame imaginable. He furthermore had to see the joy of His enemies, the shaking of their heads, and the pointing of their fingers, as well as hear all sorts of biting words of slander. God withdrew all light and the manifestation of His favor from Him, and filled Him instead with His anger and wrath. He cried out in the anguish of His spirit, "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He suffered from a painful thirst; in response to which vinegar mixed with gall was given Him as a drink. The sun was darkened so that an oppressive darkness troubled Him even more, and last of all He gave up the ghost. All this was comprehended in being Surety for a sinner; and, true believers who read or hear this, it was in this manner that He paid the ransom for you.

(6) He was buried and on the third day rose again from the dead. After forty days He ascended into heaven, and received the very greatest honor and glory at the right hand of the Father -- and will return as Judge upon the clouds to judge the children of men. The quiet and thoughtful contemplation of all this is one's duty around the time of the Lord's Supper, for by this, one remembers Him and shows forth His death. The contemplation of this will engender a clearer impression of God's righteousness, the necessity of satisfaction, the love of Christ, the severity of His suffering, and the resultant efficacy of the atonement.

Proceed from this point to the contemplation of the way by which God brings the elect into fellowship with the Savior. God causes the gospel to be preached at various places in the world, sends forth ministers to proclaim it, and calls His own by His Word -- not only externally, as He does with many, but also internally. He illuminates them, convicts them, gives them a desire after the Lord Jesus, draws them to Him, and gives them faith whereby they receive Christ and entrust themselves to Him for justification, sanctification, and salvation. God thus regenerates them, makes them new creatures, leads each of them according to His counsel, and at last takes them into the glory merited by Christ. Simultaneously, meditate upon those ways by which the Lord has

brought you hitherto -- at each point you will thus observe wondrous things. You will be strengthened in the truth, joyfully approve of this, quietly be led into the truth, and thus be guided to glory by His counsel.

Secondly, spiritual adornment consists in the endeavor to come into a spiritual frame whereby one can be an object of free grace. This transpires when you observe yourself in reference to your insignificance and sinfulness in order to be humbled thereby. Those who are in such a condition are suitable objects of grace. "... for God ... giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5); "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15); "... I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13). Therefore, think as follows: "What am I, poor worm, that the Lord should remember me! I am a man whose origin is in the dust, who dwells in a vessel of clay, carrying about in my flesh the worms of corruption, and am but a dry root and nothing at all. Will such a one enter into covenant with God, be a child of the Lord of lords, and hereafter have communion and fellowship with this glorious and all-sufficient God? Furthermore, I am nothing but sin, and by nature I miss the image of God; instead, the image of the abominable devil was in me. What abominations this wicked heart has brought forth -- not only prior to my conversion, but also yet after my conversion! What sins I have committed in thoughts, words, and deeds at such and such a location, at such and such a time, in the presence of, and together with such and such a person, as well as in solitude! How void of desire and spirituality, and how sinful I am in my religion; that is, in hearing and reading the Word of God and in praying and singing! How unfaithful I am in reference to grace received, and how I have grieved the Holy Spirit! Truly, I am not worthy that God would look down upon me and bestow any grace upon me at all." Reflect upon this for some time until you are rightly affected by these matters and sink away in your sinfulness. This is not so that you become unbelieving and disown your state, nor be terrified and devastated by the law and the prospect of eternal condemnation -- as if this alone were the right manner of being humbled. No, such terrors are generally experienced at the outset of conversion. However, the conviction of one in whose heart there is faith is not of this sort. Rather, the humility to which we are here referring consists of these frames:

(1) Humbleness of heart: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies" (Genesis 32:10); "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" (2 Samuel 7:18); "... I ... am no more worthy to be called Thy son" (Luke 15:21).

(2) Evangelical shame accompanied by faith: "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra 9:6).

(3) Sorrow over the sinfulness of sin: "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalms 51:3-4).

(4) A humbling abhorrence of self: "I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech Thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly" (2 Samuel 24:10).

(5) A being fearful of the rod: "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure" (Psalms 6:1).

(6) Confession of sin, coupled with the acknowledgement of it being hateful and condemnable: "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord" (Psalms 32:5).

(7) Heartfelt prayers for forgiveness and peace of conscience: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities" (Psalms 51:1-2; Psalms 51:9).

(8) A lifting up of the heart by believing the promises made to those who confess their sins: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). These are the humble frames of the heart upon which God bestows His free grace and these are the adornments in which the Lord Jesus finds a delight. Pray for such frames, and highly esteem them if you may have them.

Thirdly, this spiritual adornment consists in a restoration in and renewal of the covenant of grace. Israel did likewise, for we read, "And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; and they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire; and He was found of them" (2 Chronicles 15:12; 2 Chronicles 15:14-15). It is true that this covenant, which once has been made, remains sure to all eternity. "Neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed" (Isaiah 54:10); "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jeremiah 32:40). Some frequently come into darkness, however, and doubt if they have ever rightly entered into the covenant and are concerned whether they are partakers of Christ. Others miss a lively frame, and the joy of being in covenant with God. The luster of the benefits of this covenant is so obscure for them. It is therefore beneficial and necessary to renew the covenant. Therefore quietly meditate upon the miserable, sinful, condemnable, impotent, and abominable state of those who are outside of the covenant of grace. Consider that you yourself were once one of these. Consider, on the other hand, how blessed it is to be in the covenant of grace, to be a partaker of its excellent benefits, and how surely and perfectly it has been established in the death of the Lord Jesus. Be enamored with this state. Give heed therefore to the sincere, earnest, and urgent invitation and calling of the Lord Jesus; listen to His lovely voice. Stir up your desires thereby and by way of that covenant surrender yourself earnestly and willingly to the Lord Jesus as if you had never done so before, saying, "I now do this with my whole heart and by this covenant I wish to, and shall, live and die."

Fourthly, this spiritual adornment consists in a sincere resolution to lead a more holy life. "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8); "Come, eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding" (Proverbs 9:5-6). You must not only make a general resolution, but it must relate to specific sins, as well as to specific virtue. To that end, there must be an enlivened

desire for holiness: "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!" (Psalms 119:133 a wholehearted initiative: "I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes always, even unto the end" (Psalms 119:133); and there must be earnest prayer for help, being aware of your impotence: "Order my steps in Thy Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psalms 119:133); "Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalms 143:10). If the soul may be conscious of her sincerity in this, she will be at liberty to approach to the Lord. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:21).

Fifthly, spiritual adornment also consists in having an esteem for the Church. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Psalms 137:5-6). The Church consists of the people of God, the beloved of the Lord, the body of the Lord Jesus, and the kingdom of Christ, and is a city adorned upon a hill, a light in the world, a terror to the kings of the earth (not due to her physical power, but rather, her heavenly disposition), awe-inspiring to the ungodly, the delight of the godly, an ornament of the entire earth, a goodly bonnet in the hand of God, and the glory of Christ! The Church is the object of God's goodness and benevolence. "All my springs are in Thee" (Psalms 87:7). The supervision and protection of the Lord provide a safe hiding place. "I the Lord do keep it (the vineyard); I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isaiah 27:3). What bliss it is to be among those saints and glorious persons and, with them, to appear before the countenance of the Lord, to confess Jesus, to glorify God, and to receive a blessing! Who would not be carried away with desires to be among them, and with them endure the sweet and the bitter, prosperity and adversity? Moses conducted himself as such: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Sixthly, spiritual adornment also consists in having a heart which is moved in love toward all God's children, regardless of whether one knows them or not -- yes, a heart filled with love which extends to all men. "And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Peter 1:7). At the Lord's Supper communion is exercised with all believers. It is a communion which cannot but function by the love of the heart manifesting itself. Here the heart must be examined carefully as to whether there is any hatred, envy, or vengefulness -- and if there is, special care must first be given to its removal. One must also consider whether there have been any differences or discord between you and your neighbor -- be it that you have offended him with deeds, words, or facial expressions, or that your neighbor is of the opinion that you have not conducted yourself well toward him. It could also be that your neighbor has offended you and you did not behave yourself correctly toward him in defending yourself. Give heed to this and do not readily pass over this. Do not allow yourself to be blinded by self-love, neither be your own judge, nor insist upon your rights to the utmost, but rather accommodate him as much as the truth will suffer you to do. Do not demand that your neighbor be humbled before you, nor triumph over him, but be the least, even if he is the more guilty one, is younger in years, and is of lesser position. Even if he were to boast of this, go to him and discuss this in love, persuading him by your tenderness and peaceful disposition. If you have offended him, go to him and openly confess your guilt, request

forgiveness, and be not ashamed before him, for you were not ashamed of your misconduct toward him. Give heed to this and do not pass over this by saying, "I forgive him in my heart," or, "I confess my guilt before God and my heart is therefore at peace," etc. You must not expect a blessing if you have not done everything from your side to promote peace with your neighbor. If your neighbor refuses to be reconciled, you have done your part. Consider the following passages in connection with this: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24); "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

We have thus sought to motivate you to be engaged in sacred preparation. We shall add one more matter as a warning and as advice. The warning is as follows:

(1) Restrict yourself neither as far as time (that is, as far as the duration of your preparation is concerned), nor as to the manner in which you will perform this, so that you will be confused and troubled if you do not perform this as carefully as you ought. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in His operation; however, let there be neither laziness nor laxity.

(2) Do not force yourself to be in a specific frame and to be emotionally moved to such and such a degree. This would convey that you imagine yourself to be able to do this by your own strength and your own will. The best preparation is to engage in this duty in quiet resignation, as being destitute of everything, and with expectation -- not running ahead of the Spirit, but rather, following His leading. This will provide the best preparation, and will teach you not to rely upon preparation. The advice I wish to give is that I deem it to be most beneficial to have a day of fasting and prayer prior to the Lord's Supper -- be it that one either does not work and eat at all, or that one works little and eats the simplest of foods. Let every one consider the circumstances in which he is; that is, whether he is in service or free, rich or poor, or whether he is in an ungodly or godly family. The Lord has left it to our discretion to what extent we wish to restrict ourselves, except that there be one day which we designate for the purpose of setting ourselves apart. This act of separation itself, and the repeated reflection upon this during this day will make an impression. To spend this day with the impression of it having been set apart will make one humble and pliable. If one has been barren, dead, without desire, and has had wandering thoughts the entire day, there may generally be special movement at night, so that one may as yet rejoice in having set the day apart. If such is not the case, however, the desire to seek will yet excuse us to some degree, and one will be humbled by having spent the day in such an unprofitable manner, not having been able to be humbled about other sins on this day. This concludes our discussion regarding preparation. The Celebration of the Lord's Supper The person who has prepared himself in the aforesaid manner, must not sleep too long in the morning, lest time slip away and he were to come in a hurried frame of heart. He must also not arise extraordinarily early, lest he be dull, sleepy, or exhausted during the hearing of the sermon and the administration of the Lord's Supper, for an exhausted body inhibits the motions of the soul. He ought to arrive in church punctually with clean and appropriate clothing; that is, without either a careless or proud appearance. If someone is poor and has no other clothing except his daily garments, and if even this is very plain, let him not refrain from attending, for the Lord looks upon the heart rather than on the clothing. The godly will not despise him for it, and what the others think does not matter; the dogs and the swine are themselves to

refrain from the use of that which is holy. When you leave your home and walk the streets to church, let your heart distance itself from the world, as Abraham went out of Ur, Lot went out of Sodom, and Israel went out of Egypt. Leave all worldly thoughts, desires, and concerns at home, and walk away from them. Walk the street with the heart of a stranger who is hastening to heaven, the fatherland -- and as you go, pray, long, and yearn for the Lord.

Upon entering the church let a holy reverence arise in your soul, considering that God, the angels, and the children of God are present there. As you enter, pray, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God my God" (Psalms 43:3-4). Quietly take your seat, and let attentiveness, reverence, and dignity manifest themselves upon your countenance and by your deportment. On the one hand refrain from looking around idly, and on the other hand, from affectedly allowing your head to hang, distorting your mouth, gesturing with your hands, lifting your eyes with affectation, heaving loud sighs which are audible to others, and leaning then in this and then in that direction, etc. How abhorrent is such affected behavior! It is abominable to the godly and ungodly alike, and it renders godliness suspect and despicable -- and even if there is no subtle hypocrisy, such ought to know that it is so perceived. "Wisdom is before him that hath understanding" (Proverbs 17:24).

During the reading of God's Word, singing, prayer, and preaching, join in with the congregation and unitedly engage in singing, prayer, and listening; let your heart be focused thereon. This is not the time to strive for special frames relative to the Lord's Supper, for then you may lose the one as well as the other. "Take heed therefore how ye hear" (Luke 8:18). As you arise to go to the holy table, arise as if you were a bride about to be married, doing so in response to the voice of the Bridegroom Jesus, calling out, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away" (Song of Solomon 2:10); "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). Moreover, arise with a desire to be near to your Bridegroom Jesus. "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight" (Exodus 3:3). It is inappropriate to quake and to tremble at this moment, as if you were being drawn there with reluctance -- love and desire are appropriate at this time.

While going to the table -- if there is some time -- reflect upon the pathway and the various aspects of Christ's suffering. Else, maintain a quiet, introverted disposition and pursue those thoughts and motions which the Lord impresses upon you, or reflect upon the leading of the Holy Ghost, accompanied with ejaculatory prayers to be led by Him, saying, "Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalms 143:10). You may also think by yourself how the Lord Jesus, being accompanied by holy angels, so to speak, takes you by the hand and leads you to the table. "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought" (Psalms 45:14-15); "Even by the springs of water shall He guide them" (Isaiah 49:10).

While sitting at the table, consider yourself as being seated in the brightness of an open heaven, shedding forth its light upon the table and all seated guests -- and thus also upon you. Consider yourself to be in the presence of God your heavenly Father, and Christ your Bridegroom. Sink away in your insignificance and let a childlike awe and reverence arise in your soul, while saying, "Surely the Lord is in this place. ... This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of

heaven" (Genesis 28:16-17). Be observant and do not fear, for the Lord has determined to bestow much grace upon you in Christ. Remain steadfast in the faith, and glorify God in His grace and Christ for the perfection of His atonement.

While eating and drinking, be consciously active by faith.

(1) Partake as being invited by the Bridegroom who says, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song of Solomon 5:1).

(2) Do not focus on the external signs only, for you know that they cannot feed your soul. Also, let not your heart turn from them in order to receive Jesus immediately, that is, by faith only -- such activity is to transpire outside of the Lord's Supper. Rather, in a conscious and feeling manner, unite the sign with the matter signified, and behold in them the breaking of the body of Christ and the shedding of His blood, and with that, His love and the efficacy of His suffering unto the forgiveness of your sins. Note these signs as a seal and pledge given to you by the Lord Jesus to assure you that His atonement is for you and that His love is toward you -- and that this will forever remain true.

(3) Neither expect a miracle here nor an extraordinary measure of elevation, light, or ecstatic joy. If the Lord gives you this, enjoy this good thing while it may be your portion. Be it known, however, that it is the common way to exercise faith, and to assure you by means of these signs -- as being seals and pledges -- that as certainly as you eat that bread and drink that wine, so certain is it that Christ has died for you and loves you; thus strive to attain peace in your conscience by faith.

(4) Keep your soul in a steadfast, thoughtful, and expectant frame -- a frame wherein faith is in exercise. Thus, if you are conscious of the sincerity of your heart and your objective in coming, refrain from instability and fearfulness, be it due to sudden thoughts which enter, fear of eating and drinking judgment to one's self, darkness suddenly coming upon you, or your inability to keep your thoughts together and being, so to speak, without thoughts. Such frames will prevent a fruitful partaking.

(5) While eating and drinking, apply Christ to yourself, unite yourself to Him in truth, with steadfastness, and in love. Ascend to the immutability of the covenant, which has now been sealed to you, saying, "My beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16).

Upon departing,

(1) say within your heart, "My Jesus will keep His word; with that I am satisfied. He will neither leave me nor forsake me and He will finish all things for me. He will preserve me, keep His eye upon me, lead me by His counsel, and afterwards take me into glory. I put my trust in His power and wisdom."

(2) Enliven your desire to remain near to Jesus; since this is not possible, however, leave your heart there and entrust it to Him.

(3) Comfort yourself with His return on the Day of Judgment, and look for this day with great anticipation, for then you may be with Him eternally in body and soul.

(4) Depart from the table as being sent forth by Jesus to show forth His death and fullness of salvation to the world, and to finish that work which the Lord has given you to do.

I have presented each of these matters to you individually to motivate you to come to the Lord's Supper in a proper frame. Do not trouble yourself, however, to practice these matters in such an order. The soul must at such a time have freedom and the Holy Spirit operates at such times in divers manners. Rather, by reading or rereading what has been stated before, you will engender a habitual tendency in the soul, and you will become more fit to engage yourself by way of such a frame. "Happy is that people, that is in such a case" (Psalms 144:15); "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple" (Psalms 65:4). Blessed is he who may thus be led into the inner chambers of the gospel, who may say, "To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary. Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee" (Psalms 63:2-3).

Reflection Upon the Lord's Supper

After having been to the Lord's Supper, you must not conduct yourself as if you have left behind a heavy burden about which you had been so concerned, and you are now quite satisfied because you hope that you have neither eaten nor drunk judgment to yourself -- and thus return to your former state and way of life. See to it that you refrain from such behavior. Be very careful to conduct yourself well after the Lord's Supper. If Satan has not been able to gain the advantage over you in the preparation for and celebration of the Lord's Supper, he will yet endeavor to get the advantage over you after the Lord's Supper. After the Lord Jesus had been baptized, He was tempted of the devil, and after the disciples had celebrated the Lord's Supper with Christ, they were in that same night offended and dispersed, and Peter was sifted as wheat. After Paul had been drawn into the third heaven, there came an angel of Satan who buffeted him. This is generally also true for believers -- after having been comforted they must arm themselves against the assaults of the enemy, so that he may not get a hold upon them. As one must be on guard against the enemy, he must likewise take special care to conduct himself appropriately toward God, his Benefactor. We may indeed apply to this spiritual meal what God demanded of Israel upon their arrival in Canaan with its abundance: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 8:10-11).

Reflection consists first of all in a quiet reflection upon how we have fared at the Lord's Supper, and furthermore, how we have behaved ourselves and what God has done for us. "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness" (Deuteronomy 8:2).

Reflect upon what your condition has been.

(1) Have you been actively engaged during the time of preparation? Have you taken the time for it, or did you continually postpone it until time slipped away from you and a slight spiritual motion with a prayer or two had to do? Was there a reflection upon sin, and a wrestling to receive Christ? Was there a lively inclination and a stirring to repent, or were you in darkness, listless, and discouraged?

(2) What was your condition during the administration of the Lord's Supper? Were you sorrowful or joyful? Were you tender, or hard and insensitive -- all this being intermingled with sorrow? Were you in the dark or was it light; were you moved or composed; did you exercise faith or were you full of fear? Were you filled with longing or was it barren within?

Reflect also upon the manner in which the Lord has manifested Himself to you.

(1) Were you sorrowful both when you came and when you returned, not having sensed the Lord's presence?

(2) Did you receive peace, quietness, hope, assurance, and joy? Did you sweetly cleave to the Lord, doing so while weeping, without much comfort? Or could you entrust it all to the Lord, and did you in love lean upon your Beloved? Did the Lord manifest Himself to you in a special manner with extraordinary revelations, or by granting clear and powerful assurance? Reflect upon these and similar matters. Do not deny what you have received; highly esteem the very least thing. If the soul can thus engage itself in quiet meditation, the Lord's Supper will have a sweet aftertaste. One will perceive his failures and acknowledge the free grace of God, His goodness, and His benevolence. It will be a renewal of friendship, and be as a wedding dinner, treating Jesus to His own dainties, saying, "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits" (Song of Solomon 4:16). Yes, you may then receive that blessing during reflection which you missed while partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Reflection to Be an Expression of Gratitude

Secondly, reflection consists of joyous gratitude: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalms 103:2); "Praise the Lord, call upon His Name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His Name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for He hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee" (Isaiah 12:4-6).

Gratitude consists:

(1) In knowledge of, observance of, and appreciation for, the good which has been received. This pertains to the entire work of redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ and to all the benefits promised in the covenant of grace, as well as to those good spiritual frames and the Lord's manifestation to you at the Lord's Supper. "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand" (Psalms 139:17-18). He who does not know the worth of what has been received cannot give thanks.

(2) In the acknowledgement that one is a partaker of these benefits: "... who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Such knowledge -- of being a partaker -- makes one joyful and renders the heart grateful.

(3) In the acknowledgement of the sovereign goodness of the Lord as the fountain from which alone these benefits have come forth. "Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture" (Psalms 100:3). Goodness doubles the value of the gift.

(4) In a manifestation of joy before the countenance of the Lord about all that you have received, be it more or less. "For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands" (Psalms 92:4). A joyful giver demands a joyful recipient.

(5) In an inclination to requite. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord" (Psalms 116:12-13). Even though you are not able to requite, the inclination to do so is nevertheless required.

(6) In a blessing, boasting of, and praising of the Lord's goodness, grace, and benevolence, which are manifested in the received benefits. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

(7) In not being reserved when in the company of godly members with whom you are familiar. Instead, we must tell each other how it was with us at the Lord's Supper; this is generally of much benefit both for those who listen and for those who speak. The one recognizes his own heart, the other is comforted, and someone else is encouraged to seek. They may then concur to thank the Lord together with psalms and prayers. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul" (Psalms 66:16).

Reflection Must Consist in the Anticipation and Enjoyment of Having Fellowship with God

Thirdly, reflection consists in a continual looking unto and having fellowship with the Lord. "... walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1); "And Enoch walked with God" (Genesis 5:24). To that end it is necessary that one views God in Christ as a reconciled Father. Even when spiritual light dissipates, if one falls into sin and if strife comes, he must nevertheless hold fast to the immovableness of the covenant. It is neither your feeling nor your standing or falling which determines the steadfastness or stability of the covenant; rather, it is based on the immutability of God. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isaiah 54:10); "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6). Therefore do not succumb so readily; hold fast what you have, be steadfast in faith, and conduct yourself manfully. If, according to your feeling, you cannot conclude the certainty of your state, then make the conclusion judgmentally. Observe this in the following passages: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11); "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14). Therefore set the Lord continually before you and live in a continual dialogue with Him -- at one time pray, then ask for counsel, then express your dependence upon Him, then wait upon Him, then reverently worship Him, then rest in Him, then thank Him, and then again, offer yourself to His service. Acquaint yourself thus with Him.

All salvation, comfort, delight, holiness, and felicity for the soul is to be found in having fellowship with God. Such a soul perceives the righteousness of God as being only light, glorious, and pure -- she loves it and rejoices herself in it, doing so all the more, since this righteousness is not against her unto condemnation, but the Surety having merited this, it is to her advantage. The soul also perceives the goodness and all-sufficiency of God, and in enjoying their efficacy, she not only is unable to find any desirability in creatures apart from God, but apart from God there is nothing

which she desires, since the soul finds everything in God. The soul also perceives the holiness of God. Since she is unable to endure its luster, she covers her countenance and perceives in this luster her own sinfulness; and for shame, she shrivels away, so to speak, and becomes as nothing. The soul also perceives the love of God, and being irradiated by this love, she delights herself in a most wondrous way, reciprocal love being ignited within her. She perceives the will of God as being uppermost and sovereign over all things. Thus, she loses her own will in whatever suffering comes her way and in whatever duties are before her. She wishes it to be thus because it is the Lord's will. The soul perceives the majesty and glory of God, in comparison with which all creatures lose their majesty and glory and she bows herself deeply before her majestic God, worships Him with deep reverence and gives honor and glory to Him. She perceives the omnipotence of God, both within Himself and as it is operative toward His creatures. Then the power of the creature, which manifests itself either for or against her will, disappears. She sees the wisdom of God as revealing itself in all His works -- both in nature as well as in grace. Thus, the wisdom of all creatures melts away and she is quiet and well-satisfied with the only wise government of God. The soul also perceives the veracity and faithfulness of God. She is acquainted with the promises, believes them, and is so confident as far as the certainty of these promises is concerned, that it is as if they were already fulfilled.

All this engenders a thoughtful and steadfast spiritual frame, quiet submission in whatever circumstances the soul encounters, a fearless courage in the performance of her duty, and a delighting herself in the task she has done for the Lord, leaving the outcome with resignation to the Lord's direction. Such a life is truly a joyful life, and pure holiness issues forth from this. She acknowledges any virtue which is not practiced by having God in Christ in view, as a vice. Such fellowship with God is heaven itself: "... and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). David says of this: "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalms 16:11); "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psalms 17:15). "Heaven" is quickly said, but it far transcends all comprehension. The soul who acquaints herself with God by way of such fellowship, has much liberty to lay her need before the Lord her Father and to present all her desires to Him in prayer, seeking their fulfillment. God, in turn, is a hearing and answering God to her. "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).

Behold, such is the eminent felicity of fellowship with God. Since you have entered into covenant with God, however, and this covenant has been sealed to you, you thus have the privilege to walk humbly with your God -- this also being your duty. Therefore, acquaint yourself with the Lord, have peace, and let your holiness shine forth.

Reflection Must Result in a Despising and an Abandoning of the World

Fourthly, reflection consists in a despising and an abandoning of the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16). You are obliged to abandon the world, for:

(1) This is inherent in the covenant into which you have entered and which has been sealed to you. This means that God alone is your desire, resting place, joy, delight, and the One whom I

fear. The world is therefore from now on, of no significance. It is merely to be used as a means through which you traverse as a stranger in order to come to the fatherland.

(2) The world is nothing but pollution itself and lies in wickedness; you, however, are washed by the blood and Spirit of Christ. How then can you again defile yourself? The Lord has called or drawn you out of this dreadful and wicked world, as He drew Abraham out of Ur and Israel out of Egypt -- how then can you return there again?

(3) Those two, God and the world, stand in direct opposition to each other; whoever loves the one hates the other, for no one can serve two masters. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

(4) The love of the world is an adulterous love, and your Bridegroom, Jesus, to whom you have been espoused, will be very jealous in response thereto. It also dishonors Him, for it is as if He could not sufficiently satisfy the soul -- as if you needed something besides Him. It would then appear as if He were not sufficiently good and friendly to refresh and gladden His bride.

(5) He shall respond to such denial with more abundant comfort. The Lord shall not allow the abandonment of all that is of the world -- motivated by love for Him -- to go unrequited.

(6) It is nothing more than vanity. Moreover, what is the world with all its glory without Jesus?

(7) All this confusion, beloved, and all this grief, sorrow, and trouble originate nowhere else but in the world which, as your enemy, wounds you by either flattering or frightening you. Will you then seek out your own sorrow? Have you not tasted her bitterness long enough? Therefore come out of her, and let your walk henceforth be in heaven.

Reflection Consists in a Public Manifestation of One's Christianity

Fifthly, reflection consists in a public manifestation that one is a Christian and a member of the covenant. Therefore, from now on wear the livery of Christ by walking as He has walked (1 John 2:6), so that all who observe you may know that you are loyal to Jesus and His cause (Acts 4:13). This manifests itself primarily

(1) In love: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Love the Lord, and indulge yourself continually in the love of your beloved Jesus. Manifest your love also to all believers since Jesus loves them and they cherish Jesus. Let not their imperfections and shortcomings hinder you in your love, since this love has another foundation. Let your loving heart also manifest itself toward all men -- just as light and fire illuminate and yield warmth to both the good and the evil.

(2) In humility and meekness: "... learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Since having made Jesus your choice has yielded honor, love, and safe-keeping for you, can there be any concern for the honor and love of men? What interest can there then be for the goods of this world? If you therefore have cast out ambition and lust for money, humility and meekness will show forth their luster. And since you have nothing unless you have received it from your beloved Jesus, you ought to remain small in yourself and manifest this by your friendly conversation, in

being honorably dressed (and thus void of external show), by your conduct in your family and wherever humility is appropriate. If you are wronged or an opportunity to become angry arises, be on guard against wrath and vengeance. Show that you are of a meek spirit, that you can endure this, and that you can love your enemies and do good to them.

(3) In benevolence, thus bearing the image of Christ. How benevolent the Lord Jesus was! Who did ever depart from Him, being yet un comforted? Thus it must be with you: Comfort those who grieve, visit the sick, and be generous to the poor. If there is nothing you can give, nevertheless be friendly and manifest your compassion toward them. Let your light thus shine among men and manifest your faith by your works.

Reflection Must Manifest Itself in a Public Confession of the Lord Jesus

Sixthly, reflection consists in confessing the Lord Jesus. The Lord's Supper obligates you to show forth the death of the Lord until He comes. Be not ashamed of Christ, His doctrine, church, children, or cause. Express yourself freely, and let it be manifested by your speech, deeds, and friends that you are loyal to Jesus. Rejoice when you have the opportunity to manifest how glorious, full of salvation, and precious He is to you. Rejoice when men despise you for Christ's sake, and do not shrink back from persecution when you must suffer for the name of Christ. And if it would please the Lord to bring you to glory by calling you to be a martyr and blood-witness, do not refuse this crown, but rather receive it with joy.

Blessed are they who in preparation for, in celebration of, and in reflection upon, the Lord's Supper may conduct themselves in harmony with that which has been said. He whose conduct approximates this is also well off, for those who halt will, with Jacob, also arrive in Canaan. Sincerity of heart is pleasing to God and renders support in the exercise of faith.

Many are desirous for all these spiritual frames and complain that they do not have them. They indeed have great reason to complain; however, what is the cause of all this? They themselves are certainly to be blamed, for they are lax in seeking. It is too difficult a duty for them to be thus engaged in spite of darkness and spiritual dullness. He who does not work will not eat, he who does not pray will not receive, and he who does not seek will not find. In the realm of nature God grants temporal blessings only upon the use of the means; God deals likewise in the spiritual realm. Therefore if you desire these things, actively seek them. Frequently come before the Lord as you are: as sinful, lax, listless, and ignorant. Show Him that with your small measure of spiritual life, you are impotent to overcome the resistance of the old Adam -- yes, you cannot even engage yourself to do so. Therefore, while holding before the Lord His promises, pray to Him for preceding grace, His Spirit, and for willingness and ability to seek -- and the Lord will hear and give you grace. This desire to seek and this supplicating for the Spirit in order that you may be actively engaged are pleasing to the Lord. In your impotent seeking your soul will frequently come into a more lively frame, and you will thereby quiet your soul and receive more light and comfort. May the Lord, who is good, cause you to seek and to find!

047. Chapter 42: The Life of Faith in Reference to the Promises

----- CHAPTER FORTY-TWO ----- The Life of Faith in Reference to the Promises

Some years ago this material was the substance of a letter to a godly merchant in the New Netherlands. It has subsequently been enlarged, has been printed several times, and is now appended to this work.

All felicity, full satisfaction, and enduring joy of man consists in having communion with God -- such was Adam's life prior to the fall. After the fall, man's understanding has been darkened; he has become a stranger to the life of God, is deprived of the glory of God, and thus travels upon the broad way to destruction. In His goodness God has revealed a way by which a condemnable sinner can be reconciled with, and enjoy God, this being his felicity, satisfaction, and joy. In this life, this is but in principle, but after death and the general resurrection of the dead, this will be enjoyed in perfection in the third heaven -- in the paradise of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is this way, being the one, eternal, living, and only wise God and the eternal Son of the eternal Father. He has assumed our own human nature out of the holy Virgin Mary and has united it to Himself in singleness of person. He is thus true and eternal God, and a perfectly holy man. He was ordained by the Father in the eternal Counsel of Peace -- or in the eternal covenant of redemption -- to be Surety and Savior. In having given Himself to that end, He as Surety has removed all the sins of all the elect and taken them upon Himself. By His suffering and death He satisfied the justice of God, thereby reconciling the elect with God. Furthermore, by His obedience in fulfilling the law, He has merited a perfect righteousness for them. He is "the way, the truth, and the life," and no man comes unto the Father, but by Him (John 14:6). Salvation is in none other, and He can save to the uttermost all those who come to God by Him.

God causes this Savior and Surety, being the only way unto salvation, to be proclaimed in various places in the world by means of the gospel, that is, good news. He makes it known to men and calls them; He urges everyone to desire this salvation -- and for the obtaining of it, to receive this Savior as their Surety, and surrender to Him in order to be led by Him unto salvation. Is not a person wicked who insists on remaining in his wretched condition; who despises the salvation, eternal bliss, and joy in the perfect enjoyment of communion with God; who despises God, rejects the Surety, disdainfully rejects all friendly invitations, and thus goes lost forever -- is he not frightfully wicked? On the contrary, is not he blessed who is acquainted with the necessity of, the full salvation in, and the friendly invitation to come to this Surety, Jesus Christ? Is not he blessed who delights in this salvation, desires this way, and becomes a partaker of it in this way? A Serious Exhortation to the Unconverted to Consider Their State and Repent

Apply this now to yourself. If you are unconverted, you are as yet without Christ, without God, without the promises, and without hope unto salvation -- that is, if you remain and die as such. Would that for once you would conduct yourself wisely, and that it would please the Lord to convert you, give you faith, and lead you unto salvation.

First, reflect with composure upon your blindness. However, how will one convince him who is born blind that he is blind, since he does not know what it is to see? You know in a natural sense that there is a God. However, do you know Him? Do you continually think upon Him as the lofty, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, holy, and righteous God? Do you know what it means to behold God's face in righteousness? Are you acquainted with what a preciousness there is in being reconciled with God by this Surety, and how delightful it is when God reveals Himself to the soul, fills the soul with His love, and when the Lord Jesus kisses the soul with the kisses of His mouth? Are you acquainted with the satisfaction and joy the soul experiences in the union with and the enjoyment of God, and how the soul is warmed and set aflame with love toward God when she is irradiated by His love? Do you know of that pure, holy, liberated, contented, delightful, and satisfied state of soul which flows forth out of this blessed communion with God as a reconciled Father in Christ? You may respond: "I understand the words and am acquainted with this matter in the natural realm; but I cannot imagine what the spiritual motions of the soul and God's manifestations to the soul are. I am blind in this respect, and therefore I also can not desire it. However, I do know this: I wish to be satisfied and joyful, but I have no knowledge of anything other than in the things of the world. It does not grieve me that I miss God and have no desire to have God as my portion; I do not know Him."

Secondly, are you not sinful within and without? Do you not live in all manner of sin of which nature teaches you that they are sin? Are not the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life attractive and delightful to you? Do you not find your life in them? Do not all of these set the faculties of your soul and the members of your body in motion in order to attain, enjoy, practice, find delight in, and satisfy yourself with them? Is not God outside your heart? Are not harm and shame the only things which bridle your lusts? What is your response to all this?

What is your opinion? Can the holy God be pleased with such a vile and abominable sinner as you are? Can God, the righteous Judge of all the earth, do anything else but do right? Is not His judgment according to truth and has He not said, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10)? Oh, if you would but perceive what the word cursed expresses as applied to yourself! It is to be despised, scorned, and rejected by God. It means to be deprived of all grace, help, comfort, and hope; it means to be without refuge and shelter. It is an unbearable and dreadful terror; it is a trembling and anxiety resulting from being filled with the wrath of God -- all of this without any relief and rest. It means to be eternally cast away from God in the pool of damnation; that is, into the eternal fire where there is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth and where the smoke of torment arises to all eternity. All of this will be accompanied by the most horrifying despair, since all hope for the future will be totally cut off. Behold, this is your condition, this you are worthy of, and this will come upon you if you do not make haste to flee to that Surety we have held before you.

First, do not deceive yourself by thinking, "God is gracious and merciful; therein is my hope." Man, awake from the stupor imposed upon you by the devil and your darkened understanding! Are there not any people damned, and do not the majority of mankind go lost (Matthew 7:1-29)? Where then is your imaginary mercy of God? It would not be an act of God's mercy if the righteous Judge would forgive sins without punishing them to the full. Such mercy would be despised in worldly judges. Rather, God's mercy consists in the gift of a Surety in whom He fully punishes the sins of believers, in granting a person faith in this Surety, and in regenerating, sanctifying, and leading

such a person in that way to eternal felicity. Do you now perceive that your hope upon mercy is false, and that you would deceive yourself, since your hope is without foundation?

Secondly, also do not deceive yourself by thinking as follows: "If I believe that Christ has died for us, and if I do my best, repent, and endeavor to live a godly life; and if I pray that God would be gracious to me, I have a good hope that I shall be saved." This is the widest pathway to destruction, for all this is erroneous. Christ did not die for all men; He died for His elect only, to whom He gives true faith, the nature of which we shall soon discuss. What is the best that you can do, you who are blind and dead in sin? And you who are void of the principle of spiritual life, what repentance can proceed from you? Your feigned conversion and godliness is but a work of nature, consisting in abstinence from blatant evil and the performance of civil good; however, this is not conversion and godliness. The latter is a principle of spiritual life which proceeds from the soul's union with God in Christ, which manifests itself in spiritual deeds wrought in the soul by the almighty power of God.

Thirdly, also do not deceive yourself by thinking that you are converted simply because you have experienced sorrow, have been moved emotionally, have been terrified, believe that Christ is your Savior, and pray for the forgiveness of sins. Many have done this who are now already in hell. True sorrow, faith, and prayer are hidden matters for the unconverted; their focus is only on the natural. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You are thus entirely destitute; you are blind, dead in sins, condemnable, and all the foundations of your hope are nothing but deceit.

What now? There is yet hope for you, that is, if you but desire to be saved in the way which I shall propose to you. There is no counsel for those who are insensitive about their wretched condition, who will not hear of either of hell or heaven, and have neither desire nor fear. But poor man, awake! for you are at the very edge of hell -- and behold, you are falling into it. Awake, awake, before it is too late! If not, then with horror we must see you sink away into eternal damnation. An Exhortation to Concerned Souls

However, if there may be some concern and desire to be delivered from hell and to enjoy salvation eternally, give heed, and let such divine counsel be agreeable to you. The righteous and good God has given His Son Jesus Christ -- who is God and man -- as Surety, who, by His suffering and death, has accomplished eternal reconciliation and redemption, and by His holy obedience has merited a perfect righteousness. As His servant, I offer this Surety to you in His Name -- yes, you who read or hear this read, the God of heaven calls you to receive this Surety freely as your ransom and righteousness. This Jesus, who is good and true, invites you in a most friendly manner to receive Him and to surrender yourself fully to Him, assuring you that upon coming He will not cast you out, but will most certainly take you to Himself into eternal felicity. Should you not listen to such a God who calls, and to such a Jesus who extends such a friendly invitation? Shall this not move your heart? Do such offers then have no attraction for you? Shall eternal felicity and deliverance from hell not be matters of concern for you? How I wish that the Lord would illuminate your understanding, incline your will, and stir up all your affections to receive that Surety, to enter into that great covenant of grace and be saved! May the Lord Himself draw you powerfully and translate you out of yourself into Christ Jesus. May He grant you faith, regenerate you, grant you life in union with Christ, and may He also cause you to grow and increase in this life -- for it is God

who works in you both to will and to do.

First, to that end it is indeed necessary that you are acquainted with and perceive your wretched state, your wicked heart and previous sins, as well as the corruptions which continually manifest themselves. Do not yield to a sense of hopelessness, however, nor become discouraged, for the way unto life is not by way of a new covenant of works, but by the covenant of grace in which everything is given without price -- the atonement of Christ being the only foundation -- and all things are given to the praise of the glorious grace of God.

Secondly, one must not focus upon his corruptions for long periods of time in order thereby to sink even deeper into his misery and to be more brokenhearted; as if being more brokenhearted prior to conversion would make one more acceptable before God; as if it were a condition upon which you could, and without which you could not come to Christ; as if it were the basis for our liberty to receive Christ. Rather, broken-heartedness is only necessary to cause you to go out of yourself and to take refuge with Jesus. If this is brought about by sorrow over your sinful state, it makes no difference whether your sorrow and broken-heartedness are great or small. Their only purpose is to drive you, while yet unconverted, out to Jesus.

Thirdly, the reception of Christ by faith as one's ransom and righteousness seldom occurs without fits and starts. A repentant sinner sees and perceives, to a greater or lesser degree, his wretchedness. Even if he cannot reflect upon his deeds as such, there are indeed perceptions -- albeit they are but faint -- of the righteousness of God, which time and again hinder him, nearly causing him to lose courage. He knows Jesus as Surety and as the only way to obtain reconciliation and salvation; he knows what troubles him and what it is that drives him. Since he is and remains a great sinner, he is sometimes so in the dark as to whether he may come. Yet, he cannot find deliverance anywhere else and he thus turns to this way, hoping that the Lord will permit Himself to be entreated and to grant him Christ. At times he may have more light and perceive the offer, the calling, and the invitation; and this gives him liberty. Various spiritual motions intermingle here. At one time he turns to Jesus as one standing from afar, not being able to speak a word; he stands perplexed and at times a tear trickles down. At another time the soul is filled with yearning, saying, "Oh, that I could find Him and receive Him!" Then again she waits upon the Lord to give her some light, inner stirring, ability to approach, and some liberty; or the soul is able to persevere in prayer, weeping, and supplication in order to have Jesus as her portion. Then there are times when the soul has liberty to surrender herself to Jesus. She makes known to Him her desire and the uprightness of her intent, and she gives her heart to Him, albeit that she is yet concerned as to whether the Lord Jesus will be willing to receive it. At other times she believes the offer of grace with more clarity and she receives Him in all His fullness as He freely offers all this to her. There are many inner fluctuations between light and darkness, hope and discouragement, faith and unbelief, and temptation and holiness. By way of such fluctuations the soul becomes more and more acquainted with Jesus. Jesus is no longer unknown to her. There comes a grounded hope in her heart and at times there are some assurances. These quickly vanish, however; and while wrestling, she learns more and more to rely upon Jesus and to entrust her soul to Him.

Fourthly, it is during this strife and these exercises of faith that the Lord changes and regenerates the heart, and grants spiritual life to it. This life abhors the former life of sin, and has a desire,

yearning, and love for holiness. And although spiritual life is, as yet, feeble and tender and corruption still is strong, it nevertheless does not die; instead, it surfaces time and again, and in the continual battle between the flesh and the spirit it becomes stronger and stronger.

Believers Cannot Make Progress in Their Own Strength A believer, a converted person, who now desires to increase in this life must carefully guard against any notions about his own strength. Instead, he must habitually endeavor to discern his impotence, for then he will be more dependent upon the Lord in every deed. He will then gratefully acknowledge every good thought, be kept from much falling into sin, avoid many temptations, and be steadfast in the ways of the Lord. To that end it is necessary that one give attention to what God says about man in that respect. God says:

(1) That man is dead in sins. What can a dead person contribute to his own regeneration?

(2) That man is so blind that he "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). What can a man do and how can he perform anything of which he neither understands what it is nor how it ought to be?

(3) That man is so wicked that he will not come to Christ, will not permit Christ to gather him in, has no desire after the knowledge of the ways of the Lord, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. What can be expected of such a man other than wickedness? Can such a man do anything that is good?

(4) That man is absolutely incapable of performing anything that is spiritual. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). It is as impossible for man to do good as it is for a leopard to change his spots. God says that it is He rather than man who transforms someone into a sheep of Christ.

(5) That only He removes the stony heart and gives a new heart of flesh, causing man to walk in the statutes of the Lord and to keep and do His judgments. An unconverted person can thus not do anything that is spiritual. Therefore, he who has received spiritual life does not have this of himself, but from God.

Yes, once God has converted someone, he still needs the preceding, supporting, and finishing influence of the Holy Spirit, for the Lord Jesus says to His disciples (already having been born again), "Without Me ye can do nothing." Paul says to believers, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do." Meditate frequently upon this and similar texts; consider them, while lifting the heart to God, to be declarations and pronouncements of the God of truth, and say, "God says this concerning me; thus, this is how I am." This must be lively within the heart, and in this frame one must do everything; in all things be dependent on the Lord, and give thanks to the Lord for every good inclination.

Furthermore, take note of your heart and deeds and observe: (1) How impotent you are to do anything aright -- to do it by faith, in union with Christ as one's life and strength.

You are impotent to comply with the law as being the will of God -- incapable of doing so out of pure love, to the honor of God, and without inclination toward a seeking of self.

(2) Consider how the heart is repulsed by that which is spiritual, how difficult and troublesome it is for the unregenerate old nature to live in the presence of and continual communion with God, and how inclined it is to the world. It seems as if the old nature is naturally inclined to rest and delight in these thoughts. This is an indication that the old nature is here in its element and that spiritual life is thus supernatural, having been wrought, not by them, but by an almighty power.

(3) Take notice of the innumerable multitude of sins which continually issue forth from the heart in reference to so many different objects and in so many different ways -- which occur either spontaneously or at the slightest external stimulus. How many sins manifest themselves when one begins to resist sin, and how one's nature will rage against this! Yes, even when one opposes sin, sin will ignite and become lively; and sin, taking occasion by the commandment, will even work all manner of concupiscence.

(4) How strong is the attraction of sin! It prevails, contrary to reason, over one's own judgment, his objective and intent, the goodness of God, and chastisements. Is there then any expectation and strength with you to mortify sin? How wrong it is, therefore, to be active in one's own strength!

(5) When a person is overcome by manifold crosses, and they are very intense and of long duration, where then is the humility and the acknowledgement of the Lord's sovereignty and justice? Where then is your faith that it is God's hand -- your acknowledgement of the providence of God -- your faith that this all comes upon you by the love of God, to your benefit, that God has appointed both time and measure, and that there will be a deliverance to your benefit? Where is the willing surrender under the hand of the Father? How much fretfulness, grief, melancholy, rejection of one's state, and inclinations toward despair arise in the heart! Does not all of this teach you your impotence?

(6) Furthermore, how incapable you are to make appropriate use of your prosperity. Upon being delivered from a cross which either presses you down or imperils you, being granted one blessing after another, do you then readily acknowledge that the Lord has done this? Is your heart joyful in thanksgiving toward God, or is it a great effort to believe, even faintly, that God's hand was in it? Does it humble your soul? Do you consider yourself as unworthy of all these benefits, or do you consider it as having occurred spontaneously -- as if it transpired by chance, and specific means were the cause of its execution?

How one will lift himself up in prosperity; how riches will become the city of his strength, and how he will secretly rest in what he possesses! What care is expended to preserve and multiply them! How great is the consternation and discouragement when it vanishes! Do you not perceive from all this how impotent you are to mortify sin, practice virtue as you ought, and to bear with adversity and prosperity correctly? The Tendency of Both Unconverted and Converted to Rely upon Their Own Strength An unconverted person, upon being convicted of sin and God's wrath upon him -- and thus of his condemnable condition -- undertakes everything in his own strength. He will repent, forsake his sinful life, and live virtuously; he then hopes that God will be gracious to him, and he prays to God for forgiveness. Poor man! He does not know what repentance is, for this does not consist in abstaining from evil and in doing what is good. Rather, it consists in a complete change of heart and life; that is, from darkness to light, from death to life, from being worldly-minded to being heavenly-minded, from being carnal to being spiritual, and from being sinful to being godly. All this is through union with Christ who by faith dwells in the heart and who exercises a life-giving

influence in the soul. Nothing comes of all his intentions, for when his fear dissipates and his nature by renewal exerts itself, he is the same as he was before. And even if he were to remain consistent in all his actions, his nature has nevertheless not been changed, but there is only a change in the degree of natural virtuousness. The highest degree of such virtuousness is but the manifestation of the natural heart. It does not bring forth spiritual deeds -- deeds proceeding from a spiritual heart. With all his virtuousness he will go lost if he is not regenerated by the Spirit of God. When a person has received true spiritual life from God, and this life is yet feeble and the old nature still strong, this person will join together God's work and his own. He not only seeks for the forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God in the blood of Christ, but he also prays for sanctification, thereby manifesting that he is impotent and is in need of God's help. However, according to his imagination, he himself must also be active. He thinks as follows: "If I were to wait so long until God would take the initiative and work all things within me, nothing would come of it." He therefore begins to work and with much determination resolves to do so. He perceives the dreadfulness of sin with such clarity, and is so enamored with holiness that it seems impossible to him to return to sin. He is determined and it will now take place. What is the basis for this courage? Is it the assurance of divine influence? No, it is his vivid intention to carry out what he has intended to do, and he thus concludes that he has strength within himself. If, however, this intent gradually disappears from his mind, if his determination dissipates, if the clarity of his view of the dreadfulness of sin and the desirability of spiritual life is obscured (which generally occurs very readily), and if the corrupt nature by renewal gains strength and he again falls into sin and becomes a captive of sin -- then all lies in ruin. Such a person will then blame himself -- however, in such a way as if he could have done better, rather than attributing it to his wickedness, unwillingness, and impotence. This, instead of lessening his guilt, greatly aggravates it, and is brought down even further. If he then tries once more, and the result is again the same, he will become discouraged and will begin at once to reject his spiritual state. This is a very evident sign that all his expectation was based upon his own strength. As long as a man is not drawn away from his own imagined strength and does not come into a frame in which he is conscious of his impotence, there will be little purity in his sanctification and he will make little progress. Our Obligation to Use the Means in Spite of Our Impotence

Question: Must one then simply let go and refrain from action until God irresistibly intervenes and works everything within us? Is man nothing but a stock and a block which does not move itself, but can only be set in motion by external means?

Answer: First, an unconverted person cannot and will not do anything; and a converted person cannot do anything without Christ, for God must also work in him to will and to do as has been shown above. It is, however, the duty of both -- both being convinced of this. An unconverted person has the illusion that his corruption is not such that he cannot repent when he wills. He imagines that he, indeed, is willing and that it is in his hands.

Secondly, if God chooses to convert such a person, He will then deal with him according to his nature; that is, in conformity to his rationality. God illuminates his understanding, affects his will in an immediate sense, inclines it toward Him, and causes him to be active himself by means of His influence. Furthermore, a converted person, besides having received spiritual life, is a new creature, a new man, and a hidden man of the heart. This life has its motions and the propensity to be active, according to whether it is weak or strong. In several respects there is a similarity here

with natural life. In the natural realm, man is entirely dependent upon God, without whose influence and will he can neither breathe nor move; nevertheless, he is in actuality the formal cause of his actions. A person has the ability and strength to walk and to engage in various activities, but all men are not of equal strength. A man is able to stand up against a child, but a hundred children are not able to stand up against a man; this is likewise true in the spiritual realm. A converted person has spiritual life, and this life has its own motions and will endeavor to manifest itself albeit in dependency upon the influence of the Spirit of God. This life prevails and does not cease upon the conclusion of a spiritual act; it is not repeatedly given anew when a person becomes active, prays, and exercises faith, hope, and love -- thereby suggesting that he would be dead in the intervals. Rather, these motions which repeat themselves time and again, proceed from this intrinsic life, be it by the common or extraordinary influence of God. When a spiritual man grows and increases, he not only grows as far as his actions are concerned, but also internally in the habitual frame of his spiritual life. If a man decreases and regresses, the inner disposition of his spiritual life also becomes weaker. This is not true in reference to one sinful deed, for a man who falls retains his strength; rather, it pertains to a more persistent pattern of living an increasingly sinful life. According to whether the propensity of this life is small or great, weak or strong, this man will either be more or less capable of resisting sin, and of practicing virtue either more or less purely. If a believer is but small in grace, he can only do the work of a child; the larger task is reserved for the young men and fathers. It is evidence of spiritual wisdom to know one's weakness and strength and to be active in circumstances consistent with the greater or lesser degree of his strength -- doing so neither below nor above his level and always striving to grow. A Christian must be faithful in regard to this spiritual life, so that it will not decline due to his carelessness and listlessness; rather, it ought to increase due to his diligence. By God's common influence, one should frequently be able to do much more as far as this life is concerned. Exhortations are intended to revitalize us time and again. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18); "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:12-13); that is, do not work in your own strength, but rather in dependence upon divine influence -- which will time and again precede, and stir up and sustain you, so that your labor will not be in vain. "If ye then be risen with Christ (that is, if you have spiritual life within you, let this life be active), seek those things which are above" (Colossians 3:1). To that end it is necessary to exercise faith unto justification and by faith to be exercised with the promises.

True Holiness: A Fruit of Being Exercised with Justification

All true and pure holiness issues forth from being exercised with justification by faith, and therefore, more than anything else, one must earnestly endeavor to be exercised with this. The basis for faith is the Word of God in general, and the calling in particular: the offer of and invitation to the Lord Jesus Christ. This fact must, first of all, be acknowledged as being certain, steadfast, and infallible -- as having been revealed, offered, and promised by God who is true, immutable, and faithful. This is not to suggest that this is saving faith itself, but it is the foundation which must first be laid before one will be able to build thereon.

God declares that men by nature are children of wrath who are nothing but sin within and without, and thus are hateful, abominable, intolerable, and condemnable. God declares Himself to be the Judge of all the earth -- a righteous Judge who will by no means clear the guilty, whose judgment

is according to truth, and who will reward everyone according to his works. Therefore in order for man to be saved, the justice of God must be satisfied by the bearing of the punishment due upon the sinner and by the perfect fulfillment of God's law -- man having been created in conformity to this law and eternal felicity having been promised upon obedience. God, in His Word, reveals the wondrous way whereby these two matters have been executed and whereby the sinner can become a partaker of eternal felicity. God, out of purely free grace, solely out of love toward hateful sinners, according to His unsearchable wisdom, and by His omnipotence, has given His own eternal Son to be a Surety for the elect. He, who is very God and coessential with the Father and the Spirit, has assumed the human nature, taken upon Himself the sins of the elect, borne the punishment, fulfilled the law, and thereby reconciled the elect with God and merited their right to eternal life. The Surety Jesus Christ, thus having become the ransom and righteousness of the elect, proclaims peace to you by means of the gospel. He invites, offers, and with various reasonings allures everyone -- regardless of who he or she may be, and how great a sinner he or she may be -- to be justified, sanctified, and glorified by Him, along with the sure promise that He will in nowise cast out him who comes unto Him. This must of necessity be believed, for He who is true says this. He who neither approves of this nor receives this as infallible truth upon which he may most certainly depend, dishonors God in a most dreadful manner and considers God to be a liar (1 John 5:10). Acknowledge then these evangelical truths, believe them, and rejoice that there is a Jesus and that this Jesus calls you in order to save you.

These divine revelations are the foundation upon which saving faith rests. Since all fullness is to be found in Jesus, and since this fullness is being offered to you personally by this good Jesus, receive Him then as your Jesus with a ready and willing mind, heartily surrender yourself to Him, and entrust your soul entirely to Him in order that by Him you may become a partaker of all the benefits of the covenant. The acts of choosing, receiving, surrendering, and entrusting constitute saving faith. The promises are applicable to a person who is thus engaged. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12); "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36); "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Psalms 2:12).

God's Offer of Grace in Christ: The Basis for the Exercise of Faith

Many are in the dark concerning the exercise of faith and act confusedly in this respect. They make themselves the starting point; they turn to Jesus, pray for grace by the blood of Jesus, flee to Him, take hold of Him, and in this manner hope that He will as yet receive them and be moved to bestow grace upon them. In themselves these matters are good; however, the correct manner of conduct is lacking here. They seek to move Jesus, whereas they ought to know and believe that Jesus was willing, called them, and offered Himself, saying, "Whosoever will, and whosoever thirsteth, let him come." This offer must be the basis for their liberty to receive Him, and men must make this offer the basis for their assurance -- namely, that they, having received Him upon His offer, truly have the forgiveness of sins and are partakers of all the benefits of the covenant. Those who flee to Jesus apart from the foundation of this offer, seldom attain assurance about their state, unless the Holy Spirit deals with them in an exceptional manner. This assurance will last no longer than the duration of the sweet consciousness of grace. When this dissipates, they again live in fear, and question their previous assurance and comfort. They think that the Lord Jesus is not willing to receive them, that they are too great a sinner, and that they spoil everything time and

again. They question whether they are indeed capable of receiving Jesus; for their contrition is not of the right kind, and they know not if their desire is of the right kind, etc., as if contrition, desire, and hunger were conditions upon which one would be permitted to come. Instead, perplexity and hungering are only frames by which one is stirred up to seek Jesus. If you are therefore stirred up to turn away from yourself and to go to Jesus, approach Him upon the basis of the offer of grace; be not hindered by the objections mentioned before, and your goings will become more established. The nature of faith is such that it does not remain with the receiving of Jesus, but presses on to justification and to a life of love and holiness by faith.

Justification is not a work of man, but of God as righteous Judge. Man comes before the bar of justice, not as he is in himself, for then he could only be condemned; instead, he comes as having the righteousness of the Surety Jesus Christ which the Judge imputes to believers, Christ having acquiesced in and having been willing to become Surety. He satisfied and merited everything in their place, and a believer receives Christ's ransom and righteousness on the basis of the offer. The believer thus has a perfect righteousness which can abide the judgment of God. While thus standing before the bar of divine justice, the believer is acquitted of guilt and punishment, and is granted a right to all the benefits of the covenant of grace, both in this and in the life to come. The pronouncement of this justifying sentence is made in the Word of God by means of all the promises made to believers. The believer seeks out these promises, being convinced that he believes in Jesus and that God has thus made these promises to him, declaring him to be an heir of all those benefits, such as: forgiveness of sins, freedom from curse and condemnation, having God as a reconciled Father, being a child of God, being an heir of God, being a fellow-heir of Jesus Christ in eternal glory, etc. The stronger that faith in Christ is, and the greater the measure of clarity is with which the promises made to believers are perceived and in a lively sense are received by faith and applied to the soul, the more clearly the believer will hear the pronouncement of the justifying sentence by the righteous Judge, and the greater the measure of peace and joy will be. The efficacy of justification will, however, be tasted in a most lovely and sweet manner if the Holy Spirit causes the soul to discern her grace, applies the promises to the heart, and says to the soul, "I am thy salvation; thou art Mine; I have loved thee with an everlasting love." The Believer's Need for Daily Justification A believing soul is not satisfied with having received Jesus by faith only once, but she does this time and again, both when she has fallen into sin and endeavors to restore the disturbed peace, as well as outside of such a situation. She is desirous to live continually in union with Christ and to be continually in amazement about, and to rejoice in, the great work of redemption. She ascends to eternal election and then proceeds to the fall, to the promises of the future Messiah; she considers the types and proceeds to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus; she reflects upon His suffering and death -- from the cradle to the cross; she contemplates upon His resurrection, ascension, His being crowned with glory, His intercession, His coming unto judgment, as well as eternal glory. In all this she observes how the Lord's glory, righteousness, goodness, wisdom, truth, omnipotence, and other perfections of God shine forth, and she praises and glorifies God on that account.

She thus beholds the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and walks with Christ, being rooted and builded up in Him. And as Moses' countenance shone due to his fellowship with God, she will likewise perceive that her soul will acquire a more habitual spiritual frame, and will be more capable of despising the world with all that belongs to it, denying self, and walking with a perfect

heart in the ways of the Lord -- both toward God and her neighbor. This frame and its result are of an entirely different nature than when one has the illusion of being reconciled to God and occupies himself with the speculation of God's majesty and the insignificance of himself and all creatures. Such is but the work of nature, whereas the other is truly spiritual -- also in the smallest degree. Therefore true holiness flows forth out of faith and justification. The Need to Be Exercised with the Promises in Order to Grow in Grace

We have stated above that the growth of spiritual life also increases in consequence of faith's activity in reference to the promises. By way of various trials and sorrows, it pleases the only wise God to lead His elect, who have presently been regenerated, to the felicity which He has ordained for them and which Christ has merited. He does so at one time by bodily trials, then by spiritual trials, and frequently by both. A bodily cross generally troubles the soul and causes corruptions (which lay upon the ground as dregs) to surface and to trouble her quiet and clear disposition. Just as strong legs are needed to hold up under prosperity, it is an equally great art to hold up under adversity; great grace is also needed for this. Adversity presses the soul down, robs her of a joyous and cheerful disposition, oppresses the heart, and even has an evil effect upon the body, which yields opportunity for and stirs up to the commission of many sins. Sorrow kills more people than one would anticipate, although it is not noticed. In adversity, both discouragement and despair are very near at hand. One frequently reasons as follows: "It is done, no deliverance can be expected, and my hope has perished." If such a person then tries to cheer himself and becomes active, he will act as a young horse hitched before the wagon; it jumps forward, then it walks next to the trail, then it rears, then it stands still, but the yoke remains the same nevertheless. One is so unaccustomed to the cross in body or in soul that he does not know what to do. He seeks it in either this or that direction, but it is not to be found there, and the more he tosses about, the more confused he becomes. Such a person becomes sorrowful, doubts all previous grace and experience, views God as being provoked to wrath, and as an avenger. He will not be able to take refuge to the Lord. God hides Himself. Such a person is unstable and without footing; he will sin more and more, and the cross will become heavier and heavier. He will seek for diversion, attempting to shake off the cross, but instead it oppresses more and more -- just as is true for a deer which has been shot and carries the arrow with it while fleeing. Thus, a person walks upon the treadmill, so to speak, and after much walking, is still in the same place.

Cross-bearing and the Believer's Use of the Promises

It is therefore necessary to know how one ought to behave himself while bearing a cross in order that he may be sanctified thereby -- for this is God's objective when He visits His children with a cross. He chastises for our profit so that we may be partakers of His holiness; and believers indeed become partakers thereof if they bear their cross well. For even if for the present the cross may not seem joyous, but rather seems to be grievous, it will nevertheless afterwards yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby. Therefore, since the cross cannot be avoided and be cast away, one must set himself to it -- there being no other way to heaven -- and take up the cross willingly, therewith to follow Christ and bear it well. The cross will then be sweet and light even if it may press tears from our eyes. One will then possess his soul in quiet patience and have sinful passions under control. He will then experience the comforts and the help of the Lord, gain much advantage from the cross, and thank the Lord that He has led him in this way. However, the great question is: How will one bear the cross in order that he may be

sanctified thereby? To this I answer: by faith in the promises. In order that God's children would not succumb due to the multitude and variety of bodily and spiritual afflictions, but be sanctified thereby, the Lord has made many promises to them whereby a believer must be exercised in order to be comforted and strengthened. David found much strength in the promises: "Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy word hath quickened me" (Psalms 119:49-50). Every believer will likewise be revived by the promises when he makes use of them. Their hands have eyes; that is, they believe what they see. They delight in possession, in immediate deliverance when the cross but begins to show its teeth; then they are comforted and deem God to be good. To be led further into the cross, however, and to remain there for a long time, so that one neither sees an opening anywhere nor a means of deliverance -- then to remain steadfast in faith, and to bear the cross courageously (persevering in the ways of the Lord while having a lively hope of eternal glory), that is work for mature men -- work that requires effort. The child of God must strive for this, so that in the way of many exercises he may attain to such a propensity. He who wishes to go to heaven must count on being surrounded by crosses from all sides. If heaven is not worth all this effort to you, then cease in your pursuits and live for the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Love the world, get your share of what it has to offer [Note: This is a paraphrase of the Dutch idiomatic expression, "neemt er uw deel en deeg af."] , and be assured that you will have to endure the final outcome, that is, eternal destruction. However, do you have love for God? Do you desire to be reconciled with Him and continually live in fellowship with Him? Do you desire to enjoy in Him, through Christ, peace which passes all understanding, and live in humility, meekness, and submission? Is it all your delight, in willing obedience, to live a life pleasing to the Lord? Is it your choice that the Lord be your only and all-sufficient portion, and to delight yourself in the Lord? Do you have eternal life as your objective, and do you lay hold on it? Therefore choose then also the way of the cross, the way of temptations, dark providences, and many perplexities, since that is the Lord's way with His children whom He leads to glory. You must also go the way which Christ has gone. Let all your endeavor not be how to avoid or cast off the cross, but rather, how you may bear it courageously and be comforted in it -- yes, bear it joyously. You will do so when you exercise yourself with the promises -- then, if not deliverance, the divine consolations will be most precious to you.

How the Promises Are to Be Used In order to make good use of these promises, four matters must be considered by way of preface: 1) who makes the promises, 2) to whom they are made, 3) the specific promises that are made and their nature, and 4) the confirmation that the promises will neither yield comfort nor strength unless the Holy Spirit Himself applies them to the soul.

First, it is not a matter of indifference as to who the person is who promises. The promises of someone who promises more than he can give, who may become incapacitated, and who is able to change his intent are of little value. Such is true for all human promises. When God promises something, however, one not only may deem it to be sure, certain, and infallible, but he is also obliged to do so. Otherwise, one will dishonor God dreadfully, since he then deems Him to be a liar. God is sovereign and He may either promise or not promise, or He may promise the one thing to this person and not to the other. God's goodness is wondrous and He promises great things to His children. God is omnipotent and He can execute all things without any impediment. God is true and faithful, and therefore He neither can nor will change, and He will certainly perform His

promise. Sooner would heaven and earth be turned upside down before one of His good words would fall to the ground. When exercising one's self with a promise, one must consider God to be thus in the lifting up of his heart and with full approbation and assurance. If he does not do this, the promise will yield little comfort and exercise; doing this, however, adds emphasis to the promise. Therefore with uplifted heart, let this time and again be your practice.

Secondly, when considering a promise, one must carefully note to whom the promise is made. To appropriate promises to oneself without having a foundation for doing so is great foolishness and imagination; this will deceive the soul unto her destruction. One must therefore consider the promises in their context. With each promise, one will find a description of the characteristics of the persons to whom they are made. It will then be necessary to examine one's self as to whether these characteristics are found within. If yes, then one must come to the express conclusion: "This promise has been made to me by the great, omnipotent, good, and immutable God, and this promise will therefore most certainly be fulfilled in me. I thus conduct myself accordingly with certainty as if I already had the matter." In this manner, one will attain to assurance and glorify God as being true.

Thirdly, since the way to heaven is encompassed by many tribulations, believers would have to spend their life in much misery -- yes, due to them, would succumb in the way -- if it were not that God, in His goodness, had provided for such circumstances by making many glorious promises to them. This is not only true in a general sense, but also as it pertains to various circumstances and inconveniences -- so that, being comforted by these promises, they would persevere all the more courageously in all difficulties. He who, in reading the Bible, has accumulated numerous promises to be readily available upon becoming subject to a trial has a great advantage. The Holy Spirit, in granting inner comfort, customarily uses Scripture passages which He clearly and powerfully impresses upon the heart, be it during sleep or during waking hours. They can be such texts to which you have paid no attention -- yes, which you did not know were in the Bible and which you subsequently find to your amazement. Such inner comforts brought about by Scripture passages are generally more efficacious and are rooted more deeply in the heart. Therefore read your Bible frequently, and accustom yourself to find a promise or an example for every occasion, and you will experience that evil will neither grieve you, cause your faith to waver, nor cause you to be in despair and to be discouraged.

Fourthly, even though God has made such glorious promises to His children, which they in faith must apply to themselves and thus support and comfort themselves, they frequently are of little effect when internal temptations are intense and external difficulties overwhelming. Then it is as if there is not one single promise in the Bible. If they find one, they cannot perceive that they have the characteristics of those to whom the promises have been made, and thus they do not consider them to be applicable to themselves. And, if they cannot deny it, they nevertheless have no effect -- either because the matter is not fulfilled for them, or because they focus so intensely upon the circumstances that they cannot quiet their heart in order to take note attentively of the promise. It can also be due to having become fretful, sorrowful, and of a gainsaying disposition, or because they are swooning, and due to discouragement, are as dead and have become insensitive. "But a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14). Therefore in order that the promises be efficacious, it is needful that the Holy Spirit Himself bring them to mind and reveal that these promises have been made to them, since they have these characteristics. He must furthermore

cause them to see the glory of the promises and their certainty, and comfort them thereby. A godly widow once told me that at one time a heavy cross came upon her. In despair, she opened the Bible and in doing so read Matthew 6:1-34. This had such an effect upon her heart that she took the cross upon her with joy. She folded the page where that chapter was and thought: "I now have sufficient matter to comfort myself. I now know from where I shall derive my strength if, in the future, I shall encounter another cross." Such a cross came and she diligently sought out Matthew 6:1-34, but could not find in it what she had previously found. Why was this so? The Holy Spirit at that moment neither used this means nor applied it to her as He did previously. May the Lord send you the Holy Spirit as a Comforter. May He, time and again, bring the promises to mind and reveal to you that you have those characteristics, in consequence of which the promises have been made to you. May He impress the certainty and glory of them upon your heart so that by His light you may be encouraged to persevere in this dark providence!

Having said this by way of preface, a few words will be sufficient to show you the manner in which you must deal with the promises in order to use them to your benefit.

First, seek out a promise which is applicable to your situation. Consider this promise as having been made by the God of truth to His children, and that it will be fulfilled with more certainty than certainty itself. Consider that the behavior of His children (whatever it may be) will not cause God to change and nullify His promises since this given promise has been made in an absolute sense -- as is true for all the promises of the covenant of grace. Their fulfillment is not contingent upon any condition from man's side, even though there are such promises regarding temporal things (as, for example, in Isaiah 1:19-20).

Secondly, consider carefully the characteristics of those to whom the promise is made; they are either expressed in the immediate context of the promise or in the condition. Compare your condition with this in the presence of the Lord, and let the Lord and your conscience be the judge as to whether these matters are in you.

Thirdly, immediately look unto the Lord Jesus -- be it that you are currently in a frame in which faith is in exercise and you enjoy intimate union with Jesus, or be it that to a greater or lesser extent you are in need of renewing the act of faith -- and thus take notice that all promises are yea and amen in Him; that the right to these promises has been merited by Jesus; and that a believer (be he strong or weak) is an heir of them all, and thus also of such and such a promise in particular.

Fourthly, then turn to yourself and to the promises, and consider them as having been made to you -- yes, made to you by the immutable God, and that they will be fulfilled for you more certainly than certainty itself. This is the kernel of the matter. However, how rarely one engages himself in this way!

Fifthly, therefore, depend on and adjust your circumstances to this, and rejoice as if you had the matter already, saying, "My God will give it to me at a time when it is most beneficial for me, and with this divine wisdom I am satisfied." Comfort yourself with this when the promise pertains to cross-bearing, and be exercised with it when it pertains to illumination, spiritual revelations, and strength for sanctification. Keep this promise in view, present it to the Lord, remind Him of the promises, continually lay hold of this promise, and in laying hold of the promise be prayerfully exercised with this while taking hold of the Lord's strength. Rest upon it with quiet assurance and

use all means which the Lord has ordained for the acquisition of such matters. When God promises the outcome, He is also pleased to give the means, and will cause men to use them when the time of the fulfillment of the promises has come. The fulfillment of the promises does not depend on the means, but the means are dependent upon the fulfillment of the promises.

Sixthly, therefore wait patiently for fulfillment and be neither impatient nor sorrowful, for that issues forth from unbelief in the promises of the God of truth and dishonors Him, or is due to a lack of submission to His wisdom. God is glorified both in His veracity and fatherly wisdom when one is quiet and nevertheless actively waits upon Him. Therefore, "though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk 2:3).

It is in this manner that one is exercised with the promises.

Specific Promises for Specific Circumstances In order to illustrate, I shall present some cases to you and join one or two promises to each. First, if a cross pertaining to temporal things fills you with concern, and either oppresses or threatens you and your soul is troubled -- for temporal afflictions can indeed cause the soul to be shaken to a great degree, not only impeding the functioning of spiritual life, but also very much weaken it -- then focus upon these and similar promises: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psalms 34:19-20); "Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5); "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Secondly, do you perceive the burden of sin, its bitterness, the disquietude of the conscience, and do you dread God's wrath, as well as death and damnation? Flee to Jesus and receive Him as your ransom and righteousness. Consider the way of God in justification: Man is freely justified by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus -- and in such a frame turn to the promises. "... for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. ... If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:34;Jeremiah 31:37); "... I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me" (Jeremiah 33:8); "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive" (Psalms 86:5); "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18). Say therefore, "God will fulfil these promises for me, and then all will be well."

Thirdly, does your faith waver? Is there no strength to receive the Lord Jesus? Does light, peace, or assurance not follow upon this abstruse and faint transaction with Him? Do you frequently think, "How shall I do and how shall I be saved? Shall I then never truly believe in Jesus? Will He never draw me to Himself, and shall I never find reconciliation? My soul is overwhelmed. Oh, that He would take the initiative; oh, that I could find Him!" Consider the following promises: "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench" (Matthew 12:20); "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:11;Isaiah 40:29). Behold, there is your condition and there are the promises; be exercised with them.

Fourthly, perhaps you complain about darkness, saying: "Oh, how delightful is the light -- to see the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus -- to be acquainted with all the benefits of the covenant of grace in their magnitude, beauty, and sweetness -- to contemplate the great work of redemption from beginning to end with continual admiration -- to reflect upon the deep humiliation of the Lord Jesus and all the blessedness to be found therein; and to have an immediate view of Jesus crowned with honor and glory -- that is heaven upon earth! I have indeed seen something of this, but at that time failed to acknowledge it because I had too great a desire for clearer light; however, if I had that now, how I would rejoice! But the sun has gone down. I still know that Jesus is the altogether lovely One, but I do not see it, and my affections are not stirred up by a view of Him. I am completely in the dark, and I see neither God, Christ, grace within me, nor the preciousness of the gospel. When I engage in prayer, it is as if I call upon an unknown God. If I desire to go to Jesus, He hides Himself and I cannot get a view of Him. If I pray for something, I cannot get a view of the matters; I do indeed enumerate them, but my affections relative to them are not stirred up and it is therefore as if I did not desire them from God. It is not merely a heavy cloud which is passing between me and the Sun of Righteousness, but it is a pitch-dark night. Oh, that the glorious Morning Star would arise for me, and that the day would come that I would be as in former days! My desire and prayer are and will remain: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me" (Psalms 43:3); however, my situation remains the same." You must know that the Lord occasionally illuminates certain individuals in an immediate and extraordinary manner. If you complain about a lack of light, your desire is indeed good, but this desire must be tempered by submission, since not only is this the Lord's doing, but He also reserves the actual beholding for eternity. The Word of God is the light by which we must now walk. Furthermore, a believer can also be in darkness, not only as concerns judgmental knowledge but also regarding spiritual knowledge; that is, in the beholding of the spiritual nature of the truths revealed and to be enamored by them. If this is the problem, you must take refuge to the promises and be exercised with them as was stated above.

Take notice of these and similar promises:

- (1) "Light is sown for the righteous" (Psalms 97:10-11) -- and light will therefore arise in due season;
- (2) "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound" (Psalms 89:15). This refers to the voice of the Lord Jesus speaking in the gospel, as well as to those whose pleasure and delight it is to hear, receive, and give heed to this voice;
- (3) "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance" (Psalms 89:15);
- (4) "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness" (Psalms 112:3-4);
- (5) "But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise" (Malachi 4:2);
- (6) "And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21);
- (7) "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not" (Isaiah 42:16).

Therefore believe also these promises. Fifthly, are you in a barren and dead condition? Does it seem that all life and feeling have departed? Do you speak as follows? -- "There is neither a

solution nor is there any hope for me, for I have no feeling for anything. Sins no longer upset me, threats do not frighten me, promises do not move me; I do not fear hell, and I have no desire for heaven. When I read the Word, I do not benefit from it and my thoughts flit from one thing to the next. I cannot pray, for my thoughts wander and while I am on my knees I become more sinful than before I pray; I would almost fall asleep, and I have nothing to bring before the Lord, for I do not desire anything. Occasionally I think, "Do I have a soul and do I believe in its immortality?" Yes, such bewildering thoughts arise in me that I do not dare to name them. I am insensitive to all this and I give up, for there is no grace for me to all eternity. This has lasted so long that all my hope has departed. It is finished; God has departed from me and I from God." Poor, lost sheep! Your condition is miserable enough, but your words are more desperate in nature than your condition is. Give me an answer upon the following questions: Are you truly satisfied to be in that condition, or does your soul languish? Are you oppressed and miserable when you think upon God, even though you forget about yourself when you are among people and appear to be in good spirits in your conversation? Do you have what you desire? Are you satisfied? You will have to answer, "No, but what good does that do?" Would the world and its enticements be able to satisfy you if you could have everything according to your wishes? You will answer, "I think not." Why are you then continually so oppressed by your sensitive insensitivity as if you had consumption? Has Jesus departed? Has the Comforter that should comfort your soul departed far from you? Is there no communion with God; is there no way by which you may approach; is there neither life, seeking, nor finding? Perhaps you will answer, "I do perceive this, but the feeling is gone." Let me ask you, "Would it be your desire that the Lord would take the initiative with your soul and reveal Himself to your soul as your God? Is it your desire that the Lord Jesus would make Himself known to you as your ransom and your righteousness? Do you desire that the Lord would say to you, "I am Thy salvation; thou art Mine and thy sins are forgiven thee; I shall nevertheless save thee"? Is it your desire that the Lord would revive your faith, hope, and love, and quicken you in prayer, thanksgiving, doing battle against sin, and sanctification? Would you then be delighted and be in your element?" If you answer: "Yes, that is it; but what good does it do me, for I do not have it? I cannot work for it and I shall not attain to this anyhow, and I therefore give up with a sigh." Do you think that such a frame can proceed from the natural man? Do you not perceive the operation of the Spirit in this? If you were to detect this frame in someone else, you would say to such a person: "Be of good courage, for your insensitivity issues forth from the excessive extent and duration of this painful experience as well as from discouragement; the Lord will indeed return to you." This I also say to you, for it is still true for you, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psalms 73:25).

Once more, do you still have within you some knowledge of the Holy Spirit and His operations? Are you still acquainted with the frame of a soul who believes, wrestles, prays, cleaves, weeps, hopes, and in uprightness walks wholeheartedly before the countenance of God? Compare this to the knowledge, religious activity, virtuousness, and language of one whose activity does not flow out of union with the Lord Jesus unto justification, and who thus is still in the state of nature. Do you know the difference and do you desire the first, knowing it to be precious according to truth, and pure? I ask you: "Is the natural man indeed capable of making such a distinction with either approbation or rejection -- with either love or aversion? Is not this ability a certain evidence of spiritual light and life?" Take careful notice of the following texts: "He shall give you another Comforter ... even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not,

neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17); "... the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from Him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:4-5).

Furthermore, is there not the choice between Jesus and His cause on the one hand, and the world with either its counterfeit virtues or its vices on the other hand? Where is your heart? Is your heart fond of believers because they love Jesus and are loved by Jesus, or are you fond of charming the men of the world? In whose company do you desire to be? Must you not answer, "That difference is too great; my heart is fond of Jesus, His cause, and His children"? Is this proverb then no longer true, "Birds of a feather flock together?" [Note: The Dutch proverb reads as follows: "Gelijk bemint gelijk, en haat wat hem is ongelijk." The literal translation of this is: "Like loves like, and hates what is not like him."] Let your heart take note of 1John 3:14, where we read, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Lastly, are there then no intermissions? Is not your heart occasionally softened; do you not occasionally pray, weep, and look upward to heaven whether there is grace and Spirit for you? Are you not occasionally enabled to receive Jesus, and do you not occasionally have some comfort and a lively hope? Is not this then evidence that there is life within? Therefore have courage, and once more lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees. To that end consider the following (and similar) promises, and be exercised with them in the manner pointed out to you above. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15). This is followed by God's dealings with the promise to one who is entirely bewildered and hard-hearted, "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him." Did this bring about repentance and restoration? No; they were hardened even more. "... and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart" (Isaiah 57:16-17). What follows upon this? Was it total rejection and banishment of which they were worthy? No, the contrary is true. "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him" (Isaiah 57:18-19). What unsearchable goodness this is! Add to this the following: "For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee" (Isaiah 54:67); "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires" (Isaiah 54:11). These are unconditional, certain, and glorious promises. "Are the consolations of God small with thee?" (Job 15:11).

Sixthly, do you mourn -- not mourning in the manner of the previous case when one languishes due to insensitivity and desires to mourn in a heartfelt and grievous manner, but is your soul encompassed with anxiety, fear, and trembling -- one time due to certain circumstances and then again due to many trials which overcome body and soul simultaneously? Does the Lord keep Himself estranged? Does He remain quiet, and does He hide Himself, so to speak, behind a cloud so that no prayer can penetrate? Does He not answer your cries? Does He reject your soul and has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Is there no rest in your soul and has peace departed

far from you? Is Jesus absent, and is your soul troubled because your Beloved has departed? Does your soul melt as you think of former times when you were able to pray, weep, wait, yearn, and long; when you were able to lean upon Him in such a delightful manner, when you lost yourself in mutual love and requested everyone neither to disturb nor awake your Love until it would please Him; when He kissed you with the kisses of His mouth, His left hand was under your head, He embraced you with His right hand, you were sick with love, and found delight under the shadow of His favor? Do you miss all this? Have numerous sinful and grievous afflictions come in their place? Is your life consumed by sorrow and your years with sighing? Come, and attentively give ear to the promises. "For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul" (Jeremiah 31:25); "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me ... to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isaiah 61:1-3); "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

Seventhly, has it pleased the Lord to allow Satan freedom to do battle against you, buffet you, shoot his fiery darts at you, torment you with insinuations and frightening thoughts, and turn you so to speak upside down? Does your own heart bring forth unbelieving thoughts? Is your soul terrified by the wrath of God, by the fear of death, or by other unfounded fears that one thing or the other will come to pass? Attentively consider these promises and endeavor to attain to, and have a quiet soul,

(1) In reference to the assaults of Satan: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20); "And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee" (Zechariah 3:2).

(2) In reference to the wrath of God: "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee ... so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee" (Isaiah 54:8-9).

(3) In reference to the fear of death: "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:15); "... then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). Unfounded fears relative to what may come to pass are to be considered as birds which fly overhead. Do not act as a prophet, for you do not know what will come to pass; direct your way according to the Word of God; sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.

Eighthly, are you entirely destitute of everything, void of all spiritual good, and do you grieve over this emptiness? Man cannot live unless he has something in which he can find his delight. To possess a soul which cannot find delight within itself, and then not to have nor expect anything from without which could fill such an empty, weeping soul, is unbearable and as a hell. The things of the world cannot satisfy the soul. Yes, the inordinate desire for worldly goods even grieves the souls of godly persons. The soul must have Jesus as her ransom and righteousness, God as her Father, living communion with God, and the sweet influences of the illuminating, comforting and sanctifying graces of the Holy Ghost -- in one word, the possession and enjoyment of all the benefits of the covenant of grace. The empty soul greatly yearns for this and painfully perceives

that which is lacking. There is an intense hunger and thirst; the soul perishes for hunger, becomes feeble, and faints. She cries out for spiritual bread and invigorating water; she succumbs by reason of her longing, but does not obtain what she longs for. She seeks but does not find; prays but does not receive -- poor, starving soul! Hear the promise and strengthen yourself with this until the soul be filled, for she will be filled. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6); "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1); "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Revelation 21:6); "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink" (John 7:37).

Ninthly, are you conscious of the power of corruption? Do the lusts of the flesh war against the soul? Are you losing the battle? Do vain imaginations and sinful stirrings of the heart have the upper hand? Does your most besetting sin manifest itself strongly, take you captive, penetrate, and rage furiously? Does it make you despair? Do you think that in your entire lifetime you will not be able to overcome, since your soul is wounded time and again? Does sin rob you of all your liberty before God, and of all your desire and spiritual life? How must you persevere? Consider the following promises: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27); "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33); "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31); "Let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3:10); "... for the Lord ... hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle" (Zechariah 10:5); "And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded" (Zechariah 10:5). The Use of the Promises in Cross-bearing and unto Sanctification

These and similar promises have a twofold use. They comfort so that believers with courage and joy may willingly take all manner of crosses upon them, bear them with ease, and assure themselves of an advantageous and glorious outcome. They also have a sanctifying effect, since by faith in the promises one continually lives in the presence of the Lord, acknowledges Him as omnipotent, good, reconciled in Christ Jesus, and true. With quiet trust one depends upon Him and remains steadfast in all that transpires, as seeing Him who is invisible. This is the fountain of pure holiness, and we thus become partakers of the divine nature through the promises. Therefore, whatever your condition may be, take hold of a promise, appropriate this to yourself as having been made to you by the God of truth, present it before the Lord and with humility and boldness beseech Him in Christ Jesus for the fulfillment of this His promise. Then remain focused upon these promises and be exercised with them. Let them be your strength in the battle, since you will most certainly obtain what is promised.

God may possibly have decreed a long period of time between the initial moment when the desire concerning a certain matter arose in your heart and the moment of fulfillment. Abraham had the promise that he would have a son from Sarah; the fulfillment was so long in coming, however, that it was no longer probable. What a long time span there was ere David received the kingdom!

Zacharias had long before prayed for a son in his youth and his prayer was heard in his old age. We must thus not always expect the promised matter as soon as the promise comes to mind, nor should we become discouraged if it is not fulfilled immediately; instead, patient waiting is necessary at such a time. The Benefits of Waiting Patiently for the Fulfillment of the Promises

It is much more beneficial to wait patiently upon the postponed fulfillment of promises than to receive the promised matter immediately, for this will bring the soul into a holy frame and teach her to exercise many virtues. Among them are the following:

(1) One is not always capable of receiving the promised matter; rather, the Lord by way of postponement prepares the soul to be able to receive and make use of the promised matter properly. Similarly, one first cleanses and prepares a vessel before putting a delightful beverage in it, so that it will not leak out of a crack or assimilate the peculiar taste of the vessel. Such preparation is already the process of being sanctified.

(2) Postponement teaches one to believe without seeing and to acknowledge God as being truthful, even though He does not fulfill the promise as yet. This is a holy frame and is at such a time more beneficial to you than the promised matter itself. Yes, at times the promised matter itself is given, although in a different manner than you had imagined.

(3) Postponement teaches one to know and acknowledge God as being sovereign and only wise, who makes all things beautiful in His time. To be thus exercised is holiness and God-glorifying.

(4) Postponement will humble you, causing you to see your unworthiness and to understand that God will not give it to you for your sake. It will cause you to say: "I am not worthy of the least mercy; I am not worthy that God would make the least promise to me, a worm. Since, however, He has promised such great matters to me, should I then not rejoice and humbly anticipate them?"

(5) Postponement causes one to yearn for the Lord; it causes one to wait, to be quiet, and to be content with the present. It causes one to rejoice in the promise as if he possessed the matter already, considering Him to be faithful who has promised it, and glorifying Him in doing so. Are such spiritual frames not holy? Would you not prefer that God would postpone the fulfillment of the promises somewhat in order to attain to such frames, rather than that God would immediately give the promises without them?

(6) Postponement makes the soul more grateful when the desired matter arrives, causing the soul to rejoice all the more and to preserve it more carefully. Therefore be neither sorrowful nor discouraged. Do not cast everything away when the Lord postpones the fulfillment of the promise. Rather, endeavor in this way to attain the above-mentioned spiritual frame, and to be sanctified thereby. To be exercised both with and relative to the promises, and to wait for their fulfillment, causes the soul to be drawn away from worldly things, keeps her engaged in transaction with God, and -- without noticing this -- brings the soul into a more spiritual frame. Such a sanctified condition will spontaneously and without much effort engender various virtues. You will rest in the Lord, rejoice in Him, thank Him, acknowledge Him, and glorify Him in all His perfections in Christ Jesus. Those that honor Him He will honor. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:4-5); "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalms 27:14).

Observing the Time and Manner of Fulfillment

It does not suffice to focus only on the promises, to appropriate them in Christ, and to wait patiently upon the fulfillment. Rather, it is also very necessary and beneficial that you take careful notice when and in which manner a promise is fulfilled, and then subsequently bring to remembrance the previous fulfillment of the promise. Yes, you should record the fulfillment of each promise, along with its specific circumstances, so that you may have a record of them -- a record which one ought to read frequently. David gives us an example by saying, "And forget not all His benefits" (Psalms 103:2). Hezekiah remembered the fulfillment of the promises. "What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it" (Isaiah 38:15). Moses recorded the precise moment of fulfillment: "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:41). Joshua reminded Israel of this: "And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He sware unto their fathers ... there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:44-45). This must convict us of our negligence. When the godly are in great need or have a strong desire because of other difficulties, their prayers and seeking are heartfelt. They will then bring general and specific promises before the Lord and strengthen themselves with them. When God fulfills these promises, however, they may momentarily give thanks, but little notice is given to the fulfillment of that promise and it is much less remembered. It is one thing to acknowledge that our prayers have been answered and another thing to give heed to the fulfillment of God's promises -- the first acknowledges the goodness of God, whereas the latter His veracity. As far as answers to our prayers are concerned, one must not only note the answers to these prayers -- which we shall discuss comprehensively in a subsequent volume -- but one must also note the fulfillment of the promises. Take, for example, the following two promises: "And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, " (Psalms 50:15); "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do" (John 14:13). A believer in taking hold of the Lord on the basis of these promises (as pertaining to his present need and desire), is enlivened by praying believingly and assures himself of the fulfillment of these promises in subjection to the will of God. When God grants the desired matter, then there is an answer to prayer as well as the fulfillment of the promise; the believer must therefore note and remember both. If one were to take note of the fulfillment each time and record this in a register -- together with a description of the trial, the strong desire, earnest prayers, the making use of the promises, and furthermore add to this the Lord's fulfillment of these promises -- it would frequently cause us to sink away in amazement and give us special freedom to request the promised benefits of the Lord. It would strengthen us in an extraordinary measure to trust in God and with what assurance one would expect the fulfillment of the general and special promises! The Misapplication of Promises

Question: It will be beneficial to answer the following question: Is it not possible to apply a promise wrongly to one's self?

Answer: There are no promises for the unconverted in the Bible. They deceive themselves, regardless of what promises they may appropriate to themselves. These will not be fulfilled, for they are "without Christ, being ... strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope" (Ephesians 2:12). Only believers are the "heirs of promise" (Hebrews 6:17). All the benefits of the covenant of grace are for them and will most certainly be given them. If they are exceptionally

desirous for a given spiritual matter, then they, in the name of Christ, may not only in a heartfelt manner request this of God in prayer, but they may also consider those promises of God which pertain to the matter in question as having been made to them -- which is also true when a general promise is applied to this matter. They may humbly remind God of this, earnestly pray for fulfillment, and remain assured that this promise will indeed be fulfilled for them, while subjecting themselves to the will of God as far as time, measure, and manner is concerned. A believing supplicant cannot deceive himself in this.

It is somewhat different in regard to desires pertaining to bodily matters. The godly also have the promises of this present life. God also promises to support them in the bearing of their cross, in deliverance to their benefit, and that they will be provided for as far as food and clothing are concerned. They, in subjection to God's will, may and must strengthen themselves with these promises and expect their fulfillment insofar as it is needful and beneficial unto salvation, for it is His way to lead the elect to glory in a way of many tribulations. A believer may have inordinate desires for a specific temporal matter of which he has no need in his station of life -- be it either that this matter at first suddenly comes to mind, or that, due to circumstances it gradually takes hold of him. The excessive desire for this matter prevents submission and causes him to imagine that he will either be delivered or obtain a matter which he desires excessively, although it has not been promised by God but he has promised himself. It can happen that a Scripture passage will suddenly come to mind, be it during waking or sleeping hours, appearing to be a revelation or promise of God to us. One might then apply certain Scripture passages of which one knows quite well that the promises they contain were made specifically to certain individuals such as Abraham, David, or others -- and then made under different and specific circumstances. Due to our strong desire, however, we appropriate them to ourselves as if they had been made by God to us by way of special application, and as if we may draw a conclusion therefrom in reference to our inordinate desire. One is strengthened in this opinion due to perceiving strong motions of the heart toward God, in love and in a lively acknowledgement of His goodness. One has intimate communion with God, is able to pray and exercise faith in Christ, and finds himself in a godly frame, be it with or without reference to the desired matter. Yes, one does not desire this matter if it is not according to the will of God; and one is quiet and in subjection. The matter resurfaces, however, and it is as if God gives renewed assurance, and in a lively manner holds His omnipotence before them. This causes such persons to be ensnared for years and very much impedes them in being at liberty as far as their condition and walk is concerned. The outcome is that the matter is not obtained and one must come to the conclusion that he has wrongly applied a promise to himself due to an excessive desire for a given matter.

Question: It must be asked here how such a wrong notion can engender love, hope, and faith in communion with God; or would this be imaginary as well?

Answer: No, this spiritual frame of the soul in a believer, and the exercises issuing forth from this, are not imaginary but are in truth. They are according to the Word, unto God, and through Christ. They do not issue forth from an erroneous notion, but from the spiritual life of the soul which was enlivened by a lively faith in God's goodness, truth, and omnipotence, although the situation to which it was applied was erroneous. God will at times allow such errors to be to the advantage of believers -- not by virtue of the error itself, but according to His good hand over them. "All things work together for good" (Romans 8:28). It is not always necessary that a person have a special

promise in order to be assured of the fulfillment of the promises. He may and must, however, also hold before himself the general promises, take hold of them, and relate the fulfillment of the promises to them when the Lord causes him earnestly to pray for a matter and to wrestle with such promises as: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6); "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psalms 145:19); "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalms 81:10). These can be impressed upon the heart in such a lively manner -- being applied to a special need or desire -- that one receives the strong assurance that God will do it and give it, so that he is strengthened by it and encouraged to take hold of it. The Lord will then also grant our desire -- be it immediately, some time thereafter, or by the giving of a different solution. Since this fulfillment nevertheless relates to our desire and wrestling with the promises, one must then consider it to be a fulfillment of the promises.

One can also go too far in this, however. It can be that the passions are stirred too much, either as far as the time is concerned (desiring the matter too readily), or as far as measure and manner are concerned, so that one cannot subject himself to the wise government of God. Yes, with some beginning Christians, it is as if the time, measure, and manner were but extenuating circumstances; they wish to take hold of the promises according to their perception, desires, and prayers. This is foolishness, for it would be as if a farmer were to desire the seed to spring forth as soon as he sowed it -- as if he would harvest the wheat before it was ripe. A wise and more advanced Christian is more concerned about the wise and sovereign will of God than about the fulfillment of his desires. In such a frame he prays, believes the promises, and submissively waits for their fulfillment. To be submissive is not the same as renouncing, devaluating, or nearly abandoning the promises. Rather, it is an enlargement of the promise, since it will be fulfilled in a better and more beneficial way than if our passionate desires were fulfilled. How often there is perplexity upon receiving one's desire, as was true for Israel upon receiving the quails! How frequently we must thank the Lord for not giving us our desire, subsequently perceiving that it would not have been good for us! Therefore, believe the promises, expect their fulfillment, and joyfully leave the time, measure, and manner to the Lord. You will then trust as a child and be established. Take the following text to heart: "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Psalms 107:43). The Christian's Obligation to Walk Godly Among Men

It is not sufficient to lead a godly life in isolation, but a Christian must manifest himself to the world and within the church. He will thus glorify God in his station, be of benefit to his neighbor, and adorn the church.

Man has an innate inclination toward fellowship, but grace is necessary to make proper use of such associations among people. Some believers (I am not discussing the unconverted here) have too little association with people, be it that they are overwhelmed with domestic affairs, or that they are listless, and, so to speak, have lost all vigor due to the feebleness of their languishing spiritual life. It can also be their experience that they do not behave themselves among men as they ought, and generally come home with an uneasy conscience; or that they continually want to be engaged in spiritual meditation, thus manifesting that at best they desire to live for themselves, having no concern for the honor of God, the glory of the church, and the salvation of souls. Such persons are generally rewarded with darkness, a weakening of habitual grace, and bondage to

sin. They will often deviate toward a religion which is of a more natural kind (although they think it to be more spiritual), which either is due to true spiritual life being darkened in them or because they do not possess it at all.

Others spend too much time with people, neglect their calling, run from the one to the other, know not where to spend their time, and thus become lazy, engage in gossiping, and do nothing. Instead of edifying and being edified, they neither edify themselves nor others, but cause reproach to come upon the church and themselves.

It is God's command that we intermingle with other people. "Let your light so shine before men" (Matthew 5:16); "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles" (1 Peter 2:12). It is the duty of a Christian to confess Jesus and to give expression to the life of Jesus in our walk. It is our duty to gain interest with our talent, to be instrumental in the conversion of people, and not only to be interested in our own advantage. We must be able to say, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me" (Isaiah 8:18). We should be like sheep which come up from the washing, whereof everyone bears twins, and among whom none is barren. How else, except by having contact with people, could the church be multiplied and built up? How else could the light, holiness, and excellency of the church become manifest unless people intermingle with others? However, to that end we must take special care that our conversation be consistent with our Christianity.

It is therefore, first of all, necessary that you have and maintain a soul which is pure and undefiled, fully devoted to God, and finds her existence in communion with God. You will then -- as was true for Nehemiah -- be able to speak with men while simultaneously praying unto God (Nehemiah 2:4-5). It is with such intent that you must leave the home, and in order to preserve such a condition within, you must pray each time when going out. He who in the solitude of his home is not exercised in continually turning to God, walking with a perfect heart, or acknowledging the Lord in all his ways; who in believing union with the Lord Jesus does not strive to cleanse the heart from world-conformity, vanity, cleaving to sinful lusts, and a continual thinking upon vain imaginations; and who does not continually exercise himself to be of a spiritual disposition -- such a person, when in the company of and engaged in conversation with others, will not be fit to maintain this good disposition which as yet he has, although he be beset with the corruptions mentioned before. The good frame of heart will readily vanish and you will not have within yourself a fountain bringing forth all manner of spiritual matters to your personal benefit and that of your neighbor. Instead, you will frequently speak of spiritual matters for the sake of conversation, doing so, however, without inner warmth and without causing the hearts of others to burn within them. Yes, you will even become engaged in worldly conversation, and upon arriving home your spiritual frame will have vanished and you will have a restless conscience. Therefore, you must especially endeavor to have a pure heart. Everyone must do so according to the measure of grace which he has received, be it that one is either a child in Christ or more advanced. You must not be silent about spiritual matters merely because you are but a child and without great gifts. On the contrary, the language of a child is often charming. Also little ones have received a small talent with which they must seek to gain interest.

Secondly, you must deliberately seek to be free from both the love and fear of man, so that you thereby neither stoop to their level, nor are prevented to either speak or be silent in a manner as

befits a follower of Christ. You must especially endeavor to strive to maintain the soul's disposition of seeking secret fellowship with God. It is difficult to search out how subtly the love and fear of man will affect the heart. In solitude you may consider yourself to be free from being in bondage to man, perceiving their insignificance, and knowing that they can neither speak nor move outside of the determinate counsel of God. You know by experience that you cannot depend on man, and yet the love and fear of man so easily creeps in. What is the cause of this? It is self-love and a desire to be esteemed and honored. This begets the fear that you will not conduct yourself wisely enough, as well as a desire to be well-liked. Oh, much that is good is spoiled by this idol, and how much edification is prevented in this way!

Thirdly, it must be our only objective either to edify -- according to the measure of grace we may have (however small it may be) -- or to be edified. To that end it is necessary that you yourself select certain individuals (who are the most suitable subjects for our gifts) for the purpose of instructing them, leading them to Christ, rebuking and exhorting them -- or else persons by whom we ourselves can make the most progress. Experience will guide you in this. If you are in the company of others, be it by appointment or accidentally, or if you are alone with a certain individual, you must take careful note of everyone's behavior in order that you may refrain from that which is undesirable in them, and learn that which is attractive and pleasant in them. If you are in the presence of a wise and spiritual man, you ought to be silent when he speaks; however, if he is silent, you must then give him the opportunity to speak. If you are in the presence of an ignorant man, you must give him some instruction; if he is weak, you must strengthen him; if he lives in sin, you must exhort and rebuke him; and if he mourns, you must comfort him. Thus, you will experience that you yourself will first and foremost benefit from your speaking. If you are in the presence of those who are like-minded, in sweet love and mutual familiarity you must speak together of spiritual matters, thus strengthening and stirring up one another (Romans 1:11-12).

Fourthly, if you are in the presence of an unconverted person or with people who espouse an erroneous religion, you must (without affectation and pride, and nonverbally) by your manner of speech and the subject matter of your conversation convey that every righteous person is more excellent than his neighbor, that the righteous are of a more excellent spirit, and that there is a distance between them as great as there is between light and darkness, life and death, and the children of God and the children of the world. Along with such a disposition one must manifest humility, self-denial, common love, modesty, and obligingness, so that in parting from them (you must not be there long -- it is not safe there) you will leave behind some conviction in their heart. I am not suggesting that you must always speak of spiritual matters; a wise person will know both time and manner. A Christian may also speak of worldly and civil matters; but then he must be on guard not to do so in a vain manner, but all conversation must be moral, dignified, and in moderation.

Fifthly, wherever you are, see to it that in all things you conduct yourself properly, that is, not gruffly but in a friendly manner, not being silent while only listening to be a judge. We should be talkative, but not verbose, and not engage in gossip. We should be humble, wise, and dignified, and in all things let the Lord Jesus be our example. May the Lord lead you in this sweet and holy pathway, cause you to progress in it, and at last translate you into eternal glory -- there to live in perfect union with God, and to be satisfied with joy and purity. There strife, faith, and hope will come to an end, and nothing but love will prevail. Amen.

048. Chapter 43: A Warning Exhortation Against Pietists, Quietists, and All Who in a Similar ...

----- CHAPTER FORTY-THREE ----- A Warning Exhortation Against Pietists, Quietists, and All Who in a Similar Manner Have Deviated to a Natural and Spiritless Religion Under the Guise of Spirituality

It pleases the Lord to glorify Himself upon earth by separating unto Himself, from all other men, His own people -- His congregation or church. It furthermore pleases Him to unite them by a mutual spiritual bond, give them His Holy Word, and let them shine as lights in a dark world. It even pleases Him to dwell among them with His gracious and blessed presence to reveal His perfections in the face of Jesus Christ, to enable them to persevere against all the devices and violent assaults of the devil and the world, and at last, to translate them into His eternal glory. The truth which has been entrusted to His church has many enemies. These enemies will either attempt to eradicate the church by external violence, or they will seek to obscure the truth by introducing numerous erroneous doctrines. False doctrines relate either to matters of faith and confession, or to the practice of life -- to either the truth or the practice of it. Such is the distinction which is generally made, but in essence they are all contrary to the truth. Erroneous doctrine results in erroneous practice and erroneous practice is intermingled with erroneous doctrine. If you observe someone who errs in either aspect, you may readily consider him to be in error in both areas. One must therefore be as careful and particular relative to the one as well as to the other, and be on guard against the one as well as the other.

God has brought the gospel to the heathen and has established His church among them, but there now seems to be a rapid return to heathendom. Ignorance covers the countenance of the church. All wisdom is now defined in relation to the knowledge of natural sciences and to eloquence. With the Epicureans men consider worldly pleasure to be their heaven and felicity. The motto is: Eat and drink, and joyfully indulge yourself, for after death there is no pleasure. [Note: This is the translation of the Dutch rhyme: "Eet en drinkt, en speelt met vreugd, want na den dood is geen geneugt."] Or with the Stoics one considers absence of feeling to be happiness; that is, to be quiet and satisfied as a result of the impossibility of going contrary to their fabricated fatum (or eternal order), which must therefore be allowed to run its course. Others follow the example of religious pagans, some of whom, without knowing Christ, strive to cease from doing evil, and endeavor to do that which is good. Other religious pagans occupy themselves with meditating and speculating about God, finding their delight and religious practice therein.

Many so-called Christians follow the latter, for they have a natural impression of God, considering man's felicity to consist in the knowledge of and communion with God. Since such persons are ignorant of beholding God in truth as well as having true communion with God in Christ, considering this to be too lofty, difficult, impossible, and unattainable, they deviate to natural speculation, imagining this to be extraordinarily elevated and spiritual in nature.

Various Forms of Natural Spirituality Identified

Among those who espouse blind popery -- whose religion does not differ much from paganism -- there have always been those who have rejected creature-worship and who have written much about internal religion, elevating this as highly as their natural intellect would permit them. These persons are referred to as mystical writers (that is, hidden writers) since the general public did not achieve such a level of contemplation, such elevation of spirit having been concealed from them. Today many are very fond of the word mystical, as if it implies a high level of spirituality.

We do not particularly consider Johannes Tauler to be among them. Although he has presented many matters in a spiritual and soul-moving manner, they are intermingled with fanaticism and gross errors. We also do not consider Thomas à Kempis to be among them, having written that excellent treatise *The Imitation of Christ* in three volumes. The fourth volume is not authored by him; it is idolatrous and has been added by someone else. However, both Tauler and à Kempis have little to say about the Lord Jesus as being the ransom and righteousness of sinners -- about how He, by a true faith, must be used unto justification and in approaching unto God, beholding in His countenance the glory of God, and practicing true holiness as originating in Him and in union with Him. Readers must note this about both authors, keeping this in mind when they read them. They will then be able to benefit from their writings.

After the time of the Reformation many strayed further from the truth than the very popery from which they had departed. Many old heresies surfaced, adorned with a new garment -- each having its own followers. Such has also been the case with practical religion. Numerous imaginations originating in empty minds, natural speculations, deceptions of Satan, dreams, and zealotry go under the name of mysticism. These differ so much in their views, and are so far removed from the genuine practice of godliness -- both within and outside of popery -- that it would grieve me and the reader to even write or read anything about it. In Germany Jacob Boehme has the most followers, and in England the Quakers have arisen. The latter are called by this name because they begin to quake when they, in an elated state, think of God and divine matters (this occasionally may happen to those who are genuinely godly due to being in awe of God), intimating that they are then receiving the Holy Spirit. Their numerous fanatical practices are common knowledge.

Some years ago *De Geestelijke Leidsman* (*The Spiritual Guide*) by Michael de Molinos (a Spaniard) was published, in which he rejected all external exercises of religion and proposed that one need only be in a quiet and introverted frame God-ward in order to be irradiated by Him. He delineated three levels of meditation. The first consisted in a seeking of emotional frames, or reflections engendering these sweet and emotional frames -- this he rejected. The second level he referred to as rational reflection, the intellect being engaged in reflecting upon God -- seeking to know, approve of, and practice the truth. This was for him also too crude and too inferior. The third level was the elimination of all external activity, including the activity of the intellect and any spiritual elation. This would consist in being totally divorced from self, being elevated above all things, being fully united with God, and in passive reflection to lose one's self fully in God, thus worshipping Him in pure love. This is how far the illusions and vain speculations of the natural man -- who is void of the Spirit and ignorant of God -- can go. Since he excluded all external and spiritual motions and promoted quietness in both areas, his followers, many of whom are to be

found among Papists and various sects, are called Quietists, that is, those who are quiet or at rest.

Some years after Molinos, François de Salignac de Lamoignon, Archbishop of Cambrai, published *De Verklaring van de Grondstellingen der Heiligen, of het Inwendige (Geestelijk) Leven* (The Exposition of the Fundamental Propositions of the Saints, or, Inner [Spiritual] Life). It is truly not a spiritual book. Fabricated spiritual matters -- which are neither to be found in Holy Writ, nor in the practice of the saints -- are elevated in a natural manner to as high a level as natural reflection can possibly bring them. He is of the same mold as Molinos and the previous mystical writers among the Papists. They teach a love (or lovelessness), a beholding of God and union with God to consist in some nonessential fancy contrary to the Word of God. This Word teaches us to behold God in the face of Christ as He reveals Himself in the work of redemption. As such God is known and believed by the truly regenerate and true believers. This renders them joy in, and love for, God, causing them to glorify God. The difference between the self-denial, love, beholding of God, etc., of the mystics and of the truly godly consists in this: The mystics comprehend, say, and do everything according to their natural intellect, fantasy, and imagination, doing so without the Spirit. They do not make use of the Lord Jesus (that is, as a ransom, and righteousness unto justification and peace), as being the only way of approach unto God, and unto true and genuine sanctification. Such exercises and this way are hidden from them. Those, however, who are truly godly, regenerate, and who truly believe, live by faith and not by sight. In all things they make use of the Lord Jesus. They come to the Father by Him, accustom themselves to behold God in the face of Jesus Christ, do everything as in the presence of God, and walk before God's countenance in humility, fear, love, and obedience. These are the old paths. From this you can observe that the difference between the mystics and the truly godly is as the difference between imagination and truth; between being natural and without the Spirit and being led by the Spirit; between worldly and heavenly; between seeking an unknown God and serving the true God; and between being engaged without, and contrary to, the Holy Scriptures (dabbling with invisible things), and living according to the written Word of God. A truly godly person remains humble and serves God in Spirit and truth, and is thus kept from the temptation of entertaining high-minded and fabricated imaginations.

Pietism Identified and Defined

Some years ago there was a sizeable movement among the Lutherans in Germany toward religiosity. Of some we believe that it was in truth, but with the majority it was but an illusion. This counterfeit religiosity has in some places also affected those of Reformed persuasion. People of the world, due to observing that many of them turned to a godly lifestyle, called them Pietists, thinking to offend them in this way. Instead, they, being ungodly, actually condemned themselves in doing so, and placed a crown upon the head of the truly godly whom they intended to offend -- for to be a Pietist means to be a godly person. In desiring to warn everyone against the Pietists and to give some direction in this respect, we do not have the truly godly in mind at all. Far, far be this from me! May the Lord bless them and give them more light to see the Lutheran error and to turn away from it. Rather, I have in view those who stimulate various fictitious notions and errors, such as mystics, Quietists, heretics, fanatics, David-Jorists, Boehmists, Quakers, and all such individuals who in our day are known as Pietists.

Every heretic has something whereby the godly are rebuked and convinced of their neglect. There is something which makes them attractive and which causes a godly but unstable person to vacillate, being desirous for those delightful matters which they hear being proposed. The most attractive aspects presented by these people are 1) the contemplation upon God and how to practice this continually, 2) speaking of the denial of self, and 3) the delightfulness of love. When these matters are presented in a most charming manner, they will find entrance into the hearts of those who are naturally pious and of those who are truly godly. They perceive that to know God, to walk in the light of His countenance, and to be united with God constitutes felicity. They perceive that self-love is still so deeply rooted in their hearts, causing them so much sorrow. It is their whole desire to be delivered from this. They perceive that love is the purest, sweetest, most necessary and most holy of the graces. When they hear these matters presented in an excellent and most eloquent manner, they come, so to speak, in a state of ecstasy and there is an inclination of the heart to believe that these speakers possess these matters. This causes them to be tossed back and forth as to whether they should join themselves to them. However, the thorn hidden in their speaking is that the speaker both speaks and understands everything in a natural manner -- that is, void of the Spirit -- whereas you conceive of it in a spiritual sense. By his speaking, he would draw you away from this spiritual understanding and the desire to enjoy and do that which is spiritual -- drawing you away to a natural and unspiritual understanding and activity, and at the same time into other errors which he initially conceals. Do not expect me to enumerate and refute all their errors both in doctrine and practice. That is an impossible task, since almost everyone espouses a different sentiment. What the one says is denied by the other. Rather, I shall state and defend some propositions whereby the errors will be evident and whereby a believer, holding fast to those truths, will be delivered from their temptations.

PROPOSITION 1 A Christian must have a great love for the truth; all splendid pretense void of love for the truth is deceit.

First, the truth is the way of salvation as revealed by God in His Word. Whatever God has revealed about Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, regeneration, saving faith, true holiness, and the manner in which God wishes to be served -- all that is truth. "... Thy word is truth" (John 17:17); "... after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Ephesians 1:13).

There is no other way unto salvation but one. He who misses this one way, will go lost; one cannot be saved with all religions. Whatever is contrary to this truth is a lie and from the devil, who "abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Secondly, God has given this truth to His one and only church in order to preserve, proclaim, and confess it. "... the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15); "... because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2).

Thirdly, this truth is the seed of regeneration; that is, it is the means whereby man is drawn out of darkness into marvelous light. "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1:18); "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). He who therefore neither knows nor has the truth cannot be regenerated. If he is not regenerated, however, all his speaking about spiritual things is but the work of nature and he is entirely devoid of the truth.

Fourthly, the truth is the only means whereby saving faith is to be obtained. Saving faith is the extrinsic exercise -- a going out of self -- of a soul perplexed by sin and judgment, and of a soul who yearns for reconciliation, holiness, and communion with God. It is the going out of the heart after the Lord Jesus, He being the ransom and the righteousness of God. She receives Him, surrenders to Him, entrusts herself to Him, and lives and grows in Him. This faith is founded on the truth; without this truth there is no faith. "... how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God ... that is, the word of faith" (Romans 10:14; Romans 10:17; Romans 10:8).

Fifthly, the truth is the means, fountain, and rule from which holiness issues forth and according to which it must be regulated. Holiness is the loving observance of truth. "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:14-15). The Lord Jesus when praying for holiness for His own, beseeches that it may come about by the truth. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). If the heart is to be purified, it must occur by means of the truth. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit" (1 Peter 1:22). He who lives in sin is a slave and servant of sin. He who is set free from sin is set free by the truth -- a truth comprehended and known well. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). To live holily is to walk in the truth. "... even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:3-4). Someone who neither knows nor has the truth cannot be holy. Whatever he manifests is but the natural work of an unconverted person. Every step which deviates from the truth is impure, and causes impurity in the way of holiness.

Sixthly, God demands from believers that they will do everything in their power to protect the truth and to engage in battle on its behalf so that nothing of the truth is lost or obscured. A spiritual warrior must himself be girded with the truth. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" (Ephesians 6:14). Being thus armed, he must keep an eye on the truth, not permitting that anyone infringe upon it in any point. "... it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3); "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). We must follow the example of the apostle Paul who said, "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13:8). Whenever anyone would undermine the truth, he would immediately stand ready. "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Galatians 2:5). If we love the truth, we shall hate all that is opposed to the truth, however insignificant it may be -- for one error does not remain isolated, but multiplies beyond what one could imagine. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines" (Song of Solomon 2:15); "I hate every false way" (Psalms 119:104).

One cannot trifle with the truth. It is too precious a gift from God and God takes notice of how we deal with it. If you love the truth in a heartfelt and genuine manner, the Lord will give more light. If, however, you are cold, listless, indifferent, and careless toward the truth, you must expect the wrath and judgment of God. Impress upon your heart 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, "... because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed

not the truth." Therefore, from now on do not expend so little energy toward the truth.

Eighthly, not only is it contrary to God's will to have fellowship with error, but also with those who espouse error. The church is a garden enclosed (Song of Solomon 4:12). It is separated from all other men, whatever religion they may espouse. If heretics arise in her midst, they must be cast out. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. I know thy works ... and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants" (Revelation 2:6; Revelation 2:20).

Thus, every member must be on guard against intermingling with those who espouse false doctrine. Hear what the command is: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15; 2 Corinthians 6:17). If you stand in awe of God's majesty, if you tremble at His Word, and if the truth is precious to you, be on guard against false doctrine, false teachers, and for men who are mired in error, however attractive they may appear to be. Let your heart be governed by the exhortation of the apostle: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2 John 1:10); that is, have no fellowship with him and avoid him so that you will not be drawn away from the truth by him in the least. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17-18).

How necessary it is to carefully heed this proposition! Compare yourself to this. Do you have such a tender love for the truth? Is it that precious to you? Do you joyfully give thanks to God for it? Do you live according to it? Do you engage in battle on its behalf? Do you indeed abhor all error and those who espouse it? Are you fearful and concerned about associating with such persons? If such is the case with you, then you are not in danger of being misled by the elevated language of the Pietists, for you will immediately perceive whether they have and promote either the truth or error, and whether they have love for the truth. This will become evident when you will have directed them away from their lofty language to the foundational truths of religion. You will experience that in this respect they are either ignorant and therefore not willing to discuss it, or that they espouse several errors -- the one this error and the other that error -- and you will have sufficient grounds to depart from them out of love for the truth. You will perceive that all their lofty language is not from the Spirit, but rather, proceeds from the natural mind. When you examine their practice, you will perceive that they have no love for the truth, because they maintain equal fellowship with Papists, Socinians, Anabaptists, etc., and are unconcerned about their association with people from various religions. They thus unite the truth and the lie, light and darkness. If they do not say so -- as many do -- they nevertheless show by their practice that one must tolerate each other's sentiment, must neither judge each other about this nor defend it, but must rather practice love and more love. Is this not tantamount to rejecting, despising, and not loving God's truth, and to be opposed to the truth contrary to God's command as stated above? A person with

whom we are not personally acquainted can be known from the company he keeps; therefore, depart from and forsake all such whose deeds are the fruit of nature and who engage in elevated discourses, since they have not even reached the first step. You who are spiritual ought not to be shaken by their speaking of spiritual matters which is void of the Spirit and which conceals the rejection of the truth.

You of little faith -- who also have but little knowledge of the truth, for which you are to be rebuked -- be on your guard, for you are in the greatest danger. You have a desire for spirituality, to know God, to have communion with Him, and to walk in love. You grieve that you are still so far from this. When you hear such individuals speak of those elevated matters, you become enamored due to the spiritual principle within you. You are torn as to whether you should follow them, neither seeing the hidden thorn nor the ultimate outcome of such religion -- not perceiving that it is all but a natural speculation about God and interacting with God. All of this is contrary to Scripture and is not the way and manner in which God leads His children. Remain faithful to the Word, seek God in Christ in all simplicity of heart, and be satisfied with the measure of grace which God gives you. Their practice would draw you away from that which is truly spiritual to the realm of the natural. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

PROPOSITION 2 A Christian must have great love and esteem for the church. Who can reflect upon the church without being ignited in love toward her? Of all that is found upon earth, she excels in glory, purity, and excellency. What would the world be without the church other than Sodom? Yes, the world would not exist if there were no church. The church is "... the joy of the whole earth" (Psalms 48:2) and "... a praise in the earth" (Isaiah 62:7). It is the chief joy of God's children -- yes, it exceeds all that is joyful. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Psalms 137:5-6). All David's love, joy, care, and desire were focused upon the church. When he was driven away from her, he said, "My tears have been my meat day and night" (Psalms 42:3); "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech" (Psalms 120:5). His only desire upon earth was to be where the church was. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life" (Psalms 27:4). He rejoiced exceedingly when this was his portion. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem" (Psalms 122:1-2). May such a disposition of heart and such feelings for the church also be ours, for the church is the congregation of the living God (Romans 9:26). The world is divided into many kingdoms and each has its king -- the one more glorious and mightier than the other. The church is also a kingdom which is indeed in the world but not of the world, for it is the kingdom of heaven. God Himself is its King: "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us" (Isaiah 33:22). The Lord Jesus -- the Lord of glory, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords -- is their King. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Psalms 2:6).

God Himself has chosen the church out of all nations in order that she would be His property -- in contrast with the nations of the world: "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6). God Himself gathers this people together: "This people have I formed for Myself" (Isaiah 43:21); "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be

saved" (Acts 2:47). God Himself keeps a very close watch over her: "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isaiah 27:3); "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about" (Zechariah 2:8). Let the enemies freely devise and use all their devices and force against the church, but "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Woe to him who opposes the church of God, for "... he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zechariah 2:8). Who would not have the highest esteem for that church which has God and the Lord Jesus as King? How can one claim to fear and love God and love the church -- His children -- and not have esteem for her? "Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1).

Consider carefully who are to be found within her walls and you will then love the church. They are the saints of the Most High: "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom" (Daniel 7:18). They are "the saints that are in the earth, and ... the excellent" (Psalms 16:3). They are the elect and those who are purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. "... the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

They are those of whom it is said, "... for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9). They are the precious daughters of Zion who are glorious within, the children of God, the heirs of eternal life, cherished by God, the Lord Jesus, and true believers, as well as those who are justified and sanctified. Of them the apostle says, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). They are those whom God calls hephzi-bah, that is, "... the Lord delighteth in thee" (Isaiah 62:4). It is the church whose walls are called salvation and whose gates are called praise (Isaiah 60:18). If your heart is to have love and esteem for something, it must be the church. If you do not love the brethren, you certainly do not love God -- regardless of what you may say.

All that is glorious is to be found in the church. God dwells there in an extraordinary manner: "God is in the midst of her" (Psalms 46:5). The church is therefore called Jehovah Shammah, "The Lord is there" (Ezekiel 48:35). The Lord Jesus is present in His church and He Himself says of her, "These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Revelation 2:1). The Lord, by granting her radiant glory, makes His church glorious both internally and externally. "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold" (Psalms 45:13); "And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel 16:14). How Jacob stood in awe due to the presence of God in Bethel! (Genesis 28:16-17), as well as Moses when the Lord appeared to him in the burning bush (Exodus 3:4; Exodus 3:6). Who then would not stand in awe of the church where the Lord is present? Even the unconverted had great respect for her. "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them" (Acts 5:13). How much more should believers have high esteem for the church!

Take notice of the blessings and benefits which God bestows upon the church, and you will then love her -- they are beyond comprehension. "Truly God is good to Israel" (Psalms 73:1). Paul expresses this by the words "all" and "spiritual": "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians

1:3).

(1) There the Sun of Righteousness shines forth under whose wings there is healing (Malachi 4:2). The church is irradiated with light which is heavenly, begets joy, warms the heart, renders fruitful, and guides in the way. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isaiah 60:1-2). That light will show the way in such a clear and efficacious manner that even "fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8). "They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding" (Isaiah 29:24).

(2) There the Lord Jesus is given unto justification and sanctification. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1); "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isaiah 33:24).

(3) There the Holy Spirit is poured out upon its inhabitants. "Neither will I hide My face any more from them: for I have poured out My spirit upon the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 39:29). The Spirit guides them into all truth (John 16:13). "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

(4) There God gives shepherds who lead them. "And I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15). These shepherds give heed to everyone's conduct, and if there is someone who departs from the right way, they immediately make work of this and call out to them, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:21).

(5) It is there that God refreshes and rejoices His own. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High" (Psalms 46:4); "... all my springs are in Thee" (Psalms 87:7). There is safety and protection so that not one sheep goes lost: "... for upon all the glory shall be a defence" (Isaiah 4:5). Therefore those who are perplexed and in despair flee to the church to take refuge there. "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it" (Isaiah 14:32). I wish to state it comprehensively: "For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:3).

Add to this the delightful and beneficial activity of the church.

(1) There men sing the praises of the Lord. "... and in His temple doth every one speak of His glory" (Psalms 29:9).

There men serve the Lord with gladness and come before His presence with singing (Psalms 100:2).

(2) There men worship the Lord in humility and holy awe; there men bow toward the palace of His holiness (Psalms 5:7), and there are the "suppliants" (Zephaniah 3:10). "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalms 96:9).

(3) There the Lord is confessed and there men exclaim: "The Lord is God! The Lord Jesus is the only and complete Savior, and God's Word is the truth." There men exclaim, "Lo, this is our God" (Isaiah 25:9); there men offer "the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips

giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15). There every knee bows at the name of Jesus and every tongue confesses that "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:11). The apostle says concerning the church, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

(4) The church, shining forth with truth, holiness, her confession of the Lord Jesus, and her endeavors to make Him known, is the place where everyone may find refuge to serve God. "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths" (Isaiah 2:3).

(5) The church endeavors to be instrumental in the conversion of many souls. Who has ever been converted and who will ever be converted, except by the instrumentality of the mother, the church? "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:26). Relative to this it is said of the church: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the Highest Himself shall establish her" (Psalms 87:5).

(6) It is there that love is exercised both toward God and our neighbor. The congregation of Thessalonica so excelled in this that the apostle said, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thessalonians 4:9).

(7) There the weak are strengthened, the mourning comforted, the ignorant instructed, the wayfaring returned, and the slothful are stirred up. There men encourage each other while engaged in spiritual warfare, take the other by the hand, give them holy examples, and follow them.

Thus the church shines forth with holiness, by which the house of the Lord is adorned. Of the saints it is said, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness" (Psalms 110:3). Her appearance is thus "as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Song of Solomon 6:10). And even if the church is feeble in all things, she, nevertheless, possesses all things in truth; the measure does not change the quality. Silver which is covered with soot does not therefore lose its value but remains more precious than shining tin. Wheat does not lose its essential and nourishing qualities due to being mixed with much chaff on the threshing floor.

He who considers all this simultaneously, viewing the church from every dimension with a spiritual eye and heart, will not only be ignited with love for the congregation and, with ecstasy, stand in awe of the glory of the church, but he will also be provoked to holy wrath against all those who would dare to undertake anything which is detrimental to the church. The above will give sufficient reasons to be on guard against the delusions of the Pietists. They exert every effort to ruin the church -- if this were possible. They reject the church, church order, the divine commission of ministers, the ministry of the Word, the sacraments, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven. They thus make themselves guilty of the abominable sin of despising the congregation of God. "... or despise ye the church of God" (1 Corinthians 11:22). He who despises the church of God despises God Himself and the riches of His goodness, and will not escape the judgment of God. Even

though the one Pietist espouses this and another person again different heresies and errors, all of them holding to opinions of their own, they agree in this respect that their religion consists in stripping themselves as being nothing (in reference to God, that is), and in the contemplation upon an imaginary and fabricated God. They ascend in this as far as their natural perception will enable them, which to such darkened individuals appears as wondrous light and as being wondrously spiritual. Occasionally they come together to listen to someone speak of these matters. Their religion furthermore consists in manifesting an indiscriminate love for people of various sects -- even as far as the wallet is concerned. He who has no love for the church has no love for God. He who is engaged in battling the church is battling God and will endure His judgment. Take heed therefore that your salvation be dear to you and stay away from this sort of people, lest you be a partaker in battling the church of God. Attentively consider Deuteronomy 13:1-3, where God warns against such prophets who perform a miracle and who -- upon having gained esteem due to the coming about of this miracle -- then give counsel to serve other gods. The text says that God will then try them to see whether their heart is perfect before Him. This is applicable here, for they make a great display of spirituality and thereby gain entrance with the upright. They thus lead them away from the church and from true religion. Therefore you must, first of all, keep in mind what their objective is, and from that perspective judge their fair speeches. However, do not permit yourself to be ensnared by these fair speeches, nor to be tempted to the commission of the dreadful sin of leaving the church and engaging in battle against her. "He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30).

PROPOSITION 3 The Holy Scriptures are the only rule for doctrine and life. In the first proposition we have demonstrated how precious and lovely the truth is, and that he who loves the truth, hating all who deviate therefrom, will withdraw himself from all who depart from the truth -- and thus also from the Pietists. In the second proposition we have discussed the esteem and love which all lovers of the church have for the people or congregation of God from which the Pietists are separated. To this we shall now add the preciousness and loveliness of the Word of God, in which all saving truth is comprehended, upon which the church is built, and which God has given to the church for the purpose of preserving and spreading it. This the Pietists either reject or minimize.

God has caused the way of salvation (there being but one, which is hidden from the natural man) to be recorded so that His people would have a steadfast rule of doctrine and life, and be protected against the deceits of Satan. Satan brings forth much smoke and vapor from the pit of hell in order to obscure the truth and at times changes himself into an angel of light; that is, he imitates that which is of a most spiritual nature and causes it to be performed in a natural manner without the Spirit and without Christ. God has furthermore given such a record in order that the church be protected against the deceits of men who make use of craftiness, causing people to err in a subtle manner. He has also done so in order that everyone would be protected against his own heart which carries within it the seed of all heresy and error. This way of salvation, having thus been recorded, has been entrusted to the church in order that she would preserve it in its purity, transmit it from generation to generation and from nation to nation, proclaiming it everywhere unto the conversion of men, to lead the converted to the church, and to govern the faith and life of the members of the church. The Word of God is the foundation upon which the church is built (Ephesians 2:19-20), the insignia of the true church, the nourishment of the church, the only rule of faith and life, and the sword against the enemies who err and battle against the

truth -- it is everything to the church. There is no church without the Word and there is no Word without the church. As far as we are concerned, all esteem for and efficacy of the Word is contingent upon our acknowledgement of it being from God. It is contingent upon the fact that we receive it "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). It is truly the Word of the God of truth. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16); "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). The Spirit who has inspired the Word and causes believers to perceive, taste, and experience those matters contained in the Word, assures them of the divinity of that Word. He does this not only by means of its inherent evidences of divinity, but also by way of immediate operation in their hearts. "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit (who speaks in the Word) is truth" (1 John 5:6). Therefore with what reverence we ought to hear and read the Word! Isaiah therefore begins his prophecy with these words: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken" (Isaiah 1:2). With what an obedient heart we ought to hear and read the Word, saying, "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33)!

Since the Holy Scriptures have been inspired by the God of truth who cannot lie, and by the Holy Spirit of truth who leads into all truth, all that has been recorded in the Holy Scriptures is truth. All of Scripture is certain, sure, and infallible. We may depend on it -- and without reservation, vacillation, and in the full assurance of faith may rely upon it: "... the word of truth ... Thy law is the truth ... all Thy commandments are faithful" (Psalms 119:43;Psalms 119:142;Psalms 119:86). The Lord Jesus testifies of this: "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The apostle refers to it as "the word of the truth of the gospel" (Colossians 1:5). He who rejects the Word and does not believe it, rejects God and does not believe God, but rather (which is dreadful) considers God to be a liar. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John 5:10). Man, who with haughtiness of spirit does not receive the Word of God as being spoken by God -- and thus as being true and infallible -- will derive no benefit therefrom. "... for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16); "... but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2). In the Word, God reveals heavenly mysteries to His church; that is, the entire work of redemption by the Mediator Jesus Christ, and the manner whereby man is led to this redemption -- and then through the Mediator unto God. He also reveals the manner in which the Holy Spirit operates in the heart of the converted for illumination, comfort, sanctification, and eternal felicity, as well as the purpose for which He has given His Word. Therefore it is called, "... the gospel of your salvation" (Ephesians 1:13); "... the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16); "... the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15); "... the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

Nature is ignorant of such a way of salvation; neither angel nor man could have devised it. It is a mystery which can only be known by divine revelation. Concerning its power and motions, it can only be made known by the Holy Spirit who works in souls by means of the Word. In reference to this the Lord Jesus says, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matthew 13:11); and Paul states: "According to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets,

according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:25-26).

Even though a natural man reads and hears of the mysteries of the Word of God, he does not understand them unless God by His Spirit makes them known to his soul by immediate revelation. Those who are wise and prudent in natural matters think highly of the quickness of their intellect. They think that if anyone ought to understand mysteries, it ought to be them; they should be able to comprehend them; they are, nevertheless, blind as bats when it comes to spiritual matters. The apostle says concerning them: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). The apostle Jude (not Iscariot) says of the natural man who does not have the Spirit: "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves" (Jude 1:10). Since they do not understand the spiritual mysteries, but view them in an external sense and in a natural manner, they despise them as illusions and matters of no worth. Since their reason cannot penetrate to the pith of these truths, they therefore reject them and thus exclude themselves from heaven. The Pietists lack this spiritual light. They have natural light concerning God's majesty and the insignificance of the creature. They perceive that man's felicity consists in the beholding of God; and by means of the Holy Scriptures their natural light becomes increasingly clear. Since these persons do not understand the spiritual mysteries they occupy themselves with a natural beholding of God, imagining that their natural perceptions are wondrously spiritual, and far exceed the Word and that of those who are truly illuminated. Yet such perceptions are nothing but fabrications and illusions which deprive them of salvation. Not only do the Holy Scriptures contain mysteries, but they also contain all mysteries which God wills His children to know, and which are needful for their spiritual functioning here and the enjoyment of felicity hereafter. Therefore, to teach spiritual matters or spiritual exercises which have neither been revealed nor prescribed in God's Word is deceit. The apostle says, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). There is nothing lacking in the Word -- neither small nor great, low nor high. "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Psalms 19:7). He who either adds to or subtracts from it shall have no part in all the promises recorded in the Word. Rather, all the curses which are declared in the Word will come upon them (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19). Fear therefore and tremble; closely adhere to the Word, and seek both to understand and practice its spiritual meaning. The Word of God is "able to make thee wise unto salvation ... and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:15-17). One cannot desire anything beyond this; he who fabricates something else accuses God's Word of being deficient. God demands nothing beyond this; he who demands, seeks, and does something apart from Scripture cannot please God with his will-worship. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20:31). The Holy Scriptures are the only rule for doctrine and life. He who wishes to live godly and desires to be saved must regulate his intellect, will, affections, words, deeds, and entire religion according to this Word. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20); "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto

according to Thy Word" (Psalms 119:6;Psalms 119:9); "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). Therefore -- whoever you may be -- if you love godliness and salvation, if you have esteem and reverence for God, you ought also to have respect and esteem for the revealed will of God which, by the goodness of God, has been given to us unto salvation. Let this Word be your only rule and do as David, who testified concerning himself, "I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me" (Psalms 119:30); "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (vs. 97); "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart" (Psalms 119:111); "I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes alway, even unto the end" (Psalms 119:112). Observe therefore God's commandment and follow the example of the saints and you will walk surely. "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy" (Galatians 6:16).

If the Word of God is so precious to you, if you love it so, and if you make it your rule for faith and life, you will be immune to the delusion of the Pietists. If you are taken in and shaken by their speech -- having the appearance of spirituality -- and you turn to the Word of God, you will immediately perceive that it is not according to the Word, that the Word of God does not speak in that fashion, and that God does not lead His children in such a manner; the Word of God will be a shield to you. When you encounter them, you must investigate first of all what knowledge of, esteem for, and study they make of the Word. You will then perceive that some reject it entirely, ignore it, and will not respond to your investigation. Others will perceive it as a primer, from which little ones and beginners derive benefit; they contend that one must ascend beyond the Word and engage in more elevated contemplations. However, they will either deny or be silent about the fact that the Word has been inspired by God and has been appointed to be the only and eternal rule -- which you may interpret as a denial. Others, who do not perceive the spirituality of the Word with their natural eyes, will deem it to be of little value and will view it as a dead letter, having neither spirit nor life. They maintain that those who hold to the Word will never become spiritual. Others, in order not to give the appearance of casting aside the Word, and your being frightened by them, will make use of it in their conversation and will quote such Scripture passages which speak of light, beholding, and spirituality. Investigate them more carefully, however, as to whether they believe the Word of God to be inspired in its entirety, and whether they acknowledge it as the only rule for faith and life. You will then experience that things are not in order here. Investigate furthermore if, when they use the Holy Scriptures, they understand the true meaning and spirituality of the truth. You will then discover that they are spiritually blind, and a proof for this will be that they do not wish to be examined concerning this, unless they perceive that they have a person before them with little knowledge, and over whose eyes they can readily pull the wool.

You thus have sufficient reason to reject them, and to consider all their doings to be but natural (which they truly are), thinking of this passage: "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" (Jeremiah 8:9). If, however, you do not have esteem and love for the Word of the living God as was stated above, all warnings to you are in vain. Then you are vulnerable for all manner of delusions which present themselves under the guise of spirituality, and for being led about by all wind of doctrine. For you there is no counsel -- and how will you be saved? If you insist on being in error, and you rebuff all warnings, then go your way -- but know that you have been warned.

PROPOSITION 4 Regeneration is the originating cause of spiritual life, and of all spiritual thoughts and deeds.

Everything functions in harmony with its originating cause and according to its nature. Man also functions according to his internal principle -- be it that he is in the state of nature or that he lives by the Holy Spirit. A natural man functions in a natural manner with reference to natural and spiritual matters, and a spiritual man functions in a spiritual manner in reference to both. This distinction cannot be comprehended by a natural man, since he does not understand that which is spiritual. The truth of this matter is taught by the Holy Scriptures. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil" (Luke 6:45); "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8:5).

One must not be of the opinion that all natural men indulge in ungodliness. No, in an external sense they live a life which is beyond reproach. Some take notice of their heart; they examine themselves at night as to how they spent the day -- what sins they have committed, and what virtues they have either performed or neglected. They have God before their eyes and give heed to the Spirit and His motions, thinking that He deals with them as they deal with Him. They know that all their happiness and felicity is to be found in communion with God and they continually engage in reflecting upon God. Pagan writings bear abundant testimony to this, doing so with expressions which are capable of bringing a soul into ecstasy and of quickening them Godward, and to godliness. Nevertheless, it is nothing but the work of nature, which cannot please God, cannot yield delight to one who is truly godly, and cannot render salvation to one who is thus engaged. Even though it appears to be spiritual, it is nevertheless not worthy of being called spiritual. It is nothing but darkness and pollution when a spiritual person compares it to the spiritual beholding of God and true life in God. You may respond as follows: "What is lacking? I would think that I am living in a heavenly fashion when I am thus engaged in beholding God, giving heed to my heart, daily examining myself, and thus increasing in virtuousness. What is lacking here?" Spirit, life -- yes, everything is lacking. Natural men can also be religious. "... I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. ... Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you" (Acts 17:22-23). If heathen who do not have the Word of God can be that religious, this is much more true for the unconverted who are externally illuminated by the Word. You must therefore not immediately consider to be spiritual what appears to be spiritual -- for there is a natural and a spiritual piety.

All men, as they are born, and as they grow up in such a condition, are dead and blind as far as the spiritual is concerned -- and this is also true for all their deeds. "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). That is the condition of man prior to regeneration, even when he is at his best. "... who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1); "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." (Ephesians 4:18). This ignorance, even in those externally illuminated, is so great that, although they imagine themselves to have greater light than those who are truly converted, they can neither have a correct understanding of spiritual matters nor perceive them in their essential nature. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually

discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Therefore, you cannot conclude from someone's external behavior, nor from the fact that someone speaks of elevated and spiritual matters, that a man has Spirit and life. From the deeds themselves, you cannot come to a conclusion about someone's spiritual state. You must rather judge someone's deeds by his regenerated nature and state. The very same words and the very same deeds which a converted person speaks and does can also be spoken and performed by an unconverted person. With the one, however, it is spiritual and proceeds from a living principle; with the other it proceeds from a natural principle. The difference is as great as between dreams or illusions and reality, and between paintings and living persons.

Therefore, man, being dead and blind, and producing such motions and deeds as mentioned above by means of that natural principle, must be born again if he is to become seeing, living, and spiritual in his dispositions and deeds. This is an absolute truth to which there is no exception. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3; John 3:5). This is so universally true that not one man will come into heaven unless he first be changed and regenerated. There is not one example to the contrary. "... and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 18:31). He who does not impress this truth deeply upon his heart, nor seeks for regeneration, will not be saved. He who rejects this Word of God will be rejected by God, and we reject him after the first or second admonition, deeming him to be a heathen.

However, the point in question is this: What is regeneration and what change does it bring about in man? Whatever the converted do or refrain from doing can likewise be true for the unconverted -- yes, an Abimelech remains standing where a David falls. Many pagans have so excelled in conquering their corruptions and in practicing virtue that they put many of the regenerate to shame. He who reads Cicero, Seneca, Marcus Antonius, Epictus, and other pagan writers will stand amazed.

Regeneration does also not consist in losing sight of yourself; it does not consist in abstaining from aiming at or seeking prosperity and salvation, or your joy and delight for yourself, and instead lose yourself in nothing else but the beholding of God alone. It does not consist in the reflection upon and beholding of God, in sinking away in God, and in continually bringing yourself in the presence of God. All of that can also be the work of nature; pagans, idolatrous Papists, and other proponents of error do likewise.

It does not consist in the increase of natural light and virtuousness, as if man would be regenerated were light to exceed darkness or virtuousness sin. For,

(1) growth is of the same nature as the principle from which it originates. The principle of light and virtuousness is natural, and thus also the increase in both -- regardless of how far it may go.

(2) The natural man, however illuminated, virtuous, humble, and exalted he may be in his beholding of God, is and remains a fool (Romans 1:22), without God and without hope (Ephesians 2:12), and blind (Ephesians 4:18; 1 Corinthians 2:14). Thus, regeneration does not consist in the increase of the matters mentioned.

(3) If this were so, man would not need to be regenerated; however, he does stand in need of this. Growth is the continuation of a principle which already exists, and not the receiving of a principle of

life which did not exist previously. Regeneration is, however, the generation of a principle of a life which did not exist previously, and thus a translation from one state -- death, into another state -- life.

(4) Regeneration proceeds from the Holy Spirit by means of the gospel; it causes a person to behold God in the face of Jesus Christ, generates spiritual life by union with Christ, and culminates in felicity. None of these things are true for natural light and virtuousness, and they thus differ in their essential nature.

Regeneration is a complete change of man wrought by the Holy Spirit through the Word. This change is both internal and external. It is from death to life, from natural to spiritual, from an earthly disposition to a heavenly disposition, from self and all creatures to Christ, and through Him to God. Regeneration begins in the heart and in the innermost recesses of the soul. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). The heart encompasses the intellect, will, and affections.

(1) The intellect, being enveloped in darkness prior to this, is illuminated and receives enlightened eyes (Ephesians 1:18). Observe this in 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He who has been illuminated now sees things differently from before and views what he has observed before from a different perspective. That which previously was pure in his eyes is now polluted; that which appeared to be light is now only darkness. The illuminated soul now perceives that none can behold God except as He reveals Himself in Christ in the work of redemption, and that by such beholding, man is sanctified, made joyful, and is saved.

(2) The will -- which previously followed the blind intellect and delighted in that which was hateful, perceiving it to be delightful -- now hates what it formerly delighted in, and now delights in that which it formerly hated. All its desire is now Godward -- not outside of Christ, but in Christ. Its love is now toward the Lord's will as revealed in His Word. "I will love Thee, O Lord" (Psalms 18:1); "O how love I Thy law!" (Psalms 119:97).

(3) The affections are inclined toward different matters and in an entirely different manner. The disposition of heart now being spiritual, the inclinations and desires are now also spiritual, and there is a desire to be filled and satisfied with spiritual matters. "... be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). The heart having thus been changed, the manifestations of the heart have also been changed. The regenerated soul despises whatever does not now proceed from this changed heart. It has a heartfelt hatred for sin and flees from it. It wholeheartedly seeks God, grieves in a heartfelt manner about the absence of God, wholeheartedly delights itself in God, and serves God; it is all done wholeheartedly. "... doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6); "I will love Thee, O Lord" (Psalms 18:1). This changed heart brings forth different thoughts and has a holy objective in all that it does. It flees from sin and the world and exercises virtue; it endeavors to be conformed to Christ in all things, desiring that the life of Jesus be manifest in our mortal bodies. In one word, a regenerated man is an entirely different person. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

However, regeneration generally does not come about so easily. There are many fears and sorrows, and there are wrestlings to be reconciled with God, to believe in Christ as one's ransom and righteousness, and to obtain a new heart and a new life. Since regeneration will always be imperfect here, the warfare between flesh and spirit, according to the testimony of the apostle, will also not cease. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). When someone comes under conviction and receives a desire toward God, he will then initially be in danger of striving for great things. Since natural religion is easier -- having the cooperation of nature (true regeneration being contrary to man's nature) -- he will very readily be drawn away to Pietism, which is nothing else but a natural religion. He will thus be in danger of remaining in a natural state and of perishing. Therefore, if you desire to be saved, strive for your regeneration in the manner which we have briefly presented to you. Consider your sinful and condemnable condition and the blessed state of the regenerate. Take note of your impotence and keep your eye fixed on Christ. Let the Word of God be the subject of your meditation and keep company with those who are truly godly, so that the Holy Spirit may convert you by way of these means. If a change comes about, remain humble and increase in that very way; this will cause you to walk with certainty and steadfastness, and you will be safeguarded against the delusion of the Pietists. When you are in the company of these people (however, I counsel you to avoid them and to stay with the church and the godly in the church), do not be taken back by highly elevated matters which have a great appearance of spirituality and thus are very attractive to beginning Christians. If, however, you ask them to speak about regeneration, you will find them to be ignorant in that respect or to be entirely in error. This will be sufficient for you to see that all their activity is but natural and thus draws away from true holiness and communion with God, and consequently from salvation itself. And if there is someone among them who was truly a partaker of the principle of regeneration prior to joining with them, and thus is able to speak soundly about this, do not allow yourself to be deceived along with him who is deceived. The principle of his life is indeed true and he will be saved, but the hay, straw, and stubble which he has built upon it will be burned. Regeneration is imperfect and we must therefore not follow them in all that they do; they also still sin. They, possessing a spiritual principle, can nevertheless yield somewhat to their nature which is yet in them, and thus can practice self-denial and behold God in a natural sense. This will cause them to be a Christian of small stature where true growth is absent. Therefore, take heed.

PROPOSITION 5 A Christian continually avails himself of faith. As closely as Adam resembled God's holy character prior to the fall, and as intimately as he lived in union with God, so contrariwise is man to the character of God after the fall, and so far is man separated from God and estranged from the life of God due to the ignorance within him and the hardening of his heart. God is light and he is darkness; God is holy and he is nothing but sin within and without. Man's heart is a pool of all sorts of hateful monstrosities, and all sorts of vain, impure, proud, hateful, and envious thoughts. If anyone could see his heart by heavenly light, it would even be more abhorrent to him, for all vile and corrupt words proceed from that evil heart. Even the best among men possess a smell and taste of the vessel from which they come. Man is completely subverted in all his deeds, has so totally departed from God's law, and is fully opposed to this law in all his actions, manners, purposes, and objectives. Although the one may refrain himself more than the other, and in an external and natural manner may do something which appears to be right, yet in and of itself it is abominable filthiness and agrees with the description of man in Romans 3:11-19. It all testifies:

Away with such a monstrosity! Everyone can conclude from this that man in his natural state can neither live in communion with a holy God nor find delight in beholding Him.

Yes, what is more, since man is so abominable within and without, God is therefore against him. God's holiness is against him, necessitating the casting away of this venomous vermin. There is God's majesty to crush him, God's love to hate him, God's goodness to ruin him, God's justice to condemn him, and God's omnipotence to destroy this monstrosity. God's heart, God's face, God's hand -- yes, all that is God -- is against him. Since his soul cannot die and his body will be resurrected after death, he will be forever subject to the unbearable wrath of God. Oh, how dreadful it will be to fall into the hands of a living God! And since God is against him, also all that which is in heaven and upon earth is against him. The angels, sun, moon, stars, stormy winds, water, fire, man, and beast -- yes, everything is against him. Nowhere is there a hiding place for him, nor is there help or refuge. Do you think that such vermin would have the audacity to come into heaven and to crawl up to the throne to have communion with God and to delight itself in beholding God? Will the sinner have fellowship with God, will God delight in him, and will God reveal Himself to him?

Man is inclined to think that God is equally gracious and good at all times, so that he always may and can come to God as frequently as he wishes; and that he can always occupy himself with spiritual reflections and contemplations of God if he but turns away from sin and the world, and in all simplicity and sincerity turns to God and is desirous to live virtuously. Such a person is ignorant about either a reconciled or unreconciled state. He is ignorant of the fact that God, the Judge of heaven and earth, cannot forgive sin unless guilt be atoned for and punishment be borne -- there being no way of approach unto God without it. The religious activity of such is but imaginary and a work of nature. Neither the person who has such illusions nor his work can please God. Even if this way may seem right to him, his ways are nevertheless the ways of death which will end in eternal ruin. In order for anyone to approach unto God, there is an absolute necessity that the justice of God be satisfied by the bearing of the punishment of which the sinner was worthy. Furthermore, there must be perfect holiness so that he can abide in the righteous judgment of God and there be justified -- for God's judgment is according to truth. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? He will by no means clear the guilty. The Lord is an avenger of His adversaries and He reserveth wrath for His enemies (Nahum 1:2).

He had threatened: "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die." The immovable law of God is: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). Those who are under the law are subject to the curse. There will be indignation and wrath, and tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. In the last day it will therefore be said to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!" Impress this upon your heart and behold your former foolishness in daring to approach unto God (or better -- imagining yourself to approach) without reconciliation. Seek first to be reconciled with God, who is thus against you, as was previously stated. If not, then all your spirituality, meditation, humility, and reflections are vain and will not be able to save you from hell. But how will you be reconciled? As we have shown, you will not attain to this by some imaginary grace of God. You will also not attain to this by prayer or supplication, suffering, repentance, abstinence from evil, and the performance of good. Rather, it must occur by way of a Surety who fully bears your punishment and satisfies the law on your behalf, and thus reconciles you to God

and makes you righteous before God. All creatures are silent here, and no help is to be found by anyone. However, God Himself has sent a Surety into the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. He, being very God and very man, has taken upon Himself the sins of the elect, has fully borne their punishment, has placed Himself under the law, has reconciled with God those who by nature are enemies of God, and has brought them to God, having merited peace and all salvation. Salvation is in none other. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Him, and it has pleased God that all fullness should dwell in Him. He can save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. This is the way. But how will this Savior become someone's portion? What counsel can be given here? This was impossible for man, as he could not come to the knowledge of this Savior. And even if he would know Him, what basis would he have to think that He would be willing to be his Savior, and what would he have and what could he do to persuade Him to be willing to be his Savior? However, behold the wondrous goodness of God -- God offers this Savior to him. Whosoever will may come and receive Him, and He promises that he who comes will not be cast out -- doing so very lovingly by advancing many inducements for doing so. He does so without price and without requiring anything from a condemnable sinner as a condition upon which this Savior is offered. This is the basis upon which one may freely come to Christ. However, many do not know Christ, nor make any effort to know Him -- and even if they had some knowledge of Him, they desire neither Him nor His benefits. They choose the world and their lusts above Him. Others are moved indeed and do have some desires, but do not know how Jesus can become their portion. They pray and seek in such a manner as if Jesus could be moved by their praying and seeking. They want to bring something along: a contrite and holy heart, and a very desirous heart. They thus always remain in the same unrest and uncertainty. Instead, they must begin with this offer of God, who is true, unchangeable, and good. However, the difficulty which many create is this: "I do not know whether God offers Jesus to me." Are you not a human being? Do you not hear the voice of God in His Word? Does not God say, "Whosoever will let him come?" Is not unbelief a rejection of the Lord Jesus and an act of contempt toward His friendly invitation? Is not this tantamount to esteeming God to be a liar, and is not this a sin? Will not the unbelievers receive a greater judgment? Then He is indeed offered to you. In order for someone to be a partaker of this Savior, he must respond to this offer, go to Christ, receive Him, and entrust himself entirely to Him. This act of faith is not the cause of a person becoming a partaker of Jesus, but only the means. Therefore, whether faith is weak or strong, whether it is exercised with clarity or be it in darkness, whether it is exercised with much ease or much strife, is not of the essence, but rather, whether it is done in truth with the heart. This is indeed quickly said, but not so readily done. When it pleases God to convert someone, He first convinces him of sin, of being without God, of the wrath of God, and of his condemnableness. This is a painful realization. He is weary of his condition, desires to be delivered from it, and can no longer tolerate being in this sinful condition; rather, he must be holy, obey God in love, and serve Him with humility and fear. He does not know what to do and seeks for help, which, however, he does not find. The distress of his heart is far-reaching, more in one than in another, and of longer duration with the one than the other. God's justice presses such sinners down, and their sin and insignificance cause them to be discouraged, thinking that God will not look down upon such persons.

God reveals to them the Surety and Mediator Jesus Christ in His suffering and death, etc., makes known to them the offer, the calling, and the friendly invitation. They choose this way with their entire heart, for through Him they wish to be reconciled with God and in Him they desire to come

before the bar of divine justice.

They would fearlessly dare to rely on this if Jesus would only receive them and be their Jesus. They encourage themselves by the offer, and turn themselves to Him; they yearn, crave, and long for Him; they converse and transact with the Lord Jesus; they pray, weep, wrestle, receive more liberty, receive Him, and entrust themselves entirely to Him. His offer, goodness, and faithfulness are the support of their soul, and they thus put their trust entirely in Him, entrusting their soul unto Him for justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification. In this manner the Lord Jesus becomes theirs, and they become His. At times they may feel this with assurance, at times by way of the reflex act of faith, and at times with quiet hope. At other times they are readily confused, in darkness, and in doubt, and must begin again with the same task. Many continue to wrestle in this manner their entire lifetime and fluctuate between ups and downs. Others, however, attain to an assured state by way of many wrestlings, and spiritually engage themselves as children of God.

One ought not to be satisfied with having believed once or several times, as if this were a matter which has now been finalized. Rather, one exercises faith as long as he lives. This is true 1) for those who doubt their state time and again, and in exercising faith become assured once more, and 2) for those who are established in an assured state. The latter do so not to reestablish their state, but rather to live in communion with Jesus, which cannot occur except by the exercise of faith. They also come into many trials in which they need faith for their support. They cannot be delivered from these trials except by the exercise of faith, which enables them to overcome the difficulties.

Believers are not yet perfect, but frequently still offend and fall into sin. Their soul is injured and becomes restless, not only because of external sins, but also due to inner motions which the little ones in grace do not perceive as yet; for the more light increases, the more the dust particles can be seen. There are the corrupt frames of the heart, the yearnings of nature, the lusts of the flesh, and vain thoughts. Even though they are not shaken thereby as far as their state is concerned (although this does befall those who are strong in faith), this nevertheless wounds and grieves them; they are ashamed and abhor themselves, and their peace is disturbed. Therefore, time and again they flee to that fountain and wash themselves by faith in the blood of Christ, until, being justified by faith, they again obtain peace and once more approach with liberty, crying out: "Abba, Father!"

God does try them by the hiding of His countenance, the beholding of which is their life. It becomes dark and dead within and the enemies assault from every side. This causes them to be greatly shaken and their heart is far removed from peace, all of which necessitates the exercise of faith. They take refuge to their Jesus, find shelter there, and maintain their hold. They rely upon His unchangeable faithfulness and take the shield of faith to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. They are indeed tossed to and fro, but they yet cling to Jesus, who is their hope, help, and comfort. Not seeing, they nevertheless believe that God is and will remain their God by way of the eternal reconciliation which He has accomplished. A ship, equipped with good anchors and ropes and having a good anchor ground, may indeed be tossed by the waves of a storm but will nevertheless remain at its location. Likewise, the Lord Jesus is their anchor in all tribulations; and thus by faith they endure the storms until their darknesses dissipate and they are once more refreshed by sweet quietude.

Even if they do not encounter extraordinary events by which faith is assaulted, Christ dwells by faith in their hearts and they exercise faith in order to live continually in communion with Him. The soul then sweetly leans upon Jesus while telling Him the delight and joy she finds in Him. She tells Him that she entrusts everything to Him and that she is without fear and concern, since He is her Jesus and she is His property -- being the object of His love and of His faithfulness, who will lead her by His counsel and take her to Himself into glory. She thus takes refuge to Him and abides in His shadow. Even if she does not always taste the sweetness of His communion, she nevertheless believes that she is a partaker of Him and relies upon Him with an assured confidence. A believing soul always goes to the Father by way of her Jesus. She cannot be in the immediate presence of God and occupy herself with beholding God as the All-in-all, and herself as nothing at all. That is too lofty and too unfamiliar for her. This is not to suggest that she is always engaged God-ward by expressly receiving Jesus by faith unto her reconciliation; rather, she approaches unto God in a believing disposition. Each time Christ comes in between and she beholds God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Faith is the beginning point of whatever believers undertake. Faith is the soul of their activity and permeates everything. By faith they take hold of His strength and thereby are active as though it were their strength. By faith they overcome the world, are united with the fullness of Christ, and become partakers of all His benefits. This enables them to endure the poverty and tribulations of the world with ease, and it is this which causes all the beauty of the world to become despicable to them. This enables them to laugh in spite of all the cruel faces and threatenings of worldly men. By faith they resist the devil, since it unites them with Him who has bruised the head of the devil. By faith their heart is purified, for it unites them with their Jesus in love. Love unites their will with His will and has no other desire than to do His pleasure, to be pleasing to Him, and to be holy as He is holy. From this you can perceive that a Christian continually exercises faith in all things. If you are not as yet upon this pathway, then you are still not a Christian; then you are miserable. Pray for faith, for it is a gift of God, and use the means whereby God works faith: the reading and hearing of the Word of God, and having fellowship with believers. May the Lord look upon you in mercy.

If you are upon this way and exercise faith in the manner here delineated, see to it that you persevere in the same way. Do not ever depart from this way, for it will safely bring you to the end of your faith -- the salvation of your soul. You will be safeguarded against the errors of the Labadists, Pietists, and all others who are in error as far as the practice of godliness is concerned.

There are people who are under conviction and have greatly endeavored to believe, but have not attained thereto. When such come in the company of those who err, they are immediately set free from all such delay, as they call it (in reference to them it indeed ought to be labeled as such). In one moment they believe and are strong in faith -- that is, in their opinion. In reality it is a deviation and departure from the way of faith, however, and a turning to a natural religion. Be on guard for such individuals.

Others have a notion of how faith operates, approve of it, observe the blessed state of a believer, and are thus of the illusion that they are believing.

There are also those who at one time have received Jesus as their Savior. This task having been accomplished, they might as well proceed to perfection and pursue more lofty things. Poor people -- as if it were possible to grow, apart from Christ; as if we could live, except by faith and the

continual, actual beholding of Christ and being in union with Him; and as if we could bear fruit without continually drawing sap and nourishment from Christ! He who conducts himself in such (or even stranger) fashion, let him be convinced of his error and turn to Christ, in order to make use of Him continually unto justification and sanctification, so that he might be saved. And if you are aware of persons who conduct themselves in such a foolish manner, have pity upon them and, if possible, correct them. If they do not wish to hear you, depart from them and do not intermingle with them. If someone is upright in the exercise of faith, but yet small in grace, let that which has been said be as a beacon. Let him flee from all who do not enter upon this way of faith and who with a great show of spirituality fail to encounter Jesus.

PROPOSITION 6 All of man's felicity, here and hereafter, consists in communion with and the beholding of God.

God did not only create man as a rational being, but also as a creature capable of recognizing Him. In the beginning God adorned that propensity with His image; that is, with pure heavenly light, righteousness, and holiness, enabling man to behold God, to live in communion with Him, thus rendering man fit for God's further revelation of Himself to him.

However, after the fall God has withdrawn Himself from man, concealed from him His glorious, delightful satisfying perfections, and denied man communion and union with Him. Yes, man is an object of His righteous wrath and thus while separated from God, lives in aversion toward God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." All the excellent faculties of the soul such as intellect, will, and affections, and whatever is in him, have been fully distorted in a most hateful manner. Instead of being focused upon God, they are opposed to Him, being focused upon the visible in order to satisfy man's empty soul therewith. Man is therefore referred to in Scripture as *atheos*, that is, without God, "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18). But God, in His infinite goodness, has had compassion upon a small portion of the human race, giving them His Son Jesus Christ as a Surety, who by His suffering and death has reconciled them with God, and has made peace by the blood of His cross. He, the Just One, has suffered for the unjust, that He might bring them to God. He regenerates them, gives them faith, and by faith, access into this grace by Christ. These have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

It must particularly be noted that God reveals Himself to His reconciled children who presently believe in Him, and thus not to the world -- not to unconverted and natural men.

I repeat, God reveals Himself to His reconciled people who presently and in reality do believe; to them He grants union with Himself in love. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Psalms 25:14); "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father" (John 6:46); "... neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). Since God has appointed them to be the recipients of salvation and all felicity consists in the beholding of and having communion with God, He reveals Himself for that purpose to them. "... Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matthew 11:25). This is the most excellent promise: "I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:23); "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). Their seeing of God agrees with the manner in which God

reveals Himself from His side. "And hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true" (1 John 5:20); "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18); "For God ... hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). Such is the activity and the exercise of the godly: "I have set the Lord always before me" (Psalms 16:8); "... they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance" (Psalms 89:15); "My meditation of Him shall be sweet" (Psalms 104:34); "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! ... when I awake, I am still with Thee" (Psalms 139:17-18). This is sufficient to conclude that the beholding of God is reserved for God's children only. This hidden manna, this white stone, and this new name knows no one except he who receives it. God does not reveal Himself to the world; that is, to the unconverted, to natural men, to those who do not have the Spirit. This is evident in John 14:22; John 14:17, "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world ... the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." No one comes to the Father but through Christ (John 14:6). The unconverted, however, are without Christ, and thus they cannot come to the Father. Furthermore, there is such a difference and contrast between God and the natural man that it is impossible that God would unite Himself with him and reveal Himself to him in a familiar manner. How would a man who is dead in sins and trespasses, is blind, has a darkened understanding, is alienated from the life of God through the ignorance which is in him, and who lacks ability -- how would such a man be able to come to Christ and through Him unto God? Since God is not willing to reveal Himself to the unconverted and since the unconverted cannot ascend unto God, there remains an infinite separation. Therefore, whatever the natural man writes or speaks concerning reflecting upon, beholding of, and being united to God in love, is nothing more than an illusion.

Although a natural man cannot ascend to the right knowledge and beholding of God, and since God does not reveal Himself to such, he nevertheless knows from nature that God is, and that his felicity consists in communion with God. This is further reinforced by the natural knowledge of the Word of God. As a result, many have engaged themselves in beholding God, so that the beholding of God and the discussion thereof is no evidence of spirituality.

I repeat, many unconverted do engage themselves in beholding God by means of their natural light, or by means of their knowledge of the Word of God.

(1) This is very evident among the heathen, who speak concerning this in their writings, doing so with such lofty expressions that a Christian must be amazed and astonished about it.

(2) This is also evident among the popish mystics and thinkers. They are obviously idolaters, for they worship a piece of bread as their God. They pray to angels and deceased persons and render religious honor to images. They destroy the atonement of the Lord Jesus by their abominable mass and in other ways. They wish to be justified by their own works, and thereby merit heaven. They acknowledge the antichrist to be their head and hate true believers. They are persecutors of the church of the Lord Jesus; and they, either by their contribution or by having pleasure in this, are guilty of the blood of the martyrs, and are thus much more abominable than the heathen and others who function only in the realm of the natural. They write and speak much about divine meditations, doing so with expressions which are as lofty as their imagination can devise -- yes, their words even exceed imagination, and if they cannot understand them, others may understand

them. If they cannot, they may be amazed about these incomprehensible expressions.

(3) This is also evident among many others (not of the popish religion) who also engage themselves in meditation and reflection about divine things. It is evident that they neither have a knowledge of nor a love for the truth. They neither have a love for the Word of God nor do they establish it as their only rule for doctrine, thoughts, and life. There is no love for the church (from which they depart), and there is neither love for nor union with the truly godly. They can unite themselves with all manner of devoted people, but cannot tolerate the truly godly who rebuke them by means of their light. They are unacquainted with the nature of true conversion. This is also true for saving faith, they being total strangers of its exercise. (We do not have in mind those who are not guilty of this; they must not be affected by this.) In a haughty manner they speak about great things, about being drawn up, about ascending above themselves and above all creatures -- yes, dreadful though it be, above God Himself. The language of Balaam is heard among them: "The man whose eyes are open ... which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance" (Numbers 24:3-4). From that which has been said, it is very evident that unconverted persons also engage themselves in beholding God. You therefore ought not to be immediately inclined to think that those who speak thus -- that is, who in a charming manner speak of extraordinary illumination -- are true recipients of grace and are truly spiritual. The blind can also speak of light, the unspiritual of the spiritual, and those who are alienated from God about communion with God, and the loveless about love -- doing so not feignedly, but from a heart that thinks to have and speak the truth. You must therefore investigate whether that which they say about beholding God is truly spiritual. Follow the advice of the apostle John: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). In order not to be hastily inclined by word or spirit, attentively take note of what has been said thus far: There is a twofold beholding of God -- a natural and a spiritual.

(1) The natural beholding of God is practiced by the unconverted; the spiritual beholding of God by those who are true recipients of grace, have truly been regenerated, and truly believe.

(2) The natural beholding of God occurs by the light of nature and the external illumination of the Word, by one's own spirit, imagination, and mental powers, and by the drawing of rational conclusions; the spiritual beholding of God occurs by the illumination of the Holy Spirit who has drawn believers out of darkness into His marvelous light.

(3) The natural beholding of God has God as its object as He reveals Himself in nature as the eternal, exalted, and glorious One, etc. In the spiritual beholding of God a person beholds Him in the face of Jesus Christ; that is, in the manifestation of all the perfections of God in the work of redemption. In such spiritual beholding He reveals Himself at times in an immediate sense as their reconciled God and Father, doing so occasionally with such light, glory, sweetness, and bliss that it cannot be expressed, and at other times with such expressions as: "I, God, am your God; I am your salvation; I have loved thee with an everlasting love; thou art Mine."

(4) The natural beholding of God leaves a man alienated from God; the separation remains. The illusion of being united with God is but a union according to their own imagination, for true union occurs only by way of faith -- something they do not possess. The spiritual beholding of God brings the soul near to God -- yes, unites her with God as belonging to Him. "... that they also may be one in us" (John 17:21). Oh, blessed unity! Oh, blessed appropriation!

(5) The natural beholding of God leaves man unchanged, that is, in the state of nature -- even though through the knowledge of God they may flee from the excessive pollutions of the world. The spiritual beholding of God causes the soul to become increasingly a partaker of the divine nature, and to become holy as He is holy. By the Spirit of the Lord, the soul is transformed through such beholding -- in harmony with the object being beheld -- from glory to glory. See to it that you do not immediately deem all beholding of God to be spiritual in nature.

It is evident from the nature of their reflection, that the beholding by God of such persons -- which in reality consists more in elevated words than in substance -- is the result of natural illumination and imagination. Such beholding varies greatly according to everyone's physical constitution, inclinations, and power of imagination. What follows represents the common manner in which this transpires; if someone is not exercised in the manner as we shall now delineate, he should know that we do not have him in view.

(1) Some, as they undertake such reflection, meditate upon what they know about God in a natural sense, and have read or heard of God. They do not consider at that moment that they have read or heard this. While thus meditating, they ascend from one thing to the next, having conceptions about God in accordance with what their heart and imagination suggest. They then think about what they imagine, and all that is engendered by such thoughts. God must then be as such reflections project Him to be, and in this manner God has then revealed Himself to the soul. It is immaterial whether such thoughts of God are suitable and in harmony with the Holy Scriptures; this revelation is sufficient assurance for them that it is true and spiritual.

(2) Some will mentally withdraw from all creatures, themselves, and God. They are occupied with nothing except with expelling those mental objects which present themselves time and again. They thus endeavor to be without thoughts, as if nothing existed, and they thus enter and sink away into thick darkness. If a ray of light then falls upon their mind in this thick darkness, without the discovery of anything objective, they consider this to be of the Spirit. They allow themselves to be illuminated and guided by this light, and as this light increases, God is unveiled to them as being such and such. This they observe passively -- as being the recipient of it, allowing themselves to be illuminated thereby. The soul is thus ignited in love and receives such motions and stirrings, until they again come to themselves and desist for the time being.

(3) Some, having a desire to approach unto God and to behold Him, divest themselves of all reason, memory, affections, and even of those thoughts which initially ignited the inclination to contemplate upon God as having served their purpose. Having thus been emptied of everything, the soul turns to God, considering Him to be her God, and continually thinks: "Oh God, Thou art my God, and I am Thine." The soul then listens to what God will subsequently reveal of Himself, and thus, in an infatuated manner, focuses upon God as being present. Here she reposes, tastes more than she sees, worships, exults, is in subjection, and exercises love. The only things missing here are the Spirit, spiritual life, the exercises of faith, the going to God through Christ, and the beholding of God in the face of Christ. Since these things are absent, they are all the work and imaginations of a person's own doing. They are but natural exercises and thus of no value.

(4) Some remain quiet and in a disposition wherein which they are turned unto God, and do nothing but wait upon the Spirit. If nothing comes to mind, then they again proceed, being well satisfied. If something occurs to them, they deem this to be of the Spirit; then this is truth, and is

more certain and infallible than the Word of God which they consider to be but a dead letter, a primer for beginners, and of no benefit whatsoever. If the thought which occurs to them gives direction to do or not to do something, it is considered to be the leading of the Spirit and they give heed to it. They do not pray, speak, or do anything unless they are motivated by such an idea coming to mind; they thus, quietly and with delight, live on. When they are stirred up by an idea which occurred to them, they depend on this, irrespective of whether it either agrees with or is contrary to God's Word. This they do not investigate; it is a matter of indifference to them. They are thus carried away by their own spirit to abominable practices from which even the natural man recoils. This is borne out by the witness of those whom God in His goodness has converted from the error of their ways, and is also taught by daily experience. Some go further than that and play prophet. When thoughts about future events occur to their empty minds, they are deemed to be revelations which will either occur or not occur. Poor, misguided people! They desire to seek God and to do His pleasure, but completely miss the way itself. With all their ideas and the adamant passion of their own spirit they perish.

It behooves all Christians to live in the presence of God, to examine themselves as to what is the good will of God in which He delights, to esteem the Word of God as the revealed will of God and as an infallible rule, and continually to give heed to the leading of the Spirit. It behooves them to give careful heed to their well-illuminated conscience and to be desirous not to act contrary to it. To follow one's own spirit and ideas, however, as if they were from the Holy Spirit, is to run to one's own destruction. In order to be safeguarded against such fanaticism, we must keep the following in mind: (1) Man has his own spirit; there are many seducing spirits, and the evil spirit can transform himself into an angel of light. He, with the intent to deceive, can give thoughts which are essentially good, but stir man up to use them in an erroneous manner. We must therefore give heed and know by which spirit we are being moved.

(2) The Holy Spirit convinces man of sin and causes him to grieve, be perplexed, and in many ways be troubled about his sin.

(3) The man who is conquered by the Holy Spirit will be regenerated and translated from darkness to light, from death to life, and from being earthly minded to being heavenly minded.

(4) The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of faith who brings God's children to Christ, causing them to receive Jesus by a true faith as their ransom and righteousness.

(5) The Holy Spirit unites His children and keeps them united to the church, for by one Spirit are they all baptized into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

(6) The Holy Spirit leads believers in all things according to the Word of God; He leads them into all truth. The Word of God is truth, however, and the only rule by which we shall not err. By that Word He regenerates, sanctifies, leads, and comforts them.

Know then with certainty that where these matters are not found, there God's Spirit is not present. Be assured that whatever is deemed to be spiritual but which does not harmonize with the above, is nothing but illusionary and are seductions of a man's own spirit. Regardless of how greatly one may boast of spirituality, be instructed and warned. Know that the Holy Spirit is given only to the children of God and that only those who are led by the Spirit do indeed have the Spirit of Christ. The natural man, however, does not have the Spirit (Jude 1:19); the world cannot receive the

Spirit; it neither sees nor knows Him.

It is evident to the truly godly, when considering these ways of beholding God, that they are all but a natural work. This can especially be concluded from the fact that such persons consider the greatest mark of spirituality to be the measure by which a person is stripped of himself and loses sight of himself so completely as if he did not exist. This is not due to a shameful view of their sins, but the result of comparing themselves to God, or it is without reason, or because of the opinion that thus it must be. This is foolish spirituality, which is nothing but the fruit of nature! Why do you delight yourself in such contemplation wherein you utterly lose sight of yourself and do not think about yourself? Is not self your focus in this and do you not deem this to be your salvation? Why then do you engage in this? You neither need to nor are able to do it by virtue of it being God's will, as it is certainly of no benefit to Him. You thus do it for your own sake, since this reflection upon your nothingness is your delight. Therefore, while thinking that you do not have yourself in view at all, and to be rid of self completely, you are nevertheless seeking yourself. Only if such exclusion and deprecation of self were spiritual in nature (while in reality it is natural and sinful), it would not be a sinful seeking of self, but rather a holy seeking of self.

There can be either a sinful or a holy seeking of self. A sinful seeking of self is when one seeks honor, esteem, love, respect, advantage, etc. in order that all men and everything would end in them. A holy seeking of self is to promote one's own physical welfare for the purpose of being fit to serve God in whatever capacity that may be. In our seeking after God, it is not sinful to have the welfare of your soul, and thus light, life, love, joy, delight, and salvation in view. Rather, it is evidence of being engaged spiritually in the right way. This is a holy seeking of self, for:

First, God has created this spiritual seeking of self within man. Did not Adam need to be careful to refrain from eating of the forbidden tree in view of the threat, "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"? Did he not have to be in fear of losing his blessed state? Was he not obligated to seek his felicity in communion with God?

Secondly, God commands His children to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Php 2:12). This they must therefore strive for.

Thirdly, God continually confronts man with threats in order to save him with fear (Jude 1:23). Observe this in Luke 13:3, "... except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Fourthly, God uses many inducements to persuade man to seek his own salvation. "Come unto Me ... and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you. ... For My yoke is easy" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Fifthly, if man should not seek himself and his own well-being, it would be a matter of indifference to him how he fared according to body and soul; and being thus indifferent, all prayers would cease. Then there would be nothing for him to desire or request. God, however, wills that "in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Php 4:6). Then all thanksgiving for received benefits would also cease; God, however, wills that we give thanks in everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18), "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12).

It is evident from all this that spirituality does not consist in disregarding our welfare, utterly deprecating ourself, utterly losing sight of ourself as far as salvation is concerned, and excluding ourself from everything. Rather, this is a fabricated religion which is contrary to God's commandment, serving no other purpose but the satisfaction of the flesh and our own imagination.

Objection #1: Ought not God be the focus of all things and ought not all things end in God? By seeking self, however, man makes himself the focus and ends in self.

Answer: When a godly person focuses upon himself in spiritual matters, he acts according to the command and will of God. It would be impossible for him to end in himself and to remain focused on his felicity only, for that is not the highest level of his felicity. Being a recipient of grace, however, and while enjoying the goodness of God, he will time and again turn to God as the cause of his salvation. He will thus end in Him, thank Him, give honor and glory to Him, and praise Him, because by reason of His essence all praise must be unto Him, He being worthy thereof. The more pure the manner is in which a spiritual person ends in glorifying God, the more felicity he will enjoy; and the more felicity he enjoys, the more he will end in God. This is not to suggest that he contributes something to God, but rather, that the benefit is man's. Thus, having his felicity in view and ending in God must go together; the godly person cannot seek the one without exercising the other. As all the godly end in God upon receiving and enjoying the benefits of God, they (especially the fathers in Christ) likewise have the glory of God in view when they begin to undertake something.

Objection #2: A Christian must deny himself (Matthew 16:24), not seek himself (1 Corinthians 10:24), is nothing (Galatians 6:3), and must be lowly of heart (Matthew 11:29). Therefore, man must remain outside of everything and neither seek nor have himself in mind in anything.

Answer: There is a threefold self. First, there is a sinful self; that is, pride, maliciousness, vengeance, envy, miserliness, immorality, and all the sinful lusts of the heart, along with the deeds which issue forth therefrom, whereby he seeks to satisfy his lusts and to attain to the fulfillment of his desire. These a Christian must not seek, but he must abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. He must mortify and crucify them.

Secondly, there is also a natural self; that is, to desire and seek all that pertains to the welfare of the body, such as food, drink, sleep, clothing, housing, goods, peaceful association with people, and whatever else pertains to human existence. One may and must seek these things, for no one has ever hated his flesh, but rather, cherishes it. However, a Christian does not set his heart upon them and it is his objective to serve God in the use of these things. He is resigned to the divine dispensation, and he must be satisfied with either much or little, since these are not his portion. If, however, these matters run counter to the Lord Jesus, His cause, the truth, and godliness, and one is obligated to abstain from one or the other thing, then a Christian will readily deny himself, willingly let go of everything, view the disappearance of his goods with joy, and not even hold his life dear. This is the denial which Christ requires.

Thirdly, there is a spiritual self; that is, the desire for the salvation and welfare of our soul, consisting in reconciliation with God through the blood of Christ, union with God, and a life in the enjoyment of His fellowship, love, light, and holiness -- and thus eternal glory. A Christian may not deny himself these spiritual things. He must always seek them with all his might. It is the life of the

soul, the will of God, the command of God, and it pleases God. To neither seek nor pursue this is sin. Man, in having fellowship with and beholding God, may not utterly put self aside and keep himself entirely outside of this. Rather, he must strive for and seek to find pleasure in spiritual delight, joy, love, and holiness.

Matthew 16:24 refers to the natural self; 1 Corinthians 10:24 refers to the sinful self; Galatians 6:3 speaks of such people who have great thoughts of themselves, despise others, and who in the meantime either have no grace, or have but a very small measure.

Let us consider Matthew 11:29. Humility does not exclude self; instead, it does relate to self, for it acknowledges what a person is and what graces and benefits are his. He does not boast of this, since he acknowledges that he does not have them of himself, but that they have been granted to him of God by reason of His goodness alone. He sees his sinfulness and that he is therefore not worthy of anything. He sees virtues and capabilities in other persons which he does not have, and thus exalts them above himself. Having the Lord Jesus as his example, he knows that this lowly and yet noble disposition as a Christian, is pleasing to God. He therefore seeks to walk humbly with his God as a weaned child and in a becoming disposition -- one of submission and being obliged toward man. It is hereby very evident that the exclusion of self in beholding God is a sign of something that purely proceeds from nature, is of one's own choosing, and is a sinful act toward the majestic and holy God.

Matters Which Trouble the Humble Christian

There are three things which cause the godly to be troubled more than anything else. It first of all troubles them that those who speak of these lofty contemplations also speak of their union with God, of belonging to God, and that in such contemplation they view God as their God. Secondly, such persons, in an exceptional manner, are able to speak of love for God and of sinking away in the love of God, and, so to speak, being consumed by it. Thirdly, there are some who speak of the beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus in a most extraordinary manner. These three matters, they think, are indeed spiritual and evidences of extraordinary grace. Who would not be enamored by these matters? Who would not desire always to hear this discussed? My response to this is that it cannot but be that a truly gracious person, when hearing others speak of beholding God, of belonging to God, of love to God, and of the beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus, will find love and desire stirring within to be in such a condition. This is due to their acquaintance with these matters in their spiritual nature, and they thus perceive them as such when they hear them being discussed. If those who speak thus would know and possess these matters in their true, spiritual nature, far be it from us to warn them in any way; rather, we would embrace them in love. Since we know, however, that these three matters can issue forth from natural illumination and can be expressed by persons who neither possess true grace nor derive these lofty views from a love for the truth, the Word, the church of the Lord Jesus, conversion, and the exercise of true saving faith, we must of necessity demonstrate how the unconverted can be occupied with these three matters. As far as the first matter is concerned, it is common knowledge that temporal believers, those who are externally religious in the state of nature -- yes, even heathens -- view God as their God and call Him their God. Everyone knows this. Why is it that those who occupy themselves in contemplating upon God would also not be able to do so? However, just because they imagine this to be so, does not therefore imply that this is indeed the case. God is only the God of true

believers who, through Christ, having received His ransom and righteousness, come to God for reconciliation. Those who are therefore strangers of this way, and do not come in truth unto God in this way, do not have God as their portion. God is not their God, and their imaginations are vain and without foundation. They have never seen and felt the separation between God and themselves due to sin, the wrath of God toward the sinner, and the righteousness of God as Judge who will by no means clear the guilty. They are strangers of receiving Christ by faith. How then could God be their portion? Or else they view God as a God of all men, or of all who turn to Him and seek Him, although not in the only way, which is Christ. Or they may not have any reasons in view and just imagine all this. In this illusion they proceed to be amazed, to be delighted in, and to rejoice in God as He is, in the fact that this God is their God, and in all that this God is for them. These are great matters indeed. Many who thus contemplate upon God, however, endeavor to rid themselves of all spiritual motions which pertain to themselves, be divorced from self, and neither think of self nor reflect upon themselves. They only wish to contemplate upon God, be illuminated by Him, and be drawn up on high, into glory, and into eternity. Yes, though it be dreadful to say, they even endeavor to ascend above God in their reflections. Who would then be offended by the claim of such persons that God is their portion and that He is their God?

Secondly, their love for God is consistent with the manner in which He is their portion. Man has a loving nature, and if he finds or imagines a desirable object, his love goes out toward it. The imagination can have a remarkable effect here, for vain man can imagine something or somebody which or whom he has never seen. He dwells upon this with his thoughts; he delights himself in imaginary conversation, and rejoices in love, as if it were in truth. When a natural man focuses his thoughts upon God, he can also have natural inclinations of love toward God. When in addition he reflects upon the perfections of God -- be it through the light of nature or external illumination of the Word -- a love issues forth which is not of a spiritual, but of a natural sort. This love is commensurate with their knowledge. It is thus that the heathen delight in God. It is in this manner that idolaters and those who have strayed from saving truth speak of the love of God, the wondrous motions of love, and the kiss of love upon awakening. And thus, by all the motions of natural love which one man can have toward another, they ascend unto God, so that the nature of love does not change, but only the object. They thus dishonor God with their so-called love for Him.

Objection: Are not all natural men haters of God? "Let them also that hate Him flee before Him" (Psalms 68:1); "... haters of God" (Romans 1:30); "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7). Since many who meditate upon God delight in Him in doing so, is this not proof that they are spiritually illuminated and truly regenerate? "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19); "But if any man love God, the same is known of Him" (1 Corinthians 8:3).

Answer: Not all that bears the name of love is love. There is a love which is natural and a love which is holy. Natural men -- such as the heathen and all the unconverted -- have natural love, this being of the same nature as he from whom it proceeds; however, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8). From this natural love we can only conclude that such people are in the state of nature, and not at all that they are spiritual and regenerate. We completely agree that a natural man in beholding the perfections of God as He reveals Himself in nature in His majesty, glory, power, and goodness, etc., can with his natural heart love God in a natural manner. Pagans and other unconverted men have loved Him in this manner. Those who love God in such

situations, can hate Him in other respects, demonstrating this by the rejection of His Word, by not receiving His Son, and in hating and persecuting His children. Those who thus meditate upon God in a natural sense are able to associate with all manner of men, but they detest God's children who truly manifest the image of God. They hate the light because it exposes them, and because they are rebuked by the light in true believers. They show that they hate God by being unwilling to live according to His laws, instead desiring to live according to their own imaginations. They hate His rebukes, and their entire life demonstrates that they do not delight in God.

If we compare this natural love with the purely spiritual love of God in Christ Jesus -- which we shall briefly discuss further on -- then we shall perceive that the smallest spark and the tiniest ray of this love is incomparably superior and more pure than all the pretended love of such who meditate upon God, regardless of how they adorn it with beautiful words. The difference is not only one of degree, but of very essence. Oh, how far does this divine spark -- that heavenly fire -- excel all those dead coals! The third matter pertains to the extraordinary manner in which they speak of the glory and beauty of the Lord Jesus. Should it come as a surprise that someone who has the Scriptures, who reads godly literature describing the Lord Jesus in His beauty and glory, and who furthermore has an eloquent tongue, can speak in a most excellent manner about Jesus? Does someone therefore know Jesus Himself? Is this proof that he himself experientially beholds and relishes the Lord Jesus? He who draws conclusions merely on the basis of such eloquent speech is naive, and too little skilled in the matters of Christianity. Take time to observe a person who speaks thus as far as his sentiments are concerned, the company he keeps, his love to the godly in the church, and in reference to the first five propositions of this chapter. You will readily perceive how you must judge such a person. Take particular note, however, of how he speaks concerning the manner in which the soul is led to Jesus as Surety, how the soul is exercised in receiving the Lord Jesus as his ransom and righteousness, as well as its engagement in spiritual wrestlings. You will then perceive that all this lofty speech only relates to the Lord Jesus as King, or as an example for imitation, but not as High Priest in order to find reconciliation and peace with God in His atonement, doing so by a continual and frequently repeated exercise of faith, which is the marrow and essence of true Christianity.

Some little children in Christ, who are easily driven about by every wind of doctrine, hearing someone speak eloquently about lofty reflections and not being conscious of the thorn hidden in it, become enamored with such a condition as a result of the spiritual life and light which is within them. They may also engage in meditation upon God as the Pietists do; that is, in a natural manner -- however, with different results.

(1) Some, when they begin, perceive inner strife and have an aversion for this way, although a heartfelt desire for the matter itself remains. They condemn themselves for such resistance and aversion, being of the opinion that this is engendered by their corrupt nature -- thinking that it is but laziness and a lack of spirituality. They resume and strive all the more earnestly, but the resistance and aversion remain and increase. Having thus wrestled for some time, they begin to see that their objective -- to behold God -- is indeed good and spiritual, but that the method is but a natural one, so that this resistance and aversion were not sinful, but an activity of the regenerated nature. They perceive that there is a spiritual way to walk in the light of God's countenance. They thus escape this snare and desist from pursuing this natural method.

(2) Others, having the principle of spiritual life, are careless as far as preserving and strengthening it. They are inclined to err in seeking to be someone special. They, when perceiving the appearance of spirituality in such lofty reflections, pursue this method recklessly. When God gives them over to themselves, they err by pursuing their fantasy and natural imaginations -- and thus, upon that good foundation which is within them they build wood, hay, and stubble, which will be burned. They will nevertheless be saved since the gifts of God's grace are without repentance. In the meantime, they make themselves guilty of giving offense and are at times the cause of the damnation of other people who, not possessing grace, have followed them in this work of nature due to the esteem they have for them. It only occurs very rarely that such persons are exercised again in a unadulterated manner and come to the simplicity which is in Christ, since pride -- which comes naturally to those who pretend to have such lofty reflections -- has also overtaken their heart. Since those that are truly converted can fall and err greatly, we must therefore be careful in judging the deeds of the godly, as not all that they do is good. We may not imitate them just because they are godly, but only inasmuch as they are followers of Christ and walk according to the Word of God. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments" (Psalms 119:6). The Spiritual Beholding of God Truly spiritual persons do not make a distinction between meditation and beholding: they are both considered to be human activities. He does make a distinction, however, between the activity of the soul in meditating upon divine things, and the extraordinary revelations of God to the soul engaged in such meditation upon divine things, which the soul -- upon receiving them -- acknowledges, feels and tastes. A believer, however much he may humble himself, will never arrive at beholding God as a result of the measure in which he waits, longs, exerts himself, and lifts up his heart. His duty is to meditate so that he may gain more and more insight into what he knows of God by means of the Word, faith, and experience -- in order that he may delight himself in, rejoice in, and adore God, while bowing down before Him to worship Him reverently. He must endeavor to acquaint himself with God, become holier by virtue of having fellowship with Him, and serve God in a manner more pleasing to Him.

Objection: All of this is self-love and therefore must be rejected.

Answer: This sort of self-love is holy, commanded by God, pleasing to Him, and a proof of the spirituality of the meditation. Sinful self-love -- which manifests itself in the seeking of esteem, honor, love, respect, to be served by others, and to cause all things to end in self -- is hated, despised, and avoided by the person who meditates in a godly manner. In seeking his own spiritual welfare in spiritual meditation, he does not end in self, but rather acknowledges all things to be from God and through God. In love and joy he returns all this again to God, giving Him the honor and glory.

Occasionally God, according to His promise (John 14:21; John 14:23), meets such who meditate spiritually with extraordinary and more immediate revelations of Himself, and causes them to behold God in more immediate proximity, and to taste who He is and what He is to them in Christ Jesus. This, however, He does not do to all, but only to some, and even that is a rare hour of short duration. To heed, behold, and adore such a revelation, and to be ravished with love toward this blessed God may be referred to in some sense as beholding God, and as a foretaste of eternity. There one will no longer live by faith, but in beholding. Since God does not reveal Himself to the world and the unconverted, and since they cannot attain to a seeing and beholding of God by their own activity, all their speaking of such beholding, and all their beholding of God is nothing but

fantasy, is not in truth, and only a reflection of their thoughts upon the illusions of their own making. A believer, who engages himself in meditation upon divine things and seeking fellowship with God, withdraws himself from all things and considers there to be no one but God and himself. He acknowledges himself as a creature of God, as having an immortal soul, and as having been created with a human nature in Adam, excelling in holiness and glory. He also acknowledges that in all things he is miserably distorted, deformed, and abominable -- being sinful within and without. He occasionally will focus upon his condition in order to gain a deeper insight about himself and thus acknowledge himself to be unworthy that God would look upon him, or would bestow any grace or benefits upon him. He acknowledges himself to be entirely unfit and unworthy to approach unto this majestic and holy God, although he cannot enjoy light, life, peace, rest, satisfaction, and felicity except in communion with God.

While thus maintaining this humble frame, he turns his eye to the Mediator, wholeheartedly approving of this holy way to come and to be permitted to approach unto God through Him. At times he has dealings with the Mediator, not as a beginner in grace, but as one who renews his interest in Jesus -- although some who are of little faith do receive Jesus as if it were the first time, being fearful that they have neither truly received Him as yet nor are true partakers of Him. However, he frequently views Jesus as his Jesus by reason of his believing disposition, and as the way by and in which he may now approach unto God.

While turning unto God in this condition, he perceives that there is a great diversity in approaching unto Him. At times God hides Himself to such an extent and there comes such darkness upon him that he does not perceive anything of God and at times must desist, since there is only an increase in darkness, and temptations present themselves which he, at that moment, must flee. At times it is God's good pleasure to try him and to prepare him for greater things. At other times he himself is the cause of this, having lifted up his soul too highly, having exerted himself too strongly, having been too irreverent, and having had expectations which were too high. At other times it is not so dark, but God maintains a distance, refuses to be approached in a familiar manner, stands afar, and remains silent as if He neither knew nor saw him. The one who wishes to approach unto God wrestles at this point. He prays and supplicates, presents himself to the Lord Jesus as being his ransom and righteousness, and thus humbly presses on. Alternately he holds before the Lord his sonship, God's eternal love to him, the covenant of grace, and the promises. This wrestling makes him tender and causes him to weep. One moment he is discouraged and then again he lifts himself up. It may happen that he must depart again in this condition, thinking that he has sought in vain. His faith may even come under assault, whereas he nevertheless has much reason for joy and thanksgiving, since God did accommodate him, albeit secretly. It frequently refreshes him that he was able to pour out his heart before the Lord, and he wishes that he would be able to enjoy such a time once again. At other times it was his intent to come boldly to the throne of grace and to enter in by the blood of Jesus. At the very outset he is held up, however, and it is as if God casts him away and in anger refuses him access to Himself. This causes him to be perplexed. He can neither depart nor approach, and this rejection and the anger of his God are bitter to him. What must he do? He searches his heart as to its condition, whether it is in the proper frame to approach unto God. He reflects upon his former ways, seeking for the cause why God encounters him so harshly. If he detects sin and a careless walk, he will justify God in His dealings with him; he will humble himself, make confession, wash himself in the blood of Jesus, and thus endeavor to

approach unto God. If God then nevertheless refuses, he departs mournfully -- not sorrowfully, but as a subdued child who has spoiled it. He will quietly and passively submit himself and say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Micah 7:9). If, however, the Lord allows Himself to be entreated, removes His anger, and gives him free access to Himself -- even though not with the same familiarity and intimacy -- oh, how he then rejoices! Humbly and tremblingly he approaches unto the Lord and His goodness. The more humble he remains and the more childlike the disposition is which he maintains, the more light and comfort he may at times receive.

Sometimes those who come to the Lord are received by Him in a friendly manner -- yes, He runs, so to speak, to meet them and manifests His goodness, so that they are at a loss with the Lord's goodness, saying, "Why does this happen to me? Why is the Lord so good to a worm -- to me, a sinful man? Why does the Lord answer before I call and why does He say, "Here am I?" while I am yet speaking?" Yes, the Lord may even go beyond that and say, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." He may say, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? Ask of Me for yourself, your family, and for others and I shall give it to you." The Lord may presently give so many and such holy desires, while enabling them to express these desires with such a childlike and humble disposition, that at times there is more a lack of time and a succumbing of bodily strength than a lack of desires and answers. He believes these promises, takes hold of them, and may shortly thereafter become aware of the fulfillment of the promises in response to these desires.

It is thus that he, who but endeavored at first to have an encounter with God, may be held up at the very outset, so that he cannot even attain to meditation upon the matter he had intended to meditate upon. How blessed and beneficial it is to be held up in such a manner! As God does not always manifest Himself in the same manner to those who engage in meditation upon divine things, they likewise are not always in the same condition when they approach unto Him. They generally do not choose the matter about which they wish to have dealings with God; they leave that to the direction of the Spirit and follow Him to the matter to which He directs them. If they do not perceive such a special direction, they generally come before the Lord in the condition in which they are, and reflect upon that matter which is nearest to their heart.

Conditions in Which the Soul May Be in her Approach unto God

It may be that the soul is melancholy, restless, and in bondage without knowing of any special reason for this, or the soul may be empty and missing communion with God. To have a soul; to know that God alone is her satisfaction, rest, peace, and joy; to have tasted that it is good to be near unto God, and then to be forsaken; to be far from God, and to have no heart to seek earnestly -- all this not only causes her to grieve, but this sorrow shoots down deep roots, engendering melancholy, restlessness, and despondency, so that it seems as if the soul cannot be cheered up by anything. In this frame the soul approaches unto God and presents herself to the Lord as she is. She can neither pray much nor advance many arguments from her side or God's side. She quietly waits upon God and, while lifting up the heart unto God, brings to mind God's common dealings in filling the empty, comforting those that mourn, and strengthening those that are weak, saying, "If it would please Thee, Thou art also able to do this to me. Oh, do so to me and revive me!" She thus remains in the presence of God and searches whether she can detect an attribute of God which is applicable to her circumstances. If something comes to mind, she will focus her

thoughts upon this perfection to detect whether this is efficacious to her comfort. She turns to the Word of God to find a promise applicable to herself. If she finds one, she will bring it to the Lord, making an urgent appeal to the veracity and goodness of God, while engaging herself in reflecting upon those perfections with application to her own condition. Sometimes there arises light in the darkness for her and her mourning soul is refreshed. At other times nothing transpires, however, and with a sigh or quiet tear she must depart sorrowfully, sometimes believing that God will refresh her at His time and that He nevertheless is and will remain her Father.

Some may be encumbered by worldly concerns in which they neither may nor can refrain from being involved, such as a difficult occupation practiced among ungodly men, or as may be the case with a woman who must care for many children, who can hardly find time to be alone. Even if a person does find a moment, the soul, due to all these concerns, is so confused and so far from God that she cannot attain to calmness and quietness. Sometimes the conscience accuses one of not continually exercising his calling as being in the presence of the Lord, of not sufficiently planning to have time alone (which he indeed would have been able to find), and of having been spiritually lazy. In this condition the soul also presents herself before the Lord, being desirous for God. She does not dare to expect a great measure of light and a special manifestation, but she is in a humble frame and frequently knows not what to do except weep in a heartfelt manner, being prompted by desire on the one side, and due to lack of time and her neglect on the other side. She brings to mind how God is so good, being found of them that sought Him not, as the One who answers before one calls, as He who at times -- while one is speaking -- says, "Here am I," and as He who is sovereign in His ministration and at times allows Himself to be found readily by those who have little time or qualifications to seek Him with much perseverance. In looking back she perceives that the Lord has previously, on occasion, manifested Himself quickly and unexpectedly. While thus being engaged, she brings to mind God in His perfections and dealings, and delights herself more in beholding God Himself than to do so in reference to herself, even though one cannot perceive anything of the presence of God. It can also have a reciprocal effect upon the soul to her comfort; and even if she, being overwhelmed with temporal concerns, cannot perceive much light and comfort during her short time in the closet, she nevertheless rejoices in the fact that she has sought the Lord. The little crumbs of grace comfort the soul. A bodily cross can press down so much that a soul is, so to speak, buried by it. If then no means arise by which she may be relieved or delivered from it, such a soul can sometimes become discouraged, sometimes sorrowful, or at other times entertains bewildering thoughts about God and her own condition. If one were able to bear this cross without sinning, it would be no cross. However, the sinful motions of the heart, as well as sinful words and deeds, double the cross and are the thorn in it. Since she nevertheless has faith in Christ, possesses spiritual life, and considers all her felicity to consist in having communion with God, she therefore turns to God, in order to be engaged in godly meditation in His presence. In coming unto God, however, it is difficult for the soul to rid herself of the anxiety caused by the cross as it presses down and threatens. But she presents herself to the Lord as she is, humbles herself about her sin in not bearing the cross well, seeks reconciliation in the blood of Christ, and lifts up her heart to the providence of God. Considering that the cross has come to her from God's fatherly hand for her benefit, she humbles herself under the mighty hand of God, and meditates upon the gracious character of God manifested in His careful supervision over His people and her, over the promises pertaining to the hearing of prayer, and the omnipotence of God. In this manner she may be delivered from her inner anxiety, and find peace

and quietude. The cross becomes small and light to her; she takes it upon her as if it were a feather and delights herself in beholding the Lord's all-sufficiency. She chooses the Lord as her only and all-sufficient portion, rests in this, and may at times return to her cross with contentment. The soul may also be in a sinful condition. The corruption of the heart may manifest itself; she cannot resist vain thoughts; the lusts of the flesh are exceptionally strong and hold her captive; besetting sins are lively -- be it due to disposition, physical condition, or incidents which she either desires, cannot avoid, or may not avoid -- and she has little strength against them. She is then perplexed by this; sin is a heavy burden and she is bowed down by it. There is no peace; communion with God has been disturbed, God hides Himself, and faith is assaulted. What now? Any personal initiative does not result in progress; to stay away from God causes more regression. The soul dares not approach unto God due to being too sinful; and to remain in this condition is equivalent to dying continually, whereas there is life and faith in the soul. She makes the resolution to approach unto God, being convinced of her sincerity -- not only to be delivered from guilt and punishment, but also from corruption and all the sin which proceeds from this. Such a soul then presents herself to the Lord as sinful and as miserable as she is, together with her grief related to this and her desire to be delivered from it. She meditates upon the free grace of God, that God neither considers anyone's virtue (which is not naturally present anyway), nor sin, but is gracious because He wills to be gracious to her, and is merciful to whomever He wills. While meditating, she will focus upon the depth of this free grace, approve of it with her whole heart, be enamored with it, and adore it. From this she proceeds to eternal and sovereign election, to eternal love, and while reflecting upon herself and the grace which the soul perceives to be in herself, she is astonished and sinks away in adoration. "I, I sinful man have been known! I have been loved by Thee! I have been eternally appointed to be a recipient of salvation! To Thee, to Thee alone, oh Lord, be the glory for Thy free grace and for Thy unsearchable love for humanity." From this she proceeds to the Mediator Jesus Christ. In meditating upon Him she can find neither beginning nor end due to the manifestation of all the perfections of God, such as love, righteousness, wisdom, omnipotence, mercy, etc. She acknowledges this holy way as the way whereby the sinner is reconciled with God and which gives her liberty to approach unto God. This way she approves of. She becomes enamored with it and chooses it for herself. She observes in this way the fullness of the satisfaction and is absorbed by the unsearchableness of this way. She meditates upon the immutability of God, that God remains the same in His purpose and love toward the elect, even though they, time and again, spoil everything before Him. Christ's satisfaction cannot be abolished; the covenant of grace is unbreakable; God remains faithful, and always restores His own. When the soul in a negative frame occupies herself with such meditations, she will experience a wondrous change. The conscience perceives peace with God through the blood of Jesus, the estrangement is transformed into intimacy, and the soul -- being washed and cleansed -- goes her way rejoicing.

Occasionally the soul of a godly person has a desire for holiness which is more than ordinary. She is enamored with self-denial as far as honor, esteem, the love of men, comfort, earthly delight, and the riches or goods of this world are concerned. She does this neither for self nor for the rest and welfare of the soul, but for the Lord's sake, doing so to the degree and in those circumstances in which the Lord requires such from her. She is enamored with being continually in the presence of God, as well as with obeying, fearing, loving, and walking humbly with God. She greatly desires humility and meekness of heart, as well as wisdom, love, forbearance, and friendly dignity. She

furthermore yearns for the image of her Jesus, and to give expression to His life in her life. She does not desire this in an earthly, lifeless, and natural manner as the unconverted do. Rather, she desires that this be so in a living and truly spiritual manner in union with the Lord Jesus by faith -- and through Him with God -- and by the influence of the Lord's Spirit to the glory of her God, the honor of the church, and the salvation and stirring up of other people. With this desire she comes before the Lord and continues to focus upon His holiness. While continually cleaving to Christ, however, a view of God's holiness causes her to sink away in shame due to her insignificance and sinfulness, saying with Job, "Now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). With Isaiah she may cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). She nevertheless, being in Christ, continues in her beholding of this pure holiness, and allows herself to be illuminated and enlivened by this holiness; in that respect she becomes holier and holier. This is according to the testimony of the apostle: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Thus, the soul who is enamored with holiness acquaints herself with the Lord, cleaves to Him as seeing the invisible, and continually focuses upon the exhortation: "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

If the soul has no special matters to bring before the Lord and the Lord does not lead her into special matters, she makes a choice herself. She then beholds the Lord in the work of redemption and considers which perfections manifest themselves in the face of Jesus Christ. She will begin with eternal election and the Counsel of Peace, proceeding to the fall, the first gospel declaration, the ceremonies which depict Christ, and the prophecies and promises. She proceeds to the incarnation of Christ and follows Him in His life, preaching, miracles, suffering, and death -- thus from the cradle to the cross, each time making application to herself. At times the soul beholds the Lord's perfections in the work of creation and meditates upon them in an orderly and attentive fashion. Sometimes she occupies herself by meditating upon the providence of the Lord, and learns from this to rightly know God's sovereignty, wisdom, righteousness, and goodness, so that all the power, evil, and goodness of the creature disappears. She views God as being the only one who is operative, executing all things irresistibly according to His purpose and good pleasure. Then again, the soul who attentively meditates selects other matter for reflection and thus acquaints herself with the Lord. The heart thus increases its steadfast confidence in the Lord, loves Him, fears Him, serves Him, and due to continual fellowship with God, the soul begins to shine forth as the countenance of Moses did when he had communed with God for forty days upon the mountain. The Lord can also lead a longing soul to a more immediate beholding of Himself, at which time she neither brings before the Lord her conditions, nor is occupied with the works of God -- be it in nature or in grace. Instead, she immediately approaches unto God, be it in a general sense or as far as each individual perfection is concerned. This is not done in a barren and lifeless manner by merely beholding and acknowledging them. Rather, the Lord occasionally permits her to taste the efficacy and salvation to be found, and at times gives her a foretaste of the beholding of God in heaven. The soul who beholds God in a lively and spiritual manner always cleaves to Christ, and in that frame she beholds God's all-sufficiency, goodness, love, holiness, sovereignty, majesty, glory, and omnipotence, doing all this while considering that this God is her God and that He is her all. This brings forth adoration, joy, love, and praise. In thus beholding God, the soul maintains a humble, quiet, and approving frame that is void of earthly concerns -- and also is believing, meditating, going out in love, characterized by intimate communion, dependent,

desirous for counsel, and making use of His strength and benefits as her own.

We have dealt extensively with the beholding of God in chapters 3 [Vol. 1, p. 83] and 26. [p. ###87] It is essential that what we have stated there be read in conjunction with this; it is a significant element of this subject matter. Add to this also what is recorded in chapters 56: The Glorification of God, 57: Love to God, 58: Love to Christ, [Vol. 3, p. 243] 83: Love for One's Neighbor, and 84: Humility. [Vol. 4, p. 67] We would have added those matters here, had we not dealt with them in those chapters. It is not fitting to deal with the same subject matter twice in one book, and we therefore direct the reader to those chapters. If someone desires an example of holy meditations for the purpose of being instructed by them, he ought to read *De Trappen des Geestelijken Levens* (The Steps of Spiritual Life) by my deceased father, Theodorus à Brakel. If you desire meditations of a simpler level, you ought to read, *De Aandachtige Leerling* (The Attentive Pupil) by my deceased wife, Sara Nevius. A Final Exhortation The conclusion of all that we have stated as a warning against the Pietists is as follows: There is natural and spiritual religion, a natural and spiritual denial of self, a natural belonging to God as Creator and preserver and a spiritual and true belonging to God as a reconciled Father in Christ, a natural and spiritual love to God and to man, and a natural and spiritual reflection upon and beholding of God. This is the crux of the matter; everything depends upon this, and salvation or condemnation is contingent upon this. We have made as clear a distinction as possible between the natural and the spiritual, and wish that every one to whom salvation is dear would know this distinction, reject that which is natural, and practice what is spiritual, rather than embrace immediately whatever has the appearance of spirituality.

Objection: Religion, self-denial, belonging to God, love for God and man, the beholding of God, etc., are indeed good things, and if a person is engaged in that which is good, we ought to love such a person. Is it necessary to be so careful in investigating the difference between the natural and the spiritual, and to weigh it upon the scale of a goldsmith? We ought not to judge each other in these matters, but tolerate one another. The one may do it in this manner and the other in that manner, but we must overlook the manner itself, considering it to be insignificant.

Answer: However, must we not have a heartfelt love for our fellow man? Is it love if we, in order to maintain peace and unity, allow our neighbor to run to his destruction in hell? Is it not love if we wish to lead him by the hand unto salvation and warn him about the way which leads to hell? And even if he becomes difficult and views you as dealing lovelessly with him and as being desirous to lord over him, is it therefore not love if we nevertheless wish to pull him away from his destruction? What I did in this chapter I have done out of love, in order to deliver souls from destruction and to direct them in the holy way unto salvation. If you do not wish to hear me, it will grieve me that you are intent on running to your destruction.

You are saying that the actions of all parties are one and the same; the manner in which they are done is a matter of insignificance, and therefore, we must allow everyone to proceed according to his own opinion. If, however, everything depends on the manner in which one proceeds, and if this determines whether something is either natural or spiritual, and leads either to damnation or salvation, then this is not a matter of insignificance. Love demands that we point this out to each other, and warn, protect, and correct each other. For example, in the realm of the natural, is it a matter of indifference to you whether you have a clear diamond in your ring or a piece of glass of

the same size and appearance? It also glitters. Is it a matter of indifference to you if a coin has but the proper imprint, regardless of whether it is copper or gold -- as long as it is red? You do search out the difference in the natural realm -- either choosing or rejecting it -- and will not allow yourself to be fooled by external appearance, and would you yet be careless in the spiritual realm upon which everything depends? If there are two rich persons, the one owning his goods righteously and the other unrighteously, will you consider them to be of equal status and say, "Rich is rich, and the matter of "how?" is not important; that should not be so strictly investigated or distinguished"? Should one not give consideration as to the "how" in spiritual matters, since everything depends on it? If there are two horses and the one is clean, vigorous, and fast, whereas the other is full of stinking abscesses, stiff, and halting miserably, would you then say, "A horse is a horse, life is life, and progress is progress"? Are there differences in the physical realm and must we yet approve of everything in the spiritual realm? Is it the same to you whether a dead horse teems with living worms, or whether it is alive? Is it the same to you whether you have your father, child, husband, or wife represented on a painting, or whether they are present in very person? Would you say, "It is all the same"? This is likewise true in the spiritual realm. Is it a matter of indifference as to whether a clock indicates the hour by her chime or whether this is indicated by a human voice? If some people wish to go to the same city and some travel upon the right way, whereas others enter upon a way which does not lead to the city, but to the land of the enemy, would you then say that they all have good intentions, and one must thus leave them alone in their choice of direction? Must we not warn those who have strayed?

I have presented an abundance of examples to convince everyone forcefully that everything does depend upon the "how" or the manner, and that primary attention must be given to this. Scripture says that we must take heed how we hear, and we must speak and act accordingly. Natural men who behold spiritual matters in a natural sense remain natural and unregenerate in the flesh, and the light they have only changes them as far as the degree of virtuousness is concerned -- with which they cannot please God (Romans 8:8). They remain without Christ, without true saving faith, and therefore without spiritual life; all their reflections, self-denial, and love for God and men are but dead works. With all their illusions, spirituality (as they call it), and delightful daydreaming they will perish if they do not repent. Be warned, and may the Lord convict such persons and bring them to the right place. Take note of the following texts: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24), since they are not upon the right way and do not seek to enter in the right manner. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). Since they are of the opinion that they are correct, believing that the hidden and spiritual way to heaven has been found by them, there is but little possibility that they can be convinced of their error. "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you ... but the publicans and the harlots believed Him" (Matthew 21:31-32). Therefore, I warn you in love; do not stray any further, lest you perish. And you who are beginners in grace, and have been enticed by such natural beholding of God, self-denial, and love, I call out after you, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee" (Song of Solomon 6:13). May the Lord hear my prayer on your behalf. A Word of Encouragement to the Godly

I have indeed anticipated that some of the godly in reading this warning would become concerned and doubt their state, thinking as follows: "If the unconverted also can come this far -- that is, live in

the beholding of God, in the denial of self, loving God and man, are determined to have God as their portion, and to commune with God as their God -- do I even resemble them? How can I think to possess grace if I do not, so to speak, resemble them at all -- neither in their activity, nor in their ecstatic speaking about those matters and about the Lord Jesus? I truly ask myself: "Do I have grace indeed?" To this I answer that whatever they do in a natural manner, you do in a spiritual manner by the principle of spiritual knowledge and life which is within you. Even if they acted and spoke as you perceive they do (although they do not do so), you nevertheless have no reason to doubt your spiritual state, for a small, weak child is just as much a human being as the strongest man. In the church there are indeed men and fathers in Christ, and there are also weak children. Due to the faint resemblance to others, one may not draw the conclusion that one is neither gracious nor possessing grace. Rather, one must acknowledge that which he possesses and be desirous for growth.

Furthermore, your understanding of God and Christ, your prayers, your desires after God, your seeking after the Lord Jesus, your focusing upon God, and your deeds and exercises -- all proceeding from this principle of life -- exceed all their beholding of God, reflections, sinking away in God, losing themselves in God, and similar expressions. The difference is as great as the difference between a dead and a living person; it is incomparable. The difference is not one of degree but of very essence. The one is natural and the other spiritual; the one is but an illusion, a fabrication. They are but self-made images which you can observe as frequently as you wish, whereas the other is truth, Spirit, and a life emanating from the Holy Spirit. If you were familiar with their activity and the manner in which they behold God -- however, they do not come to God, but imagine a God who is according to their wishes -- and the manner in which they deny themselves, love, and speak, you would not desire such spirituality, but would reject it. You are also able to create natural images of God and mentally ascend higher and higher. If you yield to such natural imagination, however, you will readily perceive that this cannot delight you; it makes you colder and you will reject it. However, the least ray of God in the face of Christ, the least fleeing to Jesus and leaning upon Him will be incomparably sweeter to you than all that lifeless meditation. Therefore, rejoice quietly in your portion -- however small it may seem to you -- since it consists in light, life, truth, union with Christ, and love, and allow all those who have such elevated natural notions to go their way. Out of love for communion with Jesus and for His children, continue to be exercised with that spiritual principle which is according to the Word of God, and thank the Lord for your portion, which incomparably exceeds all their natural motions. Your spiritual principle cannot coalesce with theirs, since they are the very opposite of each other. To be but acquainted with their activities is sufficient to reject their principle and to flee from it. Consider but this one example: You love the godly because they love the Lord Jesus and are loved by Him, whereas you love other people in an entirely different manner from the children of God. You cannot be in agreement with all manner of false doctrine. They love indiscriminately, regardless of which religion a person may belong to. It is only the truly godly who stand firm in the faith, who are established in the truth, and who have intimate fellowship with God in the Spirit, whom they do not love. Rather, they abhor them and flee from them since their works, which are not upright but only of a natural disposition, are made manifest by the light of such. By this you can discern the rest of their doings. Be on your guard against this, and let your dealings between God and your soul be in simplicity and in truth. Let your eye continually be focused upon the Word of God whereby you have received spiritual light and life, which is also your continual nourishment and the rule for your

life. Then you will proceed safely.

We have thus presented to you the fundamentals to which you must adhere in order to be safeguarded against the temptation of the Pietists, which simultaneously serve as marks whereby they are discovered. We have therefore considered the following from two perspectives: love to God and man, the denial of self, belonging and being united to God, and the beholding of God. We have done so both from the side of the Pietists and the side of the godly, having demonstrated from the Word of God that their activity is but the natural activity of the unconverted by which they will perish; and that the activity in which the godly engage is rooted in God, is by the Holy Spirit, is according to the Word of God, and leads them to salvation. That which has been said is sufficient to convince those poor misguided people who, desiring to approach unto God and become partakers of salvation, instead depart from God and enter upon the broad way of destruction. Oh, that the Lord would open their eyes and change their hearts so that they would forsake their foolishness and walk in the way of understanding! That which has been said ought also to suffice as a warning for those who are inclined toward the ways of the Pietists. That is an easy way which agrees with man's nature and in which Satan leaves them alone, being able to safely lead them to hell in this way -- for the truly godly have both their nature and the devil against them. Therefore, withdraw your foot from them, depart from them, and remove yourself from their snares. If you desire pure light and true godliness, remain with the church, follow the Word, and walk in straight paths.

It also ought to suffice to stir up the truly godly to walk in the way of the Lord with new courage and lifting up of the heart, and to let their light shine -- to let it shine in demonstration of what truth is, what the efficacy of truth is, and what is the way of uprightness and holiness, so that the Pietists and their illusions may be put to shame. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). May the Lord send out His light and truth; may they lead and bring you unto His holy hill, and to His tabernacles (Psalms 43:3).

049. Chapter 44: Sanctification and Holiness

----- CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR ----- Sanctification and Holiness In the previous volumes we have discussed the meriting of salvation and its application to the elect. In the final two volumes we shall consider the life of the true partakers of the covenant in its particulars and the manner in which it functions. We shall begin with sanctification and holiness. The Infinitives "To Sanctify" and "To Hallow" Defined The verbs sanctify or hallow have several meanings. First, they are sometimes understood comprehensively as referring to salvation in its entirety, in which are comprehended regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification (Hebrews 10:10; 1 Peter 1:2). Secondly, they occasionally signify a reverent acknowledgment of God's majesty, essential holiness, and other attributes (1 Peter 3:15). Thirdly, they can signify a separation from common usage unto the service of God. This can be true 1) as far as time is concerned; God thus sanctified the seventh day (Exodus 20:11); 2) for matters and objects separated for religious purposes (Exodus 40:13; Numbers 5:10); 3) for persons separated unto the public ministry, such as the firstborn (Numbers 3:13), subsequently the tribe of Levi in their place (Numbers 3:12; Numbers 3:45), and Aaron and his sons in the priestly office (Exodus 40:13). Fourthly, it can signify an accommodating of one's self to and preparing of one's self for religious service (Exodus 19:10-11). Fifthly, it can signify separation from the world and transfer into the church (Deuteronomy 7:6; 1 Corinthians 7:14). Sixthly, it can signify an internal disposition which harmonizes with the image of God, as well as its external manifestation (Hebrews 12:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1). It is the latter which we shall discuss in this chapter. The Distinction Between Justification and Sanctification

Justification and sanctification always coexist in a believer; where the one is, the other will also be present. One should entertain no notions about justification if he does not at the same time possess the principle of sanctification. Neither ought he to have any notions that he is a partaker of true sanctification if he is not justified and if he does not earnestly seek this by faith in Christ. They are therefore conjoined: "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification" (1 Corinthians 1:30); "... but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Nevertheless, these two matters are in essence entirely different. First, justification is executed by God as righteous Judge; sanctification is executed by God the Holy Spirit as re-creator. Secondly, justification is executed by God toward man as the object; sanctification transpires within man as being the subject. Thirdly, justification removes guilt and punishment, and establishes man in a state of felicity; sanctification removes pollution and restores the image of God. Fourthly, justification is executed perfectly each time; sanctification always remains imperfect as long as man is upon earth. Fifthly, in natural order justification comes first, and sanctification follows as proceeding from justification.

Sanctification: The Efficacious Operation of God in the Elect

Sanctification is the efficacious operation of God in elect, called, regenerated, and justified sinners, purifying them by means of the Word from the pollution of sin, transforming them according to the

image of God, and -- by virtue of this internal principle of spiritual life--causing them to live according to His will as expressed in the law of the ten commandments.

We repeat, sanctification is an efficacious work of God. God alone is its cause. As little as man can contribute to his regeneration, faith, and justification, so little can he contribute to his sanctification. "... for without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). The Lord Jesus says this concerning His disciples who already are believers. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do" (Php 2:13). The apostle demonstrates this in his prayer: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (1 Thessalonians 5:23); "And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel" (Ezekiel 37:28). Sometimes it is attributed to the Father: "... to them that are sanctified by God the Father" (Jude 1:1); sometimes to the Son: "That He might sanctify and cleanse it" (Ephesians 5:26); sometimes to the Holy Spirit: "... through sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Peter 1:2); "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Galatians 5:22). He is therefore called the "Spirit of holiness" (Romans 1:4).

Even though God does not need any means, He nevertheless uses the Word of God as a means: "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17); "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26). It is there that sins are held forth in their abominable nature and spiritual life is revealed in its desirability. Scripture convicts, rebukes, threatens, and judges. It contains exhortations and various inducements, Christ is presented as the Fountain of sanctification, and it contains the promises. All this the Holy Spirit applies to the heart of believers, exercising and activating them unto sanctification -- the Word of God being an instrument in the hand of God (apart from which a means cannot be operative). Since ministers preach the Word of God and urgently call to repentance and sanctification, they are also means unto sanctification. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? For we are labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 3:9); "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). As man is the cause of his actions in natural life -- albeit that in his being and motions he is dependent upon God, and functions by means of the preceding, cooperative, and executing power of God -- this is likewise true in spiritual life. Believers hate sin, love God, are obedient, and do good works. However, they do this neither on their own nor independently from God; rather, the Holy Spirit, having infused spiritual life in them at regeneration, maintains that life by His continual influence, stirs it up, activates it, and causes it to function in harmony with its spiritual nature -- doing so in that order which God has established as far as the functioning of man's intellect, will, and affections are concerned, as well as the works which proceed from these. Man, being thus moved by the influence of God's Spirit, moves, sanctifies himself, engages in that activity which his new nature desires and is inclined toward, and does that which he knows to be his duty. Observe this in the following passages: "Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1); "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Those who are sanctified are all the elect and they alone. "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4); "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the

image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). In them, all things become new; not only the intellect but also the will; not only the will but also the intellect; not only the intellect and will but also the affections. Thus, not only the inferior faculties of the soul, but also the superior; not only the internal, but also the external deeds; not the external deeds only -- as the Socinians would like to have it, not acknowledging the internal dimension -- but also the internal faculties, intellect, will, and affections. "... be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2); "... therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20); "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17); "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Although all the elect are sanctified -- that is, in all things and in all aspects -- they are nevertheless not all sanctified in the same measure. There are children, young men, and fathers (1 John 2:13). There are oaks of righteousness, green palm trees, and high cedars, as well as broken reeds and smoking flaxes. He who is weak occasionally becomes strong, and he who is strong occasionally becomes weak -- not only as far as manifestation is concerned, but also as far as habitual grace is concerned. Their spiritual life never disappears, however, and they never again come under the dominion of sin, even though they are occasionally captured by sin as by an enemy, and for a time are even held captive. "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand" (Psalms 37:24). The activity or deeds of sanctification have a twofold focus: against sin and unto holiness. In reference to sin it is called: the putting off the old man (Ephesians 4:24); the mortification of the members which are upon the earth (Colossians 3:5); the crucifixion of the flesh with the affections and lusts (Galatians 5:24); the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh (Colossians 2:11); abstinence from fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:11); and the cleansing of ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1). In reference to holiness it is called: a putting on the new man (Ephesians 4:24); a being transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2); being conformed to the image of the Son (Romans 8:29); and a travailing until Christ be formed in us (Galatians 4:19).

Sanctification and its Relationship to the Old and New Man in the Believer The old man is the corruption of the human nature. By reason of the fall man has come into a most abominable and dreadful condition. He is void of the image of God, as well as all light, true love, righteousness, holiness, peace, and true joy. He has within him the nature of the devil, and is capable of committing all manner of abominations against God and his neighbor. He finds no delight in God, but hates God, all that resembles God, and whatever God commands him. It is his wish that the Holy One of Israel would depart from him. He is indeed satisfied if he can stay away from God, and does not wish to subject himself to God. It is his entire desire to live in sin. If he could eternally live in sin, he would readily let God have heaven. His lusts are his master, directing his intellect, will, and all the members of his body to satisfy them. Thus whatever is in him is wrong and distorted. Man is entirely such prior to his conversion. Scripture refers to this disposition as the old man.

It is called man because this corruption permeates man in his entirety. It penetrates his intellect, will, affections, and all the members of his body in its motions, both by unbridled passions, as well as the pleasure which the body receives in the commission of sin. These sins are ignited by his lusts, and they in turn ignite his lusts. Thus, both mind and conscience are contaminated and man is abominable, disobedient, and unfit for every good work (Titus 1:15-16). An evil tree brings forth

evil fruit, and an evil man brings forth evil things out of the evil treasure of his heart (Matthew 12:33; Matthew 12:35). "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19).

It is called old man since its origin is from the time of Adam and is already in man prior to being regenerated. Thus man, prior to his conversion, is nothing but "old man," that is, corruption. This "old man" is also called: fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:11); flesh (Romans 7:23); law of sin (Romans 7:23); the image of the first Adam (Genesis 5:3; 1 Corinthians 15:49). By applying the law of opposites it is now evident what the new man is: the spiritual propensity, spiritual life, the sanctified nature, and the image of God consisting in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. It is otherwise also referred to as the inward man (Romans 7:22); the hidden man of the heart (1 Peter 3:4); God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10); a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17); and the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). It is called man because it permeates the entire man and penetrates his intellect, will, affections, and all the members of the body in their motions, causing man to function in harmony with this holy nature. It is called new man because it is infused in man subsequent to the existence of the old man and transforms him into an entirely different and renewed man.

Although man receives a new nature in regeneration and all things become new in every respect -- that is, affecting his intellect, will, affections, and the members of his body -- man will nevertheless not achieve the highest degree of perfection as long as he lives, but everything will always be only in part. The old nature, even though it does not dominate, nevertheless remains in man, retains its own nature, and does not cease to manifest itself at every opportunity. It is the wise will of God to allow the old nature to remain. Hereby the free grace of God will shine forth all the more, as well as His longsuffering and power, preventing the new nature from being extinguished and devoured by the old nature -- strong as it may be. Hereby Christ's atonement always remains fresh and precious and the only foundation of our justification and joy. Hereby man remains small in himself and it gives reason for continual battle, upon which the crown is promised. This engenders a longing for heaven and the state of perfection. This is correctly understood by him who, while maintaining the desire and striving for perfection, can presently subject himself to the will of God in this respect and thus keep himself from despondency by way of justification and the hope that once it will be thus. As water and fire cannot coexist in one vessel, but will strive to expel each other in order to have sole occupancy, so it also is with the old and new man. They both coexist in one and the same regenerated man -- not intermittently, as if at one time the one and then the other exists, but they are present simultaneously. They do not each have a different location, as if the one were in the intellect and the other in the will; the one in the soul and the other in the body. Rather, they are intermingled as light and darkness are intermingled at dusk, and as cold and heat in lukewarm water. Being thus intermingled, they strive to expel each other. This warfare does not transpire in such a fashion that the old man is first removed to make room for the new man, similar to an old house first having to be removed before a new house can be built in its place. Such is the focus of the discipline in popish monasteries, and by which the Labadists -- whose entire objective is to imitate the popish mystical writers and their manner of speech -- define their piety and thus draw souls from the right way. God has therefore turned all their intentions upside down, and in His wrath has caused them to be confused and to be separated from each other. It is sufficiently evident that this was but their own doings to restrict the old man in some measure (while internally allowing it to remain untouched), and but a natural piety, for they now again intermingle with all

sorts of people. They are demonstrating that they have not learned the least self-denial (especially when it comes to esteem and money), excepting those who were converted prior to joining with them -- in them grace remains and still shines forth.

These two natures within a regenerate person generate a continual warfare. If a believer engages himself diligently in this battle, the old nature will decrease more and more, and the new and holy nature will increase more and more in sanctification. To that end we shall present the manner in which both natures function. We shall first consider the functioning of the old nature. The old nature is active in a threefold manner: 1) in causing man to commit sin; 2) in causing him to abstain from that which is good; and 3) in contaminating whatever good work it cannot prevent.

The Functioning of the Old Man in the Believer The old nature stirs up to the commission of sin.

(1) Sometimes it does so by violent assaults. The lusts are so agitated and are stirring so vehemently that there is no time to think upon the fear of God. Even if the fear of the Lord surfaces, the lusts increase so forcefully in strength that any good inclinations are immediately extinguished. Thus, sin is committed before one can think about anything else, the heart being carried about as chaff in the wind.

(2) Sometimes the old nature seeks some rest; to be so intently focused upon God tires the body and the mind, so that it appears impossible to live in such a manner. The old nature, in seeking some rest and relaxation, begins initially to think upon natural things; however, the lusts of the flesh begin to stir, and the thoughts pertaining to natural things become sinful, due to one's ego entering the picture. A person will begin to build castles in the sky, imagining himself to have possessions, to be in a position of prominence, of being honored, and of having riches. Even though he knows that he will never attain to this, he nevertheless entertains himself with such imagery. From this point the old nature proceeds to reflect upon that sin which most readily presents itself -- be it immorality, a lust for money, or pride. Being thus drawn away from his steadfastness, he commits sin to the degree that the moment permits, and if the opportunity were not lacking, he would fall into sins which he never thought himself to be capable of. Or, if the opportunity is there, he will fall into sin from which he thought to have been delivered -- be it in a natural sense or by grace.

(3) Sometimes the old nature gains in strength due to recklessness. A person will bring himself into situations, knowing from experience that they have repeatedly ensnared him. This can either be solitude, or the company of certain people, yet he is of the opinion that he will now be able to abstain from the previous sins. In making use of the opportunity, however, he is inclined to it before realizing it, and sin having found an opening must proceed; the sin which is then at hand gains the upper hand. Contact with grease cannot but leave a stain. [Note: This is a paraphrase of the Dutch idiom, "Vetjes maken smetjes."]

(4) Sometimes the old nature presents something as being beneficial but conceals its sinfulness. It presents it as a necessity, as being delightful, as being advantageous, or as being honest, etc. Sometimes it is presented as a white lie, as being a necessity (not being able to do business otherwise), as being an honest deed, or as something which would otherwise prevent you from intermingling with people in a civil manner. Sometimes it suggests that one will thereby come into a position, in which he will be able to do more good subsequently -- and similar pretenses, which are not advanced in a premeditated manner, but suddenly present themselves at a given

opportunity. And thus, man takes more liberty -- or at least he does not resist sin as much, and the old nature breaks through, one sin begetting another.

Secondly, the old nature is likewise always engaged in keeping man from that which is good.

(1) There will be no time for one to engage in his godly exercises of praying, reading, singing, and meditation.

Therefore these exercises either do not occur at all, or only in a casual manner to satisfy the conscience. It is as if he is rushed, even though he frequently would have the time.

(2) At another time one will postpone the matter, determining to do it, but to do it in a more quiet and composed manner; certain things first have to be accomplished. In the meanwhile time slips away or the Spirit has departed, and one does not get to it, or it is void of all spirituality.

(3) Then again the task appears as being exceptionally difficult; one looks up against it, and seeks to avoid and postpone it. Having burdened himself with many difficulties, he approaches the duty as a lazy person and, so to speak, crawls forward. It is too difficult and one is not fit to do it.

(4) Again he thinks that all that he does is in vain, that God does not hear, that one shall not obtain it, and he suggests to himself that he shall not obtain anything in the future anyhow. Our words do not carry any weight with others; we shall be put to shame, and our careful walk will only be construed as hypocrisy.

(5) Or one will try to compromise. The way to heaven is not so narrow as one generally claims. Would all those perish who are not so precise? No! It is not contrary to godliness to have determination, and to be courteous and cheerful. Thus, the old nature will prevent one from making vigorous progress and from carefully following the footsteps of Jesus.

Thirdly, if the old nature cannot keep man away from that which is good, she will endeavor to spoil that which is good.

(1) At one time she will cause the thoughts to wander from one thing to the next.

(2) At another time there will be good thoughts which, however, will not be applicable at the moment. They are only fit to break the resolution toward that good thing which at that moment is to be performed.

(3) Again, ulterior motives and our ego can enter the picture which will hinder a person in his duty, causing him to lose his resolve and the stimulus to be removed; thus the purity of the duty is contaminated.

(4) Then there will be thoughts that all is devoid of the Spirit and but the work of nature -- yes, even hypocrisy.

(5) At another time the atheistic heart and unbelief come to the surface, which contaminate the performance of spiritual duty -- and instead of being refreshed by the performance of one's duty, there is consternation and abhorrence that he has performed this good duty in such an evil manner. And thus the old nature agitates within. The Mortification of the Old Man

However, the new nature is not inactive either, but rather opposes the old nature, at one time by mortifying it directly, or at another time by strengthening the new man and becoming increasingly holy -- and this is the essential activity of sanctification. We shall first discuss the functioning of the new man in mortifying sin, and subsequently, the manner in which the new nature is strengthened. The Holy Spirit, having infused a new nature at regeneration, preserves it by His continual influence, stirs it up, supports it, and directs it in all its motions. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:13). This spiritual life, this new nature being thus supported and activated, functions in harmony with its strength (or weakness), and sets itself against the old nature, either to mortify or to expel it. "... if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13); "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of Christian life, battle of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Galatians 5:16-17). The new nature opposes the old nature. She does so, first of all, by a heartfelt mourning and being grieved that she is so surrounded by sin and is made so polluted and abominable by it; this causes her to abhor herself. It grieves her that she is thereby prevented from living in sweet communion with God, that she continually acts contrary to the will of God, and thus makes herself worthy of the wrath of God. Sin troubles her and as a heavy burden is too heavy for her. How she wishes to be delivered from this abominable monster! With great courage she would cast sin away if she could, but it is too deeply rooted and cleaves too much to her, so that she cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (Romans 7:24). All sorrow over other matters is as nothing compared to the evil motions, sorrow, and abominableness of sin. She mourns like a dove and chatters as a swallow; she goes about mournfully and sin can even cause her to be thin in the face. She does not avoid this mourning, but seeks to increase this sorrow and to spiritualize it. She brings herself into the presence of the Holy Spirit as she is and sinks away in shame. There she makes wholehearted confession, weeps, enlarges the sinfulness of sin, grieves, and prays for forgiveness. There she flees to Jesus, receives Him as her ransom, and with that atonement goes to the Father and wrestles until she is justified and becomes conscious of peace. She thus comes into a more upright condition and becomes more fearful of sin. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Corinthians 7:10); "Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better" (Ecclesiastes 7:3).

Secondly, the new nature opposes the old nature by hating sin. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Psalms 97:10); "I hate vain thoughts ... and I hate every false way" (Psalms 119:113; Psalms 119:128). This hatred manifests itself:

(1) By an inward aversion for sin and its pollution -- seeing by the light of God's holiness and His holy will how contradictory and unbecoming sin is -- that it is a despising and rejecting of God. This engenders aversion in her. "Abhor that which is evil" (Romans 12:9). As a result she abhors herself. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6).

(2) By a felt consternation upon the commission of sin. The heart rate increases, inner peace departs, and restlessness comes in its place. A desire to take revenge upon sin arises in the heart.

"David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt" (1 Samuel 24:5); "... neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin" (Psalms 38:3); "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye

sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" (2 Corinthians 7:11).

(3) By a despising of sin, so that one can neither hear nor see it. One neither wants to say a word about it, nor have it mentioned, and if sin arises, one will cast it away as being worthless, doing so as hastily as one shakes fire from his clothing. "... hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 1:23). The third method of opposition consists in an immediate fleeing from sin. The new nature, when functioning well, is watchful against sin. She robs it of all nourishment and opportunity; she has learned by now to which sin her nature is most inclined and which circumstances will cause sin to arise the most, as well as render it strength. If it is idleness, solitude, or the company of such and such a person, she will abstain therefrom. "I kept myself from mine iniquity" (Psalms 18:23); "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Proverbs 1:10); "Enter not into the path of the wicked" (Proverbs 4:14); "Depart from evil" (Psalms 34:14).

Fourthly, with great courage she will resist sin when it presents itself and she will endeavor to cast it out. She begins with the heart for she knows that when it is pure within, it will also become pure without. The external abstinence from sin does not count with her, but she desires to pull sin out of the heart with root and branch. She is engaged in mortifying sin (Colossians 3:5), with crucifying the flesh and all its lusts (Galatians 5:24), and she purifies the heart and cleanses the hands (James 4:8). She makes resolution, girds herself for battle, takes courage, and does not wish to yield to sin. She focuses her attention upon the love of God and this urges her on. She unites herself to the fear of God, reflecting upon all the divine warnings and judgments upon both the godly and the ungodly -- this being related to specific committed sins against which she now has to do battle. She prays for help and depends on the power of God. She does everything by faith which, relative to this, functions as follows:

(1) She seeks for a promise of God which is applicable to her current condition, such as: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart ... to love the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 30:6); "A new heart also will I give you ... and I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

(2) She focuses upon such promises, thereupon goes to Christ, receiving Him unto justification, and in a lively manner determines that all promises -- and thus also those -- are yea and amen in Christ. In Him she views herself as an heir of the promises that will also be fulfilled to her.

(3) In this manner she engages herself while continually clinging to the promises.

(4) She thus uses all the means which God has prescribed to her.

(5) She is patient as far as the promises are concerned and continues to trust that they will come true for her. She submits herself to the will of God as far as time and measure are concerned and continues to be exercised therewith. She thus progresses and increases in strength, while the strength of sin gradually decreases, even though she cannot always perceive that she is gaining the victory. The Quickening of the New Man The second function of the new nature is the strengthening of itself and the increase in holiness. This manifests itself in: 1) love for the will of God, 2) a desire for the performance of duty, and 3) being encouraged in the performance of duty.

First, the new nature is not satisfied to battle sin only, but she wants holiness in its place. As labor and diligence are needful for the one, this is likewise true for the other. She follows after holiness, which particularly manifests itself in her desire to be united with the will of God. She focuses upon the will of God as being the will of her Father in Christ. She knows God as being holy, and as the only majestic and sovereign Commander (cf. Isaiah 55:4). She sees such purity and beauty in the will of God and considers it to be so appropriate, that her will becomes one with God's will, and she becomes completely enamored with it. She earnestly resolves to cause her will to will whatever God wills that she shall will.

(1) If it pleases God to send suffering her way according to either soul or body, she wishes to receive it -- it being the will of her Lord. She embraces it, willingly accepts it -- even if it is with tearful eyes due to the grievousness which she must endure, since to be without feeling is contrary to the will of God. She humbles herself under the mighty hand of God and neither grumbles, is sorrowful, nor is despondent. If these do arise, she will then say, "Be silent, for that is contrary to the will of God." Rather, she patiently submits herself, although she knows of no reason why the Lord deals thus with her. She says: "I need not know any reason, for God does not give an account of all His deeds; and should I, a worm, insist that God would give an account of His doings to me? No, it suffices me that this is the will of my Father; I know from the Word that it is love and that it will work for my good -- even if I cannot see how. It will once come to an end and the outcome will be glorious." Such exercises of bowing her will under the will of God make the soul holy. David was thus exercised in his oppression: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Psalms 39:9); "He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because He hath borne it upon him. For the Lord will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies" (Lamentations 3:28; Lamentations 3:31-32); "For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).

(2) She therefore also embraces the will of God in regard to that which God wills her to do -- both physically and spiritually. We read in Scripture, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). This is also her will. If she serves, she serves "with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:7). If she must abstain from this or do that, she immediately focuses upon the will of God and either abstains from or does something because it is His will. "... doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6). Since she has so much love for the will of God, she also has much love for the commandments and laws of God. "O how love I Thy law! How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will delight myself in Thy statutes. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes alway, even unto the end" (Psalms 119:97; Psalms 119:103; Psalms 119:14; Psalms 119:16; Psalms 119:111-112).

She thus conducts herself with every act and in every situation, proving "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). In one word, this is her entire objective and she is very desirous whether present or absent, to be accepted of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:9). The second deed of the new nature in regard to sanctification is in the matter and in the duty. "...Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy name" (Nehemiah 1:11). This desire manifests itself in:

(1) the offering of one's self to the service of the Lord: "Speak; for Thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:10);

(2) asking what the Lord would have us to do: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do" (Acts 9:6);

(3) listening to the answer: "I will ... watch to see what He will say unto me" (Habakkuk 2:1);

(4) a willing readiness to accept the task: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness" (Psalms 110:3); "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (Psalms 119:60);

(5) a fervent zeal in executing the task: "... fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11);

(6) a steadfastness in the performance of the duty: "... they, which ... bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). The third deed consists in having spiritual courage to break through all obstacles and to be impeded by nothing -- regardless of what it may be. If she falls, she arises again; if she is wounded, she goes to the Physician, Christ, and receives His blood as the balm that will readily heal her. From adversities she draws strength, resisting them all the more courageously. She lifts herself up in the ways of the Lord, for she knows that the enemy has already been conquered by the Lord Jesus and that she only has to deal with his death throes. She knows that the enemy will never conquer her and that she will remain the victor and be crowned as victor. It is therefore her happiness to do the right and her joy to engage in battle against her enemies. She thus breaks through. "Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song of Solomon 8:6-7). Such courageous ones are denominated by the title of "strong ones" or "mighty men": [Note: In the Statenvertaling "held" is used in both Joel 3:10 and Zechariah 10:5. Its literal translation is "hero"; however, the KJV uses "strong" and "mighty men" respectively in these texts.] "Let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3:10). They are characterized as such: "... the Lord of hosts ... hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded" (Zechariah 10:3; Zechariah 10:5). It is thus that the new nature is engaged in sanctification, and this makes it evident how great the difference is between the manner in which the unconverted curb sin, and true sanctification; between the virtuousness of a person without grace, and a person with grace. Oh, that all who are virtuous in a civil and natural manner would be convicted by this! The Fruit of Sanctification: Holiness The fruit of the exercise of sanctification is holiness. It is impossible for a person to be thus engaged and yet to be without fruit, and it cannot be otherwise but that such a person will become holier and shine forth with holy ornaments.

Holiness is the most beautiful ornament and the most magnificent beauty which can be found in man. "Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever" (Psalms 93:5); "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness" (Psalms 110:3); "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4). The word holiness engenders esteem and reverence as soon as one hears it. Therefore, how glorious and how magnificent is he who is truly holy! Holiness is not just an external matter, nor does it only consist in abstaining from evil and in doing good. Rather, the seat of holiness is the heart. It is because of the holy

disposition of the heart that a saint hates and flees all sin without exception, and delights in and exercises all virtues without exception. However, no one can understand rightly (except the person who has such a disposition), what manner of heart disposition this holiness is and the manner in which holy deeds flow forth out of this disposition, just as no virtue can be rightly known except by those who practice it. Since holiness is the image of God, how then can anyone know holiness who does not know God? When God translates His elect into the state of being a child of God, having endowed them with the perfection of their Head and Surety, He likewise truly adorns them with His image. They "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:10); "... the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). Thus, holiness is an expression of the purity of God and a conformity with God. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

We shall hold forth a sanctified soul with a higher degree of holiness in order to demonstrate her beauty. Therefore one who is little and weak in grace must not be discouraged when he perceives that he has not progressed this far.

God grants such sanctified souls a wondrous light in the soul (1 Peter 2:9), enlightened eyes of the understanding (Ephesians 1:18), and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). In this light the soul sees God, His perfections, and among others, His majesty and glory. She perceives that God is worthy in Himself, that all intelligent creatures would find all their delight and joy in Him, express all their love to Him, and submit with all readiness in all things to His will. At the same time, the soul perceives that God has been so good to have willed something in reference to man -- be it that He directs some suffering his way, or that He commands him something. The sanctified soul needs no other reason for subjecting herself and being obedient than that it be the will of God. She perceives, however, that the law is holy, and that the commandment is holy, righteous, and good (Romans 8:12). Yes, she perceives unfathomable wisdom in it and it is her delight to behold the law and to meditate continually upon it. This simultaneously causes her to be filled with loving ecstasy and to burn with desire to be conformed to this law -- as being the will of God -- in her nature and her deeds. We observe this in David: "O how love I Thy law! I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. And I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage" (Psalms 119:97;Psalms 119:14;Psalms 119:47;Psalms 119:54). The sanctified soul does not rest satisfied with this view and this delight, but makes a holy resolution and lifts up her heart to keep the law. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes always, even unto the end" (Psalms 119:106;Psalms 119:112). Prior to this, all the affections were as hotheaded horses, not giving heed to the intellect and will, but rather running ahead -- yes, inclining the intellect and will (being deceived) to follow them. Instead, these are now redirected unto obedience and by this inner life stirred up to delight in and to be inclined toward the will of God. The entire body becomes subservient and all its members become instruments of righteousness. They are subservient to the sanctified soul -- not only to execute her wishes, but the eye and the ear continually find substance for the nourishment of spiritual life. Behold, darkness is thus driven away by light, death is swallowed up by life, and sinful deformity is removed by holiness and beauty.

It does not end here, but the soul, having such an inner disposition, shows by her very deeds that she knows and loves God. She is opposed to all that is sin, internally cleansing herself from all the pollution of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God. She does this also in reference to others, according to the command of God. "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him" (Leviticus 19:17). She commits herself to the practice of all virtue. In her "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22-23). She adds to her "faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Peter 1:5-7). The soul will thus manifest herself as a child of light (Ephesians 5:8), and as a son of God be "without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Php 2:15). Behold, God thus fully sanctifies His children within and without. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Even though all this is but in part and much of the old man still remains as long as a saint remains in this life, the principal elements are nevertheless very delightful and adorn the child of God in a most excellent manner. This is similar to small children whose first footsteps and manifestation of understanding are very sweet and charming. The Virtues Issuing Forth from Holiness

Holiness is not a single virtue, but rather, the shining forth of the image of God -- being a combination of many virtues. A soul, whom God in His eternal purpose has appointed to be a recipient of salvation, whom the Lord Jesus has loved and cleansed from all her sins in His blood, whom He has endowed with His glory and holiness, and who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, having become spiritually alive (thus pursuing sanctification), will exercise many virtues.

(1) Such a soul will be separated from the world. All that is to be found in the world, namely, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are foreign to her. She neither desires nor seeks them, and is fearful of them. She also views all worldly men as such. She wants to be known as having no use for their company, as considering them abominable, and as pitying their wretchedness. She does not conform to them either in clothing, language, or gestures.

(2) Such a soul has died to herself and denies herself. She knows indeed that there is nothing charming to be found in her, and therefore she does not desire that others honor, love, respect, or provide for her, etc. If she receives none of this, she is neither sorrowful, fretful, discouraged, nor alienated, but rather is in her element. If she receives this in some measure, she views it as a gracious gift of her Lord and she makes use of it again for Him, as long as it pleases the Lord to let her keep it. She views such goods only as travel money upon her way. If she has much, she shares it with her travel companions; does she have little, then she travels that much easier and with less of a burden, and it suffices her. She has no objective other than her Lord's objective. She is therefore accustomed to adjust her objective to the objective of others, in so far as it is not contrary to the will of her Lord.

(3) Such a soul finds all her delight in knowing, fearing, and loving God -- in being subject to Him with reverence, doing His will with joyful willingness, trusting in Him, and having peace, quietude, and joy in Him. God is her all, and whatever is outside of Him is of no value to her. She has

withdrawn herself from all things and has surrendered herself to God with all that she is and has.

(4) Such a soul is pious in the church as well as in her private quarters. In her solitude she continually either prays, reads, sings, or meditates. She is upright in her entire walk, truthful in her speech, meek, friendly, dignified, humble, and in good spirits. She is wise in her interaction with people, tender and compassionate with those who are in misery (whom she readily and frequently visits and is very helpful to), wisely exercises liberality toward the poor, is patient and submissive in bearing her cross, earnestly and zealously battles against sin, and is steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. She teaches with her silence, and rebukes, comforts, and stimulates with her speech. She is diligent and faithful in her calling, the performance of which has been entrusted to her by God. She is careful in all her actions, and, since she still has the old man within her, is on her guard and readily engages in spiritual warfare, with faith and hope anticipating the crown of life. All her virtuous dispositions and exercises issue forth in a godly clarity, purity, and luster; and this is holiness. The Three Requisites of true Holiness

However, since all that glitters is not gold, everything that has the appearance of holiness and is called holiness is not holiness; this we have demonstrated. There are three requisites for holiness: 1) it proceeds from a good root: faith; 2) it functions according to a good rule: the will of God as revealed in the law; and 3) it has a good objective: the honor of God.

First, all that is worthy of being called holiness must proceed from a holy principle. Faith is the primary element of conversion as far as order is concerned. This faith unites a person with Christ who is our life. It does not only make us a partaker of His benefits, but first and foremost, of the Person Himself. Christ dwells in the heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17). What the soul is to man, Christ is in some respects to spiritual life. Faith not only affords the soul a right to eternal life and makes her a partaker of it, but it also, in actuality, unites the soul with Christ, and thus life and strength flow out of Him into the soul, and the believer lives by virtue of this influence. "...I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20). The soul lives by virtue of this influence, and thus faith, in union with Christ, actively purifies the heart (Acts 15:9). This purified heart opposes the old man -- which the apostle refers to as a mortifying of the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13). This manifests itself immediately in holy deeds (James 2:17-18) and "worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). If the tree is not good, the fruits will not be good. If the heart is not in a holy state through union with Christ (which only comes about by faith), all actions -- however holy they may appear -- are of no value. The deeds as such may be good, but the parameters defining the essence are not good. However, those deeds which are the result of this believing union have an entirely different luster, and it is evident that they have been wrought in God (John 3:21). This is precisely what the Lord Jesus says: "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:5). Paul speaks likewise: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith" (Colossians 2:6-7); "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

Secondly, to holiness belongs a good rule with which the disposition of the heart and one's deeds must agree. This is nothing but the will of God alone, as presented in the law of the ten commandments. If one were to establish reason and propriety as a rule for virtues and vices, then one establishes reason to be his God. This is likewise true if one establishes human institutions, traditions, and his own desires as his rule for life and religion. However, as beautiful as everything

may appear outside the will of God, it is nevertheless all sin and an abomination before God. God is the eternal and only majestic Creator and preserver of man, who in his being and motions is dependent upon God. Therefore God is also the only "... lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12). This Lord and God has given a law to man in conformity to which he must live, constituting true holiness, whereby it may be known what holiness is. This law "is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). One who seeks to be holy has great love for this law. He holds it before him as a rule, walking according to it as upon a paved walkway. "O how love I Thy law! Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them. I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me. I will run the way of Thy commandments" (Psalms 119:97;Psalms 119:165;Psalms 119:30;Psalms 119:32).

It is not sufficient to establish the law of God to be one's rule, but one must always be conscious that such and such is the commandment of God. Here a good opinion is not valid when one is in doubt as to whether something has been commanded, and he thus either abstains or does this. Both are sinful, even though he might do that which was commanded, for he did it unconsciously and not as being the will of God. "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

Thirdly, to holiness belongs a holy objective. If someone has an evil objective -- namely, his own honor, to be loved, to gain advantage, or to harm his neighbor -- then the holier the matter is by means of which he seeks to accomplish his evil objective, the more abominable the sin is which he commits. Man differs depending on whether he is in the state of perfection, in the state of sin, or in the state of regeneration. In the state of perfection man knew God in the measure of perfection determined for him. Therefore, he could only undertake something for, and be stimulated by, the glory of God, to end therein. In the state of sin man does not know God and therefore he can neither have love for, nor have the objective to glorify God in all things. The foolishness of the Labadists is thus apparent, who wish to first purify an unconverted person from love for his salvation -- which they call impure love. They insist that such a person should begin to seek out of love for the glory of God, Him whom an unconverted man neither knows nor is able to love. In the state of conversion man is partially illuminated so that he begins to know and love God, and in principle has therefore the glorification of God as his objective.

It is God's will that man will cherish his salvation and He moves man thereby to faith and repentance. In regard to those, the entire Bible is filled with promises and threatenings stimulating in man a love for himself and causing him to be active by this self-love in using all means which are subservient to that end. Thus, in the way of sanctification a person may and must endeavor for further illumination, peace, purity, joy, and felicity -- sanctification being the way to attain this. A converted person, however, neither can nor wishes to remain stationary at this point; that is, only to seek God for his own benefit, and thus make himself the ultimate objective in which he would end. Rather, in seeking his own salvation, he increasingly obtains a view of God's attributes. Even if he initially was not stimulated by the glory of God, he nevertheless ends therein, manifesting this by his gratitude toward God for each received benefit. The more man progresses in sanctification, the more clearly he will aim for the glory of God in all his activity. His initiative proceeds from love for God, the fear of God, and obedient submission to the will of the sovereign and only majestic Lord. To be thus stimulated is to be stimulated by the objective of glorifying God. For in this alone there is an acknowledgment of God's perfections and a manifestation of this acknowledgment.

And if the glorification of God has reference to other people, it is one's aim to be led to know, love, and fear God -- and acknowledge Him by his words and deeds; that is, declare what manner of God the Lord is. This agrees with the very nature of the regenerate person. In this he ends, and the more he grows, the more vividly he aims for, and the more powerfully he will be motivated by, this objective. If this objective has been absent in his activity, then he becomes restless and begins to grieve. However excellent his activity may otherwise have been, if in this activity his own honor, pleasure, and advantage, etc. have been the objective, he abhors himself, humbles himself before the Lord, and seeks forgiveness. If a pure objective has had the upper hand, and ulterior motives nevertheless surface, he is troubled in his activity and all comfort is gone, however excellent his performance may otherwise have been. A holy objective and purpose thus belong to holiness. It is this which the apostle commands: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31); "... therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20). This was David's wish and endeavor: "Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise and with Thy honour all the day" (Psalms 71:14; "But I will ... yet praise Thee more and more" (Psalms 71:14). This is the purpose for which God gives spiritual life to His people. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise" (Isaiah 43:21); "... the branch of my planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified" (Isaiah 60:21); "... that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Exhortation to Strive for Holiness

Now consider all that we have said concerning sanctification and examine it closely. You will be enamored and motivated by it to become a partaker of that holiness, and to follow in the footsteps of Paul who establishes himself as an example in this. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Php 3:12-14). Therefore make an earnest effort to purify yourself from all the pollutions of the flesh and of the mind, perfecting your sanctification in the fear of God. Permit me to stir you up to this holy work; incline your ear and permit these exhortations addressed to you to enter your heart.

First, you who are regenerate, you may neither live as other men, nor as you have lived in the past. God requires and now expects something different from you. Hear these exhortations and commands of God: "I therefore, ... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1); "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ" (Php 1:27); "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work" (Colossians 1:10); "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). Therefore, partakers of the covenant, let your heart be lifted up in the ways of the Lord as Jehoshaphat did in 2 Chronicles 17:6. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him" (Psalms 45:10-11); "Walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8); "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Therefore, if any entreaty,

exhortation, or command from God your Father is to have any effect upon your heart at all, let your heart be stimulated by this to a zealous observance of sanctification.

Give attentive consideration to your spiritual state and be stirred up thereby to a holy walk.

(1) Are you not a chosen generation? (1 Peter 2:9). The Lord has known you from eternity, separated you from all other men, ordained you to be His favored one in order that from among all other men you alone would be His property, for He "hath ... appointed us ... to obtain salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). Ought not such gracious and glorious separation -- and that for the purpose that we should be holy -- impress upon our hearts that we must lead a separate and holy life?

(2) Proceed with your thoughts and consider how the Lord permits other people to remain outside of Christ as strangers of the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God in the world; and that you who were like these others by nature, He has chosen and ordained "that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (John 15:16). Consider that He called you with an holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9), having delivered you "from the power of darkness, and hath translated (you) into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13), so that you are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). Should we then not be a people that dwell alone? Ought not our walk then be distinct from the walk of natural men? Ought we not manifest ourselves as "a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9), so that all who see us would recognize us as a seed which the Lord has blessed (Isaiah 61:9)? After having had been called out of and having departed from Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham no longer wished to return there, neither would he suffer his son to be brought back there after his death. When Israel had been called and drawn out of Egypt, they were not permitted to return there again. This is likewise true for us; we have been called out of, and have departed from, the world. How then would we return there again?

Thirdly, proceed with your thoughts and reflect upon the respective relationships you have with God and with the Lord Jesus, and let this quicken you to deny everything, and to zealously practice love and that which love demands.

There is a union between you and Christ indeed, and you are indeed one Spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). You are indeed grafted into Him as into an olive tree and thus have become a partaker of His life and nature (Romans 11:17). Should not then the same life of Jesus become manifest in us, and should not we then walk as He has walked? You are indeed the bride of the Lord Jesus -- generally being called such in the Song of Solomon. Would a bride not adorn herself to make herself pleasant and charming to her bridegroom? Would you then not do likewise for the Lord Jesus? With Paul, ought we not to be very desirous that "whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him" (2 Corinthians 5:9)? What is, however, the ornament in which Jesus is pleased? It is holiness. "...Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever" (Psalms 93:5). In reference to this the Lord Jesus says: "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" (Song of Solomon 7:1). Therefore, show Jesus your being despised by the world, your humility, your love, your trust in Him, and the delightful manner in which you lean on Him in order that He may be pleased with this.

You are virgins who are in love with the Lord Jesus. "... therefore do the virgins love Thee" (Song of Solomon 1:3). Therefore have the heart of a virgin, keep yourself pure and unspotted from the world, have eyes of a dove, and let all your love go out to Jesus, so that He may see it and delight Himself in you. Sin, offensiveness

You bear the name, and are indeed also, children of God. World, evil character of our"... the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Php 2:15). Therefore, you do not belong here, but in the other world; or better stated, heaven is your home and there you are children. Would not a child be loyal to his father and oppose his enemies? Would not a child honor, fear, love, and serve his father, and be fully in harmony with his father's will in his manners, clothing, and the company he keeps? Therefore, since you are children of God, conduct yourselves as children; let everyone observe in your walk that you are a stranger upon earth, belong at home in heaven, that God is your Father, and that you are children of God.

Fourthly, consider what sin and the world are, so that you may the more readily be drawn away from them. Man being estranged from God through sin seeks His pleasure in that which is visible, and turns away from the invisible God. The nature of this old Adam is still in the regenerate and you must therefore be especially on your guard. You therefore, children of God, who again have made God your delight, seeking it in Him, what business do you have with the world and all that is to be found in it? Focus upon its most glorious aspect and what does it amount to? Solomon says from experience by the Spirit of God, "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

(1) How many yearn for a piece of it all and reach out for something? However, the one acquires it, whereas the others can only watch, having pursued it in vain. How often you have desired one thing or the other, having imagined that it would bring you some pleasure! How frequently it has escaped you when you pursued it, so that you could not catch up with it, but have wasted both time and effort!

(2) And even if you did acquire it, how often you have experienced that it contained a bundle of thorns which pricked you, thistles by which you were burned, or a portion of rotten apples by which you defiled yourself; so that you were ashamed and embarrassed with your acquisition, or that it was nothing more than a handful of flies which flew away as soon as you opened your hand!

(3) In addition to that, have you not experienced frequently enough that all this yearning, desiring, and seeking for those things which are upon earth -- however beautiful your pretense may have been -- troubled your soul and made it restless, robbing you of your freedom and of your quiet peace of conscience? Did it not rob you of your spiritual view of God and your communion with Him? Did it not hinder you in praying earnestly and intimately, as well as impeding you in the practice of virtue? Would you then as yet remain foolish and delight in your own sorrow and shame?

(4) Have you not experienced long enough how attractive the world becomes even if we make but a little use of her -- how readily the flesh gains in strength and how much effort it requires before one can achieve a lively, earnest, and complete separation from it? Have you not experienced how quickly you are drawn away again and how difficult it is to forget the sweet taste which the flesh

enjoyed? Would you then not be careful to see to it that the world no longer bewitch you?

(5) Furthermore, it is nothing but idolatry, and it dreadfully dishonors God -- as if there were yet something in the creature in which one could find his delight or as if the all-sufficient God must possess something more. Would God not be offended with this? Would He not withhold His grace? Would He not punish such adulterous children? Would He not let them experience what it is to run to broken cisterns?

(6) The most excellent among the things of this world are advantage, honor, and entertainment. Beloved, what do these things amount to, however, if you analyze what they really are? To find delight in what you see, smell, taste, and find in filthy stimuli is all but for a moment. It calls out to you loudly: It is not to be found with me. Why do you focus your eyes upon that which is nothing? The soul remains empty. What did I say? Empty? She is filled with restlessness and worldly pollution which is not becoming for virgins.

What do the riches of this world amount to? Do they make the possessor thereof one hair better, more attractive, or more glorious in himself? They are generally acquired with anguish if they are acquired honestly; with care they are preserved, and these unstable riches fly away with wings, causing grief. They generally saddle the possessor thereof with care, an unsatisfied desire, and pride -- and perdition. How many would be good people if they were not rich! How many have not sunk away into the eternal pool with a clump of gold or silver as a millstone around their neck? Above all, vain honor is an abomination which a partaker of the covenant must dread, and must cast it away as hastily as one would remove a coal of fire from his clothing. What honor do you have, oh sinner, except the honor of your Head? You must clothe yourself with His honor and be satisfied. Secretly to aim in your actions for your own honor, praise, applause, respect, and love, which would all end in yourself, is to rob God of what is His and to make yourself a god. It contaminates all your good deeds, grieves your soul, robs you of your liberty, and deprives you of God's blessings. Beloved, what have you ever gained from seeking yourself? Has your soul increased in wisdom, learning, and godliness? Is it such a great matter for you that a sheaf, a tree, a clump of dirt, a sinner, one destined for hell, and a slave of the devil greets you, bows down to you, worships you, adores you, and speaks well of you? Or what happens when a godly person makes an idol out of you and thus pollutes his own soul -- when the love which should be focused only on Jesus, and the heart which should be only for Christ, is drawn away from Him to you? Are you the better for it if Christ is robbed and His children are corrupted? Since you are nothing but an empty bag, do you delight in being filled with air, puffing yourself up with pride whereby you become abominable in the eyes of God, the holy angels, and the wise among the godly? You will soon be the object of ridicule and be ashamed with yourself before the countenance of God and men. Consider for a moment all the glory, delight, and profit of the world with a wise and sound judgment, and you will find that they neither suit nor serve you, but are harmful to you. Therefore, partakers of the Lord's covenant, leave all that belongs to the world to the men of the world, whose portion is in this life. You ought to live for those things which are superior, invisible, and spiritual, manifesting yourself as a stranger in this world. You are the children of a King, who are too noble to be entertaining yourselves with beggars, and occupying yourselves with the world's toys. Do not argue over this, do not envy anyone because of this, and do not seek the help of others relative to this. Christ alone is more than enough for you for honor, delight, and advantage.

Fifthly, in order to stir you up to a holy life, focus upon God the Lord with whom you have entered into a covenant. How powerfully this ought to motivate you! "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). To that end take note of God's character, will, and honor.

(1) Consider the character of God. God is worthy that you, in all that you are, exist for Him, and that you with love, fear, confidence, and service be engaged toward God and end in Him with all those motions. "Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations? for to Thee doth it appertain" (Jeremiah 10:7). "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power" (Revelation 4:11). Have you not lived long enough without an illustrious impression of the Lord's preeminence, majesty, worthiness, and holiness? Have you not lived long enough without the distinct view that God Himself must be the foremost foundation and motive to live holily? Have you not lived long enough afar off? Have you not neglected to exalt God, acknowledge Him in all your ways, and walk before His countenance? Having entered into covenant with this God, however, you must now do nothing else but look unto Him, and, if you do so, you will notice that this will change your countenance and make it shine forth as Moses' countenance did when he had communed with God upon the mountain. Paul speaks of it in this manner: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed unto the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

(2) Take note of God's command. God has commanded you to be holy; this is His command: Be ye holy. "Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy precepts diligently" (Psalms 119:4). Are you not finished with living according to your own will? Do you not perceive that it is becoming for a creature to unite his will with God's will and that his felicity is to be found in this? Do you not perceive what audacity it is and how abominable it is that a creature, who is obligated to God by reason of multiple ties to Him -- that a partaker of the covenant not only neglects to do the will and the commandment of his God, but also opposes it and does the contrary in the presence of and before the countenance of God? Therefore, you ought to have had enough of being disobedient, having turned away your heart and ear from the law, having satisfied your own lust with an unbridled spirit, and not having listened to the voice of God in your conscience. The time in which you live as well as God's dealings with you, require something different. Therefore, stir up yourself! Do you not have a desire to fear the name of the Lord? Do you not have a delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man? Therefore, behold Him who commands you, give heed to His will and commandment, give heed to yourself, and thus live as obedient children.

(3) Take note of the honor of God. The holy life of partakers of the covenant is to the glory of God. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16); "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). It is to the honor of a father that the members of his household are well-mannered, and that his children imitate the virtue of their father. This is likewise true here. Other people do not render honor to God; only His children has He formed in order that they should show forth His praise (Isaiah 43:21).

They are a planting of the Lord in order that He might be glorified (Isaiah 61:3). In the eyes of the entire world they are a city upon a hill and a light upon a candlestick; everyone therefore ought to consider himself as such. If therefore you neglect to live holily and to manifest your spiritual nature

by a virtuous life, or if you conform yourself to the world, so that no one can notice anything in you in which you excel the world, then you do not live to God's honor, but to His dishonor, and the holy name of God will be blasphemed because of you. However, if you manifest yourself as a true saint in deed and truth -- despising honor, riches, and sinful entertainment, and instead live holily, righteously, moderately, humbly, and good-naturedly in the love and fear of God -- then you will have the happy privilege that God is glorified by you. May the praises of God therefore be in your mouth, and may you show forth the praises of Him who has called you. May you live as a light amidst darkness and a crooked and perverse generation, your intent being to glorify God thereby.

Sixthly, the holiness of partakers of the covenant is very essential as far as other people are concerned. It is a true proverb that says, "Rules teach, but examples attract." It cannot be expressed in words what a holy life can accomplish. Someone may be the most eloquent, powerful, and gifted minister in the world, but if holiness is absent in his life, then all his gifts are only harmful. However, a minister who lives a holy life preaches in the heart of the godly. This is likewise true for every partaker of the covenant. Therefore, have you not blinded people long enough with your careless life, which was little more than civil? Have you put them to sleep with the idea that there was no other holiness than yours, so that they were satisfied with their life which closely resembled yours, and have thus remained unconverted? Oh, if only so many had not been offended by you, seeing you at places where sinners gather, seeing you laugh and joke as sinners do, seeing you prance and show off as sinners do, seeing you engage in vain pursuits as sinners do, seeing in you no more spirit and life, fear of God, light, purity, love, humility, heavenly-mindedness, and a forsaking of worldly things and your own will, as is true for sinners! Perhaps they would have been convicted if in your entire walk you would have been truly spiritual and void of affectation. They would have perceived that their walk was not right -- that to be spiritual is something different from what they had thought. The apostle Peter demonstrates this in 1 Peter 3:1, where we read, "... that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives." The one godly person observes the other more than one would think. If they who are esteemed to be great Christians show little spirituality in their walk, and are leaning to the world in their conduct, others will readily imitate this, and ultimately the example of godliness will be lost sight of, and will soon become much conformed to the world. This will gradually progress, and thus the church will lose her glory and luster. If Christians, however -- be they great or small -- lead a life separated and withdrawn from the world and focused upon heaven, and if they were to manifest spirituality in their words and deeds without affectation, this would powerfully convict, put to shame, and stimulate others. Such a conduct penetrates the heart and the reins, and such exemplary conduct instructs in the absence of the person as if he were present. Wherever they have been, the footsteps of holiness are left behind. The little ones in grace are the teachers of those who are advanced, and those who are advanced are examples for the little ones. Thus, the church obtains glory and luster, respect and loveliness. In this manner Jerusalem becomes a praise upon earth and brings glory to Christ. Let every partaker of such a holy covenant begin to live in such a fashion, and we shall observe that the one will be ignited by the other as one candle ignites another candle. The Rich Promises of Scripture in Reference to a Holy Life

Seventhly, God promises glorious things upon holiness. Even though the glory of God is the ultimate objective and the motions which issue forth from this are more excellent and lofty, a

Christian must also allow himself to be motivated by promises which God makes to him in reference to such and such a matter. It should be delightful to us that God is willing to make promises. We must permit ourselves to be led in the way which God uses to stir us up, and we shall perceive and experience, with Moses, that it is very sweet, and a powerful motive, to look upon the recompense of the reward. It is sad that one meditates upon this so little. God promises a reward upon holiness; however, He does so by grace, as a father does to his child. "In keeping of them (the commandments) there is great reward" (Psalms 19:11). If you ask how great this reward is, then I answer, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). This will not only be given them in the life hereafter, but He will also give them a portion of it here. The rewards which the Lord gives to those who practice holiness are the following:

(1) Peace of conscience. "Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalms 119:165). Holiness is synonymous with the "the ways of them" (Psalms 84:5). He who walks in them walks surely and experiences a wondrous peace in his heart -- the peace of God which passes all understanding (Php 4:7).

(2) Sweet joy and delight. "It is joy to the just to do judgment" (Proverbs 21:15); "I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will delight myself in Thy statutes; Thy statutes have been my songs ... they are the rejoicing of my heart" (Psalms 119:14;Psalms 119:16;Psalms 119:54;Psalms 119:111). In sin there is nothing but sorrow, but in holiness there is nothing but joy. It is the kingdom of God within the soul and it is a foretaste of heaven. He who desires to live joyfully let him strive for holiness.

(3) God promises to those who live a holy life that He will meet them and grant them nearness to Himself and revelation of Himself. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways" (Isaiah 64:5). The following promise is remarkable: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). What else does a believer desire; what else does he long for? Behold, it is this which God promises to those who keep His commandments. This is also stated in Matthew 5:8 : "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." He who is not diligent in sanctification ought not to complain that it is so dark, and that he perceives so little of God. He who delights therein must be diligent in the pursuit of holiness. He will experience the fulfillment of these promises within.

(4) God promises growth and increase in sanctification. "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2). A godly person cannot live without sanctification; absence of holiness is a continual death for him. However, to grow as calves of the stall, as a palm tree, and as a cedar of Lebanon -- that is the delight and the joy of the soul. Is it not so with all of you who are godly? Therefore, stir up yourself, look unto the recompense, delight in it, and then, by the increase which will most certainly be given, you will be motivated to strive for sanctification. It will be difficult at first, but it will become more delightful and easier thereafter.

(5) God promises eternal felicity to those who deny themselves here, despise the world, love and obey God, confess Christ, and thus seek to live a godly life. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8); "...Come, ye

blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom ... for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in" (Matthew 25:34-35). Eternal felicity is the ultimate benefit -- oh, blessed end without end! Oh, light without darkness, life without death, gladness without sorrow, and holiness without pollution! God promises this ultimate outcome, however, and wishes to lead you there by this royal, beautiful, glorious, and joyful way of holiness. Therefore, why do you sit still and waste away in slothfulness? Why do you sink away in despondency? Arise, go forth, forget that which is behind, and reach forth unto that which is before you, and thus lay hold on eternal life.

We have thus sought to stir you up to godliness; however, it is the Lord who works this in us. Reader, may He who works in others both to will and to do, also grant this to you! Amen.

050. Chapter 45: The Law of God: General Considerations

----- CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE ----- The Law of God: General Considerations The rule for holiness is the law of God. We shall first discuss the law in a general sense, and then each commandment in particular.

Torah, which is the Hebrew word for "law," is derived from hora, which means "to teach," "to instruct." A law is thus a lesson or instruction in the way which one ought to go. This is likewise true for mitzvah, which means "commandment," chāq, which means "institution," as well as mishpat, which means "judgment" or "judgments." To make a distinction between these words, as if the one were to refer to the moral, and others to the ceremonial and civil laws, is without foundation (cf. Psalms 119:1-176). In Greek we have the word *nomos* -- a derivative of *nemein* -- which means "to direct," or "to distribute," for the law governs the life of man, and reward or punishment is distributed commensurate with the compliance with these directives. In Latin we have the word *lex* -- a derivative of *legere* -- which means "to read," for laws are read to the subjects and are displayed in order to be read. It can also be a derivative of *ligare*, which means "to obligate" -- for the law obligates to obedience. "Law" in our language may be a derivative from "to know" [Note: This is probably only true in the Dutch language, as there seems to be a relationship between "wet" (law) and "weten" (to know).] because the knowledge of God's law has been impressed upon man's nature, and God has more clearly made it known to His church in order that they "might know them" (Psalms 78:6). Thus by virtue of the etymology of the word we can say that the law is a known and binding rule of conduct. The word "law" is used in various ways. It means 1) the law of nature (Romans 2:14-15); 2) the corruption of human nature which dominates in the unconverted, and frequently overpowers the converted (Romans 7:23); 3) the entire Word of God (Psalms 19:7-8); 4) the books of Moses (Luke 24:44); 5) the gospel (Romans 3:27; Isaiah 2:3); 6) the civil laws (John 19:7); 7) the ceremonial laws (Hebrews 10:1); and 8) the moral law, comprehended in the ten commandments (Matthew 22:36-38). The law in this latter connotation is the subject of our discussion here. The law is the rule of life given to man by God, the only Lawgiver, to govern the disposition of his heart, thoughts, words, and conduct thereby.

If we view the law as a condition of the covenant of works, it carries with it the threat of death to transgressors and the promise of life to those who observe it perfectly. If, however, we view it in the context of the circumstances and the objective with which it was declared at Mount Sinai, then the true partakers of the covenant can indeed perceive what their transgressions do merit and what the consequences of perfect obedience would be. The punishment due upon them has been taken away by the Surety, however, and by their continual commission of offenses they readily perceive that they cannot perfectly keep the law nor obtain salvation by the law, but only through the Surety, Jesus Christ. They also understand that upon their transgressions God chastises them as a Father and that He graciously rewards their sincere efforts. The Giver of the Law The Lawgiver is God who is the Creator and Preserver of all things and the Lord of His church -- His property. The act of legislating consists of several aspects. There must be 1) one who is superior to another in majesty and excellency; 2) proper subordination of the recipient of the law under the

lawgiver; 3) the obligation of the subject to the superior to obey the laws which have been issued; and 4) laws themselves as they relate to conduct.

God alone, by virtue of His nature, is the majestic and exalted One. He gives life to man and by His influence preserves his being. The Lord Himself is worthy of being obeyed. He has the authority to issue commands, even if there were no creature. The existence of the creature presupposes its origin in Him, and therefore the creature is subject to Him in his existence and functioning. The creature is furthermore obligated to render all obedience to his Maker. Even if the intelligent creature did not have an express command, he is nevertheless, from the first moment of his existence, obligated to obey God as the only Lawgiver in all that He has impressed upon his nature and in all that He would either command or prohibit relative to a variety of matters. This obligation is even impressed upon the conscience of man so that he is acquainted with and approves of both his obligation toward, and the will of, this Lawgiver, and obligates himself to obey Him. This disposition renders man fit to know God, the Lawgiver, by His works and to perceive and experience this binding relationship in a more lively manner. Man, in the state of perfection, had all this perfectly impressed upon his nature, and after the fall this impression remained in all men, although imperfectly. This is generally referred to as the Law of Nature, which we have discussed in chapter one. After the covenant of works had been broken, the Lord established the covenant of grace. When God had confined His people to Abraham's seed, and had separated them from other nations, He then pronounced the law with an audible voice from Mount Sinai and inscribed it in two tables of stone. This is generally referred to as The Law of the Ten Commandments. Of both the law of nature as well as the law of Scripture God is the author and giver (Romans 2:14-15). When God pronounced the law from Sinai, He began with, "I am the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:2); "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12). The Son of God stood in a relationship to the church as her Mediator and King from the very outset of the covenant of grace. The giving of the law is attributed to Him by reason of that relationship.

He is called "the angel," that is, the messenger, because He was appointed by the Father as Mediator and also because the Father executes everything that pertains to the church by Him. "...He shall ... suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger [Note: The Statenvertaling reads: the angel of the covenant.] of the covenant" (Malachi 3:1). He is the angel who has the name Jehovah in His bosom (Exodus 23:20-21); this was the Angel Jehovah who appeared unto Abraham (Genesis 18:1); this was the Angel who appeared unto Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2; Exodus 3:4; Exodus 3:6); and this same Angel, in His function as King, has given the law. This is evident in the following passage: "And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. This Moses ... did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. This is he (Moses), that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers" (Acts 7:30; Acts 7:35; Acts 7:38). In the giving of the law, the Lord used the angels and Moses as His servants. This is to be observed in the following passages: "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels" (Acts 7:53); "... and it (the law) was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator" (Galatians 3:19). In the giving of the law the angels have accompanied the Son of God, their Head, as His servants and surrounded the mountain (Deuteronomy 33:2). After the law had been inscribed in the tables of stone, the angels handed those stones to Moses (Galatians 3:19). Moses, having received the tables from the

angels, brought them to the people and laid them in the ark (Exodus 34:29; Deuteronomy 10:5); similarly, he received the ceremonial laws from God upon the mountain and made them known to the people. In light of this it is said, "For the law was given by Moses" (John 1:17). The Manner in Which the Law Was Given The manner of lawgiving is twofold: 1) by verbal pronouncement and 2) by inscription upon two tables of stone. It was first of all given by pronouncement, and this was preceded by much preparation. Previous to this the covenant of grace had been held before the people, into which the people solemnly entered. Subsequently, the people had to sanctify themselves for two days and wash their clothing, in order to be internally and externally ready against the third day (Exodus 19:18). The mountain was fully surrounded with fencing so that no one could touch the mount, it being announced that anyone who would break through and touch the mountain would be put to death. The entire Mount Sinai smoked, burned, and shook when the Lord descended with an extraordinary manifestation of His presence -- without any form or appearance but in great darkness (cf. Exodus 19:18; Exodus 20:21). All of this was accompanied with dreadful claps of thunder, lightning, and the sound of trumpets (Exodus 19:16; Exodus 19:18-19). This occurred in order to stir up great respect and reverence in the people, thus convincing them that they could not be justified by the works of the law. It was furthermore designed to stir them up to the fear of God so that they would guard against the transgression of the law. However, the objective was in no wise to teach the difference between the Old and New Testaments; that is to say, that the church at that time stood from afar and the church today has free access. Nowhere is this recorded in the Bible. It is one and the same covenant and the Mediator of the covenant is the same yesterday and today. The law pertains as much to us as to them and they had as much access to God by the Mediator as we do today.

Secondly, the law was given by inscription upon two tables of stone. First the Lord Himself made two tables of stone, engraved the law upon them, and gave them to Moses. "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables" (Exodus 32:19). When Moses came down from the mountain, however, and became aware of the making and serving of the golden calf and the breaking of the law (which had been declared to them so very recently), he broke these two tables of stone in holy zeal (Exodus 32:19). Subsequent to this, the Lord commanded Moses to make two other tables of stone and to bring them to Him. This occurred, and the Lord by renewal wrote the law on the tables made by Moses, giving them to Moses who carried them to the people and laid them in a container or ark prepared for them (Deuteronomy 10:1; Deuteronomy 10:4-5).

It cannot be satisfactorily resolved why the law was not written upon paper or parchment, nor in silver or gold. We may, however, turn with this to the human heart, which is as hard as a stone so that no one but God Himself can inscribe His laws there (Ezekiel 36:26-27). We may thus also reflect upon the eternal duration of the law, which would not be abolished in the Old or New Testament. Neither can it be satisfactorily resolved why the law was not written with letters placed upon the stone rather than by engraven letters. One may, however, conjecture that it is not sufficient to observe and perform the law externally, but rather that it must be engraved in the heart (Jeremiah 31:33). The fact that the tables were inscribed on both sides may also support the suggestion that the law is the rule for all actions, and must govern man wherever he may go or turn, both in body and in soul, with all his faculties, and can neither add to nor subtract from it. Moreover, if someone asks why the law was not written upon one, but upon two tables, we answer

that the law pertains to two objects: God and one's neighbor, as the Lord Jesus shows in Matthew 22:37; Matthew 22:39. The circumstances to be noted when laws are given, are both time and location. The time was fifty days after the exodus from Egypt. They had then been delivered from the hand of their enemies and had been fully separated from all nations; they had entered into a covenant with God and had promised that the Lord would be their God and that they would walk in His ways. To that end they needed a rule of conduct, which the Lord then also gave to them. The location was a mountain. The heart of man must be drawn away from the lowly things of this earth and must be drawn up to God and heavenly things. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" (Psalms 121:1); "Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens" (Psalms 123:1).

It was a mountain in desolate Arabia -- a barren location where there was nothing to eat or drink and where nothing attractive or delightful was to be found. They had to seek and have their delight only in God and had to live alone out of His maintaining hand. They therefore had to endeavor diligently to retain the Lord's presence by obeying and being dependent upon Him. The Law of God and its Relationship to the Covenant of Grace

Many things are to be considered concerning this law, and in doing so the nature and the purpose of the law will be the more evident. By way of preface it should be noted:

First, that a covenant was made between God and Israel, the church at Horeb, prior to the giving of the law. This is recorded in Exodus 19:1-25.

(1) God's requirement is stated in verse 5: "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant." 2) The promise is: "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me ... and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). The nation acquiesces in verse 8: "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

Secondly, that this covenant made at Horeb (or solemnly renewed, as they were already in it prior to this) is the covenant of grace. This is evident since,

(1) the covenant made with Israel at Horeb is the same covenant which God had established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob -- which without contradiction was the covenant of grace. "Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He swore unto thy fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:12); "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them. Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into His oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that He may establish thee to day for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee, and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Deuteronomy 29:9-10; Deuteronomy 29:12-13).

(2) The covenant at Horeb contains all the promises of the covenant of grace: 1) I shall be a God unto you and "... ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people" (Exodus 19:6); "I am the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:2); "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God ... and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people" (Deuteronomy 26:17-18). It is obvious that this is a promise of the covenant of grace (cf. Genesis 17:8; Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 6:16). 2) They are promised that they will be a priestly kingdom. "And ye shall be unto Me a

kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6). That this is a promise of the covenant of grace is evident in the following passages: "Ye also ... are built up ... an holy priesthood ... but ye are ... a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9); "And hath made us kings and priests unto God" (Revelation 1:6). These two include all other promises.

(3) They had the same sacraments: circumcision and the sacrifices. Thirdly, that the entire nation of Israel entered the covenant of grace at the same time (Exodus 19:8). However, the majority did it only externally and not in truth; that is, not with knowledge, faith, and love. Thus, by reason of this external entry there was also an external relationship between God and the people, and upon living an ungodly life they are said to be unfaithful to this covenant (Psalms 78:37). "But with many of them God was not well pleased" (1 Corinthians 10:5).

Fourthly, that no unconverted persons are in the covenant of grace, even though they have entered externally. Rather, they are truly and factually in the covenant of works as all the heathen are. Although the covenant made in Adam has been broken by transgression and the law has thus been made weak by the flesh to justify man and to grant him life, men nevertheless remain under the same obligation, and, as often as they sin, they break the covenant. This is like a woman who, having committed adultery, is thereby not free from the law of her husband, but time and again commits adultery. Such is also the case here. When an unconverted person sins, he repeatedly breaks the covenant of works in which he is. Having entered the covenant of grace in an external sense and yet not walking in faith, he thus despises Christ and rejects the offered covenant of grace.

Fifthly, that one must indeed make a distinction between the covenant made at Horeb prior to the giving of the law (Exodus 19:1-25), and the law which was declared subsequent to it (Exodus 20:1-26). The law of the ten commandments was not the covenant, for the covenant had been made prior to this. The law is, so to speak, an appendix to the covenant already made, being a rule for the partakers of the covenant. Therefore the covenant and the law are expressly distinguished from each other -- which we shall discuss more comprehensively later.

Sixthly, that one must make a distinction between the contents or substance of the law, and the purpose for which it was given. The contents or substance is identical to the demands of the covenant of works established with Adam, for:

(1) There is but one holiness, and therefore there can also be but one rule of holiness. The requirement held before Adam was perfection, and this is likewise the requirement of the law of the ten commandments.

(2) The requirement of the covenant of works is impressed upon man's nature (Romans 2:14-15). However, the law which is impressed upon man's nature, is identical to the ten commandments, even though they are not equal in clarity. Thus, the requirements of the covenant of works and the ten commandments are identical.

(3) Eternal life was promised to Adam upon perfect obedience, which would also be the result upon the perfect observance of the ten commandments. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Romans 10:5). The purpose for the giving of the law of the ten commandments is, however, entirely different from the purpose for which God gave the law to Adam. The law was given to Adam in order thereby to

obtain life, but the law of the ten commandments was not given to that end, since no one is capable of fulfilling it.

It was given:

(1) To convict the unconverted of sin, of the continual breaking of the covenant of works, and of the curse and worthiness of condemnation due to transgression.

(2) To cause the unconverted, who have been made acquainted with the covenant of grace, to look away from the covenant of works as not being able to give life, and to urge them to truly enter into the covenant of grace and to receive Christ by true faith unto justification. This is the purpose for the multiple repetitions of the demands of the covenant of works and the dreadful circumstances accompanying the giving of the law. In this respect the law is a schoolmaster, guide, teacher, and director to Christ (Galatians 3:24).

(3) With the objective of being a steadfast rule of life for the partakers of the covenant of grace, to show them the way in all its purity, and to stir them up to enter into and persevere in this way, and to guide them in this way. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word" (Psalms 119:9). In reference to this the law is called: the way of the Lord, pathway, and path (Psalms 119:1-176).

Seventhly, that one must make a distinction between the end and purpose of the giving of the law, and the opinion of the unconverted concerning it. The unconverted Israelites considered the ten commandments to be a requirement of the covenant of works, in the observance of which they had to seek life. They also viewed the ceremonial laws as such and intermingled it with the moral law. And thus, by the external observance of those laws -- the ceremonial as well as the moral laws -- they sought to be justified (cf. Romans 9:31-32; Romans 10:3; Galatians 5:3-4).

Eighthly, that one must also make a distinction between the commandment and the incentives given for observance. Incentives for observance are expressed with the second, third, fourth, and fifth commandments, setting forth that which is harmful to transgressors, as well as that which is profitable for those who observe the law. The commandments remain unchanged, but the incentives are presented from various aspects. Having said this by way of introduction, we shall now answer several questions. The Law of the Ten Commandments: Not a Covenant of Works

Question Is the law of the ten commandments a covenant of works? Answer: No; we shall demonstrate this to be so for the following reasons: First, God's righteousness cannot permit a sinner to enter into a covenant of friendship without a Surety who bears the punishment of the broken covenant on behalf of the sinner. However, the Israelites were sinners, and the covenant of works is without a Surety. Thus, the law cannot be a covenant of works.

Secondly, the person with whom God would establish a covenant of works, ought to be able to satisfy the demands of the covenant of works, and to obtain life in consequence thereof, for God's holiness, righteousness, and truth will not permit the establishment of a true covenant upon the basis of a dishonest promise of man. These attributes also will not permit, as a condition for salvation, that man be required to perform that which he cannot perform. These attributes will not allow perfection to be again set before the impotent sinner as a condition for salvation, and thus establish a second covenant of works, even though God, by virtue of man's original condition

when he was included in the covenant of works, may righteously demand perfect obedience from man who wilfully deprived himself of his own power. After the fall man is not able to perfectly satisfy the demands of a covenant of works, and therefore a new covenant of works cannot be established with man, and the law can consequently not be a covenant of works.

Thirdly, if the law were a covenant of works, then Israel, and all believers of the New Testament (for they are all under obligation to the law), would simultaneously be in two opposite covenants. They were under the covenant of grace, or else no one could have been saved. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Romans 3:20). And if the law were a covenant of works, they would be simultaneously under the covenant of grace and the covenant of works. This is impossible, however, for the one disannuls the other. If they would have been obligated to seek salvation by works, there would have been no room for the covenant of grace; and if they would have been obligated to seek salvation by the covenant of grace, there would have been no room for the covenant of works, as the apostle clearly demonstrates in Romans 11:6. Furthermore, if the law were a covenant of works, it would destroy the promises. The law did, however, not disannul the promises (Galatians 3:17-18). The law is therefore not a covenant of works.

Fourthly, if the law were a covenant of works, man would have had to seek salvation by works, for it is thus declared: "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Romans 10:5). This, however, one may not do, for it is not to be obtained in this manner. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3); that is, they are not partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and thus also not of salvation. The law is therefore not a covenant of works.

Fifthly, there can be no manifestation of mercy in the covenant of works; however, there is room for mercy in the law of the ten commandments. "And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments" (Exodus 20:6). Thus, the law is not the covenant of works.

Objection #1: The law, which has as its contents perfect personal obedience, is called a covenant. "... for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel" (Exodus 34:27); "And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone" (Deuteronomy 4:13). The tables are called the tables of the covenant (Deuteronomy 9:11).

Answer (1) The word covenant has various meanings, so that from a single use of this word one cannot draw the conclusion that it refers to a literal covenant established by mutual agreement. It refers here to an immutable promise (Genesis 9:9-10), a steadfast ordinance (Jeremiah 33:20), and a singular command. "I made a covenant with your fathers ... saying, At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother" (Jeremiah 34:13-14).

(2) The covenant at Horeb was made prior to the giving of the law, and thus the law cannot be the covenant itself.

(3) It is a figurative manner of speech, and the appendix frequently (and thus also here) bears the name of that to which it is appended. The covenant of grace having been established, the law was appended thereto as a rule of conduct for the partakers of the covenant.

Objection #2: Since the law is continually contrasted with grace, it therefore follows that the law is the covenant of works. This is to be observed in the following passages: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17); "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise" (Galatians 3:18; cf. Romans 4:14; Romans 10:5-6).

Answer (1) A distinction must be made between the substance and contents of the law, and the purpose for which it has been given. The purpose for the giving of the law is that it be a rule of life. As such the law is not contrasted with grace; rather, it is grace that a steadfast rule of life has been given to the partakers of the covenant. However, the law as far as its demands are concerned, and the contents of the covenant of works made with Adam, is contrasted with grace. The law was not given for that purpose, however, and it can thus not be concluded that it is equivalent to the covenant of works.

(2) The Jews corrupted the true purpose for which both the moral and ceremonial laws had been given. They considered it to be a covenant of works and sought for their righteousness in this covenant -- as many who are Christians only in name still do. These misconceptions are identified and rebuked in the texts mentioned above.

(3) Scripture states very clearly that the law is not contrary to the promise. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4); "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid" (Galatians 3:21). It is thus evident in which manner the law is and is not contrary to the promise, and that the law of the ten commandments is not a covenant of works. The Law of the Ten Commandments: Not the Covenant of Grace

Question Is the law of the ten commandments equivalent to the covenant of grace, or is it a compendium of this covenant?

Answer: The covenant established at Horeb prior to the giving of the law is truly the covenant of grace; however, we deny that the law of the ten commandments is the covenant of grace or its compendium. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, the entire contents of the law of the ten commandments was perfectly impressed upon the nature of Adam, and this law would have, if his transgression had not interfered, been passed on perfectly to his descendants. After the fall, the law is yet impressed upon the hearts of the heathen, although imperfectly (cf. Romans 1:19-20; Romans 2:14-15). If, however, the law were a compendium of the covenant of grace and equivalent to the covenant of grace itself, it would already have existed prior to the fall, and the covenant of grace would have been naturally known to the heathen apart from the gospel. This is absurd, and thus also that the law is equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Secondly, the law is the requirement and condition of the covenant of works, life being promised upon personal obedience to the law: "Do this and thou shalt live." Whatever is identical to the covenant of works in its demands and contents cannot be equivalent to the covenant of grace. For where the law says: "Do this and thou shalt live," the covenant of grace says: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." These two covenants are too distinct from each other, and the one covenant negates the other (Romans 10:5-6; Romans 11:6).

Thirdly, Christ is the Surety of the covenant of grace who therefore must be included in a description of this covenant; it cannot be understood apart from the knowledge of Christ. However, in the law there is not a word regarding a Surety, or regarding faith in the Surety, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the law is not equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Fourthly, the covenant of grace is efficacious unto the regeneration, justification, and salvation of man; however, the law is not efficacious unto regeneration, justification, and salvation. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21); "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise" (Galatians 3:18); "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). Yes, those who are under the law are under the curse (Galatians 3:10); the law is therefore not equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Fifthly, the covenant of grace only makes promises -- also the inscription of the law in the heart (cf. Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26-27). The law, however, only demands and has no promise, except upon the condition of perfect, personal obedience -- a promise which cannot be fulfilled by anyone after the fall as no one is able to fulfill the condition. The law demands but does not promise any efficacy. The law is therefore not equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Objection #1: Since Christ, as Mediator and King of His church, has given his church the law of the ten commandments, it thus follows that the law of the ten commandments is equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) We deny the conclusion. If, however, this conclusion were correct, then Christ, as Mediator and King of His church, has given His people a rule of life. If this is true, it must thus follow that the law of the ten commandments is a rule according to which the partakers of the covenant must live. The rule of life for the partakers of the covenant is to be distinguished from the covenant itself.

(2) The covenant had already been made prior to the giving of the law, which proves that the law is the rule which Christ has given to His partakers of the covenant.

Objection #2: The preamble, I am the Lord thy God, shows clearly that the law is equivalent to the covenant of grace, for that expression is the essential expression of the covenant of grace.

Answer: This phrase is not always expressive of the covenant of grace. This is evident in Isaiah 28:26, where we read, "For his God doth instruct him to discretion," namely, to cultivate the land. Nevertheless, we admit that from the preamble and the occasional addition of an incentive to a commandment it is to be observed that there must be a covenant of grace. It therefore does not follow, however, that the law itself is the covenant of grace, for the expression I am the Lord thy God is frequently added to commands and warnings which, as all agree, are not equivalent to the covenant of grace (cf. Leviticus 18:30; Judges 6:10, and many others). The preamble manifests the authority of the One who commands, and the obligation of the people to obey Him -- not only because He is God and they are His creatures, but also because they had entered into a covenant of grace with God. There is therefore as much a distinction between the preamble and the law, as there is between the One who commands and the command.

Objection #3: Mercy is mentioned in the law. "I will show mercy," etc. The mercy of God can, however, not be manifested to a sinner except by way of the covenant of grace. Therefore, the law is equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Answer: One must make a distinction between the command and the incentive. Simply because an incentive is taken from the covenant of grace, it does not follow that the law, for the observance of which the incentive is used, is the covenant of grace itself. Rather, it proves the contrary: This duty is not equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Objection #4: The law is a covenant; however, it is not the covenant of works. Therefore it must be the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) It has already been demonstrated above that the law is not the covenant of works, as well as that whatever bears the name "covenant" is not necessarily the covenant itself. Circumcision is also denominated as a "covenant" (Genesis 17:10).

(2) Those who make this objection maintain that, in addition to the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, there is yet another covenant. This they call an external and exemplary covenant. Their conclusion that because the law is not the covenant of works it is therefore the covenant of grace, is then negated. They themselves would then have to answer that there is a third covenant.

(3) And just because the law is not the covenant of works, it therefore does not follow that it is the covenant of grace. It therefore suffices that it is a rule for the partakers of the covenant of grace.

Objection #5: Whatever is confirmed by blood -- typifying the blood of Christ -- is the covenant of grace; however, the law has been confirmed with typical blood. "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people" (Hebrews 9:19). The law is thus equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) If one would have to draw such a conclusion from this proposition, then the people would be equivalent to the covenant, for they were also sprinkled with blood. The latter is absurd and thus also the first. If one wishes to draw the conclusion that whatever was sprinkled with typical blood belongs to the covenant of grace, there is no objection; and if one then furthermore wishes to conclude that the law of the ten commandments therefore belongs to the covenant of grace, we also do not object, as long as it is considered to be a rule for the partakers of the covenant.

(2) It is nowhere stated, however, that the two tables of stone upon which the law was written were confirmed and sprinkled with blood. This would have to be demonstrated for the conclusion to be of any value.

(3) Moses sprinkled the book in which the entire ceremonial worship -- typifying Christ -- was recorded, which irrefutably belongs to the covenant of grace.

Objection #6: The ceremonial laws belong to the law of the ten commandments, namely, to the second commandment, giving command to serve God in a manner commanded by Him. It is obvious, however, that the ceremonial laws belong to the covenant of grace. Therefore the law of

the ten commandments is the covenant of grace itself.

Answer (1) There is a further conclusion to be made from this presupposition. This ought to be: thus the law also belongs to the covenant of grace. We concur with this, it being a rule for the partakers of the covenant.

(2) Also the civil laws belong to the moral law -- to the second table. Should one thus also be permitted to conclude (the argumentation is identical) that therefore the ten commandments are a political or civil covenant? By no means, and one also cannot therefore conclude that it is equivalent to the covenant of grace.

(3) We deny that the law of the ten commandments prescribes the ceremonial laws; this neither occurs in the second nor in any other commandment. The basis for all service of God -- in the covenant of works as well as in the covenant of grace, and in the Old as well as the New Testament -- is indeed to be found in the words of the second commandment, the contents of which are to serve God in a manner prescribed by Him. However, no mention is made at all of the ceremonial service. To conclude from this common foundation -- from which issues forth the service of God in the state of perfection and in the New Testament, as well as in the ceremonial service -- that this commandment is ceremonial and that the law is therefore equivalent to the covenant of grace, is no more valid than to conclude thereby that the law is a covenant of works because it points out how man is to conduct himself in the covenant of works toward God and His service.

Objection #7: The covenant of grace obligates all partakers of the covenant to the keeping of the law; thus the law belongs to the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) The thrust of the argument is the same. The covenant of works obligates all men to the keeping of the law; thus the law belongs to the covenant of works. The fallacy of the conclusion is thus evident, for the law obligates all men.

(2) All that belongs to the covenant of grace is not the covenant of grace itself. Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper belong to the covenant of grace; nevertheless, they are not the covenant itself. We agree that the law belongs to the covenant of grace in regard to the purpose for its issuance, and in regard to the demand that it be a rule for partakers of the covenant. What basis is there in this for constructing a covenant of grace from the law?

Objection #8: The law demands faith, and faith belongs to the covenant of grace; the law is thus equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) The covenant of works demands faith in God, and then, according to that argument, the law is the covenant of works -- and if it is the covenant of works, then it is not the covenant of grace.

(2) Faith in Christ belongs to the covenant of grace; however, this is not required by the law. Christ is not revealed in the law.

Objection #9: The fifth commandment promises the land of Canaan, and Canaan was the earnest of all the promises of the covenant of grace; the law is thus the compendium of the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) One must make a distinction between the law and its incentives -- they do not change the nature of the commandment, nor do they make the commandment of the same nature as the source of these incentives. These incentives at times are derived, however, from the nature of God, and at other times from His works and from a given promise. This transpires in the covenant of works as well as in the covenant of grace. One therefore may not conclude from the promise of Canaan that the law is equivalent to the covenant of grace.

(2) No reference is made to Canaan in the fifth commandment; however, the children of Israel could logically deduce this, just as Paul concludes that it refers to all countries where God has decreed one's residence to be. "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:3).

(3) We deny that Canaan was an earnest of all the promises of the covenant of grace and of heaven. One will never be able to demonstrate this, and thus the conclusion is at once nullified. The Covenant Made at Horeb: Not a Mixture of the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace

Question Is the covenant made at Horeb a mixed covenant, consisting partially of the covenant of works and partially of the covenant of grace? Some call this covenant a national covenant, and consider it to be thus. They maintain that God would be satisfied and would bless them, even though they did not live in perfect conformity to the law, if they but had a sincere intent and earnestly endeavored to be obedient and practice true godliness -- and if they furthermore believed in the Messiah, being the fulfillment of what was lacking in them.

Answer (1) The word "national" does not suggest that there is another covenant besides the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. It only indicates that God established the covenant of grace with the nation of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that it would be confined to that nation until the coming of the Messiah.

(2) Christ alone is the cause of justification, and the works of man play no role in justification at all. God is, however, pleased with the sincere efforts of believers and rewards them graciously.

(3) We do deny, however, that the covenant made at Horeb is a mixed covenant, distinguished from the covenant of works and the covenant of grace -- as if a "hybrid" covenant had been composed from both. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, it is clear from all that we have proven in the above; namely, that the law, as far as the purpose of its issuance was concerned, is not equivalent to the covenant of works, and that a covenant of works cannot be established anew with the sinner. This cannot be done in its entirety, but then also not partially. It has already been shown that the law is not equivalent to the covenant of grace. If the law is neither the one nor the other, then a mixed covenant cannot be composed from both of them.

Secondly, Paul shows in Romans 11:6 that one of the two must function, and that they cannot be mixed together. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." The way of the covenant of grace and the way of the covenant of works are so far removed from each other -- yes, are so entirely contradictory -- that a mixture of the two is not possible. It is therefore impossible to make a third covenant from those two.

Thirdly, if works and faith, the righteousness of man and Christ, were to coalesce, one would acquire righteousness partially by works and partially by faith, contrary to Romans 9:30-32. Then Christ would not be a perfect Savior, for man would himself add something to his justification, contrary to Romans 3:24; Romans 3:28 and Hebrews 7:25. Then they would be subject partially to the curse (Galatians 3:10), and partially to the blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). And furthermore, if some were hypocritical in their obedience, what then? Would Christ's satisfaction then also be nullified? Would they then fall out of grace? Would the promises of this singular covenant of grace be nullified? As you see, this proposition is fraught with absurdities and must therefore be rejected.

Objection: Holiness is required as a condition for the covenant at Horeb. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me" (Exodus 19:8); "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). On the other hand, mercy is promised to those that are upright. "And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments" (Exodus 20:6). Since obedience as a condition and mercy proceeding from free grace are joined together, there is a mixed covenant, consisting partially of the covenant of works and partially of the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) Here two matters are conjoined which are distinct from each other. In Exodus 19:1-25 mention is made of the covenant of grace, and in Exodus 20:1-26 the law is declared as a rule for the partakers of the covenant, with mercy added as an incentive.

(2) In Exodus 19:1-25 the covenant of grace is solemnly established as we have shown in the above. Obedience and faithfulness to this covenant are not demanded as a condition of the covenant, for God can neither make demands upon a sinner by way of a new covenant nor issue promises upon that condition, as was shown earlier. Rather, it is required as a duty, test, and demonstration of their sincerity -- both upon entering into, as well as living in the covenant of grace. The promise which, among others, God makes in the covenant of grace is that He will sanctify them. Thus, no one can enter into this covenant unless he has a desire for holiness, and one can neither assure himself nor pretend to be in the covenant of grace unless he is a partaker of holiness. "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). When holiness is required in the covenant of grace, it is not required as a condition, but as a token of sincerity. True and false partakers of the covenant are hereby distinguished from each other, and by this they are identified. Those who do not obey nor keep His covenant, are no partakers of it, and do not belong to God. However, those who do obey and keep His covenant show that they are partakers of the covenant and belong to God. When the people accepted God's proposal, most did so only with the mouth, and not with an illuminated, willing, and sincere heart. True believers gave expression to the obligation which was theirs, and with delight approved of it. They gave expression to their sincerity in their transaction with God, as well as to their willingness and heartfelt inclination to obey God, knowing that the execution thereof was not possible in their strength, but in the power of God who made them willing. When they heard that God promised that He would do so to all who truly entered into covenant with Him, they willingly surrendered to that covenant and declared this to be so. The Law of the Ten Commandments: Of Eternal Duration and Binding to the New Testament Believer

Question: Is the law of the ten commandments a rule of eternal duration, which all true believers in the New Testament are also obligated to observe?

Prior to answering this question, the following matters must first be noted by way of preface. First, the law of the ten commandments as declared from Sinai does not place under obligation the heathen who have never had this law. "For as many as have sinned without the law ..." (Romans 2:12). The law of nature is a law unto them. However, the moral law pertains to all who are in the church, have the Word of God, and who have ever heard the law. To them the law is declared and they are under obligation to it, commensurate with the manner in which it is given.

Secondly, the foundation for being obligated to the law is not because reason teaches that something is either good or evil; for then it would not be the law of God, but a rational statement. What reason would show to be good to one, another -- also by virtue of reason (which is corrupt in man) -- would judge to be evil. Rather, the foundation for such obligation is the command of God, the revelation of God's will, and the fact that God has commanded one thing and forbidden the other. Thus, the obligation is related to the authority of the Lawgiver and His will. To this man subjects himself, and thus his good deeds constitute obedience and his evil deeds disobedience.

Thirdly, a distinction must be made between the commandments themselves as far as substance, words, and meaning are concerned, and the incentives by which they are motivated. The incentives are taken from circumstances which pertained to the Jews only, such as, "... which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," and "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt." The promise concerning Canaan, and similar promises, do not pertain to us in our circumstances as such, but only insofar that we must be stirred up to obedience by divine blessings. However, even if the incentives as relating to those circumstances do not pertain to us, the commandments nevertheless remain in force and place us under obligation.

Fourthly, since the law was not given as a covenant of works, it also has no such purpose today. As the unconverted were then under the covenant of works, however, and consequently under the law, being representative of the contents of the covenant of works, all the unconverted are also presently under the covenant of works and thus also subject to the law in said manner. As the law condemned them then, it does so likewise today. Similarly, as the law was then given to partakers of the covenant as a rule for life, this is likewise true today. And as partakers of the covenant, upon transgression, brought guilt upon themselves, making themselves worthy of punishment -- even though the Surety had taken this from them and upon Himself -- the law is likewise a rule of life for partakers of the covenant at present. Upon transgression they also make themselves guilty and worthy of punishment, even though Christ, the Surety, has already taken this from them upon Himself and made satisfaction. Upon every transgression the law declares them guilty and worthy of punishment, even though Christ has made them free from the guilt and punishment incurred.

Fifthly, as the law was not given to partakers of the covenant at that time in order to be justified thereby, it likewise is not given for that purpose today, for it has been made weak by the flesh (Romans 8:3).

Sixthly, the law is as rigorous and strict today as it was in the Old Testament. Law is law, and justice is justice; nothing can be overlooked here. We are no less free from the rigor and strictness

of the law than they were. The sincere godliness of the godly in the Old Testament was as pleasing to God and had as gracious a reward as is now true in the New Testament.

Seventhly, the believers of the Old Testament, upon transgression of the law, were convicted, had sorrow and pangs of conscience, experienced estrangement from God, prayed for forgiveness, and sought reconciliation until the Lord spoke peace to them again. The godly of the New Testament are no more free from all those emotions engendered by transgression than were they of the Old Testament.

Eighthly, to be obligated means that man is bound by the law-giving authority of God to be obedient, and that upon transgression he is subject to bear the punishment.

Ninthly, abrogation occurs when 1) the obligation terminates, since the law was only given for a specific time, and subsequently would no longer be a law -- and therefore would also not be in force anymore. Such was true for the ceremonial laws, which were in force until Christ (the embodiment of the shadows) came, and no longer; 2) the Lawgiver nullifies or rescinds such laws which had been issued without any time limitation; or 3) by the giving of laws which are directly opposite to the other laws and thus cannot coexist with the previous laws. The Socinians reject the law entirely, adhere to the law of nature, and add to this the law which Christ has given to the Christians, which in their opinion is a new law differing from the one given on Sinai. The Papists erase the second commandment. Others reject the fourth commandment. Antinomians also reject the entire law. Such individuals are either loose or ungodly men who despise all godliness, using Christian liberty as a pretense for all manner of licentiousness; or they are those who are proponents of godliness. The latter maintain that it is not lawful to conduct themselves contrary to what the law has either commanded or forbidden, and that everyone is obligated to practice the virtues which are commanded in the law. Their motive for this, however, is not that it is either forbidden or commanded in the law; in their opinion, this law was only given to Israel and is not binding at all in the New Testament. They maintain that one must now refrain from all sin and practice all virtue only out of love for God, doing so by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who teaches believers all things and works in them all things that are pleasing to Him -- all of this apart from the law as having any binding force. It thus appears as if we agree in essence; however, these propositions give license to the ungodly for their ungodliness, and lead to fanaticism. It engenders the absence of true holiness, for what the one considers lawful the other considers unlawful, while all imagine to have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it is contrary to the Word, which calls sin anomia (= lawlessness), and teaches the practice of virtue by the binding force of the law, the content of which is love. In addition to this you will rarely find such an Antinomian who also does not adhere to various other errors. We shall first confirm the truth and then refute those errors. The Eternal Duration of the Law of the Ten Commandments That the law is and remains a rule of eternal duration is evident for the following reasons: First, the law of nature remains in force and puts all men under obligation (Romans 2:14-15). The law of the ten commandments is, however, identical to the law of nature as far as contents are concerned (not in the manner in which it was given), and thus the law of the ten commandments also remains in force and is binding in the days of the New Testament.

Secondly, the law was solemnly given to the church without any limitation of time. This law has never been rescinded, neither has a counter law ever been given to negate the other. Thus, the

law remains in force as long as there is a church to whom it is declared.

Thirdly, the Lord Jesus declares that the law of the ten commandments has not been abrogated, but that it remains a binding rule for all times. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19-19). It is evident that the reference here is not to the ceremonial law, since Christ, being its embodiment, has abrogated it and the apostles have preached it as having been abrogated. Neither is he who maintains this abrogation the least, nor is he superior who now teaches and practices it. Christ here speaks of the moral law of the ten commandments, which is evident from both what is said and from what follows. For Christ quotes several of these commandments, gives the correct exposition, and purifies them from the false exposition of "them of old." Christ has fulfilled this law. This does not imply that He, having fulfilled it by His active obedience, has abrogated this law, or that He has improved that which was imperfect in the law, having given a more perfect law instead; rather, to fulfil means to do. "Whosoever shall do them ..." (Matthew 5:19); "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8); "... and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). In this manner Paul "fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:19), and fulfilled the Word of God (Colossians 1:25). Of this law Christ says that He will not destroy it, that not one jot or tittle shall pass from this law until heaven and earth shall pass away, and that he who will break and reject the least commandment (in contrast to the greatest commandment in Matthew 22:38) will be the least in the kingdom of heaven. This means that he will not be in it, which is also the meaning of being the least (cf. Matthew 20:16; Luke 13:30). It thus proves to be irrefutably true that the law of the ten commandments is a rule of eternal duration.

Fourthly, the Lord Jesus commands the performance of that which is good since the law requires this. Thus, the law remains a binding law. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

Fifthly, the keeping of the moral law is proposed and urged everywhere in the New Testament. The text references are numerous, but we shall only present some.

(1) "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31). The apostle had said in verses 24 and 28 that we are freely justified by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and that man is justified by faith without the works of the law. On the basis of this he proposes an objection: "Do we then make void the law through faith?" Does the law then no longer pertain to us? Do we no longer have any dealings with it? Has it been abrogated? No one can object that the apostle here speaks of the ceremonial laws, since no mention is made of them in the entire chapter, nor in the subsequent chapter in which he discusses the justification of Abraham. Furthermore, the apostle shows by his answer "God forbid," etc., that he is speaking of a law to which we are obligated, which can be none other than the moral law of the ten commandments, since we are completely free from the ceremonial laws. He declares that this law is not made void, rejected, and abrogated through faith unto justification without the deeds of the law; but we establish it; that is, we declare and approve that we are under

obligation to it -- not to be justified thereby, but as a rule of life to give us direction in sanctification which goes together with justification.

(2) "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself ... therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8-10). The established duty for Christians is love, the reason being that this is required by the law. Which law? -- the law of the ten commandments, which forbids adultery, murder, theft, the bearing of false witness, and coveting. Thus, Christians are under obligation to the ten commandments as being a rule of life.

(3) "By love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Galatians 5:13-14). Here one is again urged to exercise love because the law demands it, it being shown that it is the law which requires love to one's neighbor as himself. It is evident from Matthew 22:39 that this is the law of the ten commandments, where the Lord Jesus, upon the question, which is the great commandment of the law, comprehends the law in two commands, the second here being quoted by the apostle.

(4) "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3). If children are under obligation to obey their parents, they must be motivated to this because the fifth commandment requires it with a promise being added to it. The law thus remains in force as a rule for our life.

(5) "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: For whosoever will keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (James 2:8; James 2:10-11). The apostle demonstrates the law to be the rule of life by approving the conduct of those who adhere to it, and by stating that he sins against all commandments who offends in one. He declares that he is speaking of the law which forbids adultery, murder, etc. This, however, is the law of the ten commandments, and thus the law of the ten commandments is an eternal rule -- as much in the New Testament as it was in the Old Testament.

(6) All sins committed by believers are transgressions of the law. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4); "... for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). Believers in the New Testament, however, sin daily (cf. 1 John 1:8; 1 John 1:10; 1 John 2:1; James 3:2). The law thus remains in force as a rule of life. The Law of Christ is Equivalent to the Law of the Ten Commandments Evasive Argument #1: Believers sin against the law of Christ, but not against the law of the ten commandments.

Answer: The law of Christ is identical to the law of the ten commandments. Christ did not give another law; Christ gave that law of the ten commandments. To this law He subjected Himself and has perfectly lived according to it, leaving us an example therein. He Himself is also a living law. Christ has never given liberty to transgress any of the ten commandments, be it those that pertain to murder, adultery, or theft, etc. Thus, the law of Christ is the law of the ten commandments.

Evasive Argument #2: To sin is to conduct one's self contrary to the love of Christ.

Answer (1) To sin against the love of Christ, the love of God, and the law, is one and the same thing, for the law requires love to God and our neighbor.

(2) Believers of the Old Testament also sinned against the love of God and Christ who is the same yesterday and today. Their faith was identical to our faith, which "worketh by love," and their sins were committed contrary to their faith and love, which demanded holiness. Furthermore, love is also an incentive not to sin but to live holily -- which is a living according to the law.

Objection #1: There is agreement in this, since both insist upon sanctification. Regardless of whether one does so from different motives than another person, one must be tolerant of another.

Answer (1) This is the ancient language of all heretics. They reason as follows: It is already an old issue, and there is agreement as far as the matter itself is concerned, that is, holiness. We both insist on this, and therefore, be tolerant, be tolerant. This has an appearance of excellency, for those who propose moderation are the men of peace, but those who stand in the breach for the truth are deemed to be stubborn. By means of this wonderful illusion they seek to promote their errors all the more forcefully, and upon gaining the upper hand they can no longer tolerate sound doctrine. Instead, they will chase faithful ministers from the pulpit and out of town. This was the result of the toleration of the Arminians.

(2) The basis upon which, and the manner in which, sanctification functions, determines its respectability and essence. If one does not agree as to what the foundation and manifestation of sanctification are, there is no common ground whatsoever. Papists and Socinians also boast of works and holiness, but nevertheless follow the institutions of men, and reflect upon virtue in a natural manner; that is, apart from Christ and apart from true faith in Christ. Ought this then also to be called good?

(3) If the love to Christ is set forth as a law, one lays the groundwork for confusion in doctrine and life. What the one believes he must do out of love to Christ, the other will think he must refrain from out of love to Christ. The love to Christ will motivate the one to this and the other to something else, for love is imperfect here. Furthermore, one's own meaning can be very subtly mixed in with this, so that with some it results in fanaticism. It is evident from all this that one, prior to establishing ecclesiastical ties with such persons, must very earnestly endeavor to ascertain what the basis for sanctification is, as well as the manner in which it functions -- both in reference to ourselves and to others. If someone is weak in this area, but yet willing to learn, one can and must tolerate such a person according to the circumstances. The Moral Law: The Rule of Life for New Testament Believers

Objection #2: There are many texts which declare that believers in the New Testament are not under the law, the following being the most prominent: Romans 6:14; Romans 7:6; Galatians 3:23-25; Galatians 5:18; Galatians 5:23; and 1 Timothy 1:9.

Answer: To these and similar texts we shall first respond in general and then explain each text. First, in general it must be noted that Paul had to deal with individuals who combined the moral and ceremonial laws, seeking their righteousness and justification in the performance of those laws, not being able to harmonize the shadows with their embodiment. When the apostle then

declares that believers are not under the law, he at times speaks of the ceremonial laws due to Christ having come, and at times of the moral law as a condition of the covenant of works -- this being the manner in which such individuals view the law. Thus, there is nothing in these texts from which one could conclude that believers of the New Testament are not under obligation to the moral law as a rule of life.

Secondly, one must view the law either in regard to its demands, or in reference to the objective for which it was given upon Sinai. Since the image of God is but one, there is also but one holiness. Thus, the law which proposes perfect holiness is identical in its demand to the law which Adam had before the fall in the state of perfection as a condition of the covenant of works. The objective for the issuance of the moral law, however, was not that it be a condition of the covenant of works, but a rule of life for the partakers of the covenant of grace, who, on the basis of Christ's satisfaction, are justified and the recipients of salvation. In respect to the first, believers are not under the law; however, they are in reference to the latter. To have the law is a privilege to them and it is a joy to them that they have such a steadfast and delightful rule of life. And since they have not in this respect been relieved from their obligation to the law, they also have no desire to be relieved from it. They love the law and it is their delight. However, all the unconverted, also in the New Testament (although they are free from the ceremonial laws) are nevertheless under the covenant of works and subject to the demands of the law as a condition of this covenant. Since the law is weak through the flesh, they are all under the curse from which Christ has delivered believers.

Thirdly, the believers of the Old Testament were subject to the ceremonial law, not as a judgment upon sin, but as a loving guide and schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, so that believers greatly rejoiced in this, thanked the Lord for it, and observed it with great delight. They were, however, not under the demands of the law as a condition of the covenant of works, for they were under the covenant of grace. They had Christ, who is the same yesterday and today, as their justification, and they had the same faith, the same Spirit, and the same sanctification for which the law was their delightful rule of life -- as is also true today. The texts which have been advanced do not establish a contradiction between the Old and New Testaments, but a contrast which is relational in nature and is common to believers in both eras. They were not under the law as to its demands, but rather as a rule of life.

If you apply these answers to every text in question, it will be satisfactory. We shall now consider each text individually.

A. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

Answer (1) There is no contrast here between the Old and New Testaments, for all the ungodly are also now not under the old dispensation, but under the new. There is also no contrast between believers of the Old and New Testaments, for then, according to this text, believers of the Old Testament must all have been under the dominion of sin; this our opposition will not admit. This of necessity nullifies the argument, for the entire proposition rests upon the fact that believers in the New Testament dispensation are free from the law. If they wish to include believers of the Old Testament here by maintaining that all believers of all times have been under grace, and thus were not under the law, then all believers of the Old Testament have likewise not been under the

law. They would thus unravel their own proposition, for they will not admit this to be so for Old Testament believers.

(2) The contrast is here between the converted and the unconverted. The unconverted are under the law as consisting of the demands of the covenant of works, and are thus under the curse. Believers, however, are under the covenant of grace in which they are freely justified by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. They are the objects of unconditional and free grace, so that they are free from the curse, bondage, and dominion of sin. Christ has made them free from the condemning power of the law, and those whom He justifies He also sanctifies. He regenerates them, and that life has dominion over death. Thus, not to be under the law is equivalent to not being under the covenant of works, not to be under the condemning power of the law, and not to be under the demands of the law as a condition upon which salvation is to be acquired. There is neither a connection here, nor can it be deduced that those who are not under the covenant of works -- and thus not under the demands of the law as being its condition -- are therefore also free from the law as a rule according to which one lives a life of holiness.

B. "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6).

Answer: For the same reasons given in reference to Romans 6:14, there is here also no contrast between the Old and New Testaments nor between believers from each era. The covenant of works is the first husband under which believers were prior to their conversion. However, Christ has delivered them from their obligation to their first husband (the covenant of works), and having been translated into the covenant of grace they have died to this former husband, and he no longer has power to condemn them.

They are now under a different husband, Christ, having received Him by faith. Having thus been set free, however, they now (by reason of a new spiritual principle) serve in newness of spirit, in true holiness -- and not in the oldness of the letter, in the old manner; that is, as unconverted, under the covenant of works, and motivated to external religion by fear for damnation. Thus, to die to the law does not set one free from the law as a rule of life, but obligates one to live according to it in newness of Spirit.

C. "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:23-25). It is expressly stated here that those who believe are no longer under the law as a schoolmaster.

Answer (1) It must first be determined whether the apostle understood "schoolmaster" to refer to the moral law, for otherwise the entire argument falls apart. We deny this, for the moral law, when considered independently, makes no mention of Christ whatsoever. It does not reveal Christ and thus it can also not lead to Christ; its language is: "Do this." The apostle specifically has the ceremonial laws in view which the Jews intermingled with the moral law, as if they were of one and the same nature. They sought to be justified by observing it. They, now having been converted to Christ and acknowledging Him as the Messiah, nevertheless wanted to return to the ceremonies -- to circumcision and the feast days -- in order to be justified thereby. This is evident throughout the

entire letter. The apostle deals with them in reference to their views and demonstrates that one cannot be justified by the works of the law, but that justification is through Christ.

(2) In regard to these verses, the apostle wishes to say thereby that prior to Christ the Jews needed the ceremonial laws to lead them to Christ (whom the ceremonies typified) and to cause them to believe in Him. Christ having come, however, we no longer need the ceremonies since we now have the embodiment of these shadows. Therefore, Galatians, you behave yourselves foolishly by again returning to the ceremonies.

"But before faith came" -- this does not refer to the act of faith whereby Christ is received, for faith was also exercised in the Old Testament. Rather, it refers to the object of faith, Christ, as coming in the flesh. "We were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith"; that is, not as being in a prison, or in a pit to prevent escape, and as if they were in an evil and wretched condition, but rather as in a safe place being occupied with a good garrison, capable of casting out the enemy. Observe how this word is translated in the following passages: "And the peace of God ... shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Php 4:7); "Who are kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5). Therefore "to be kept" is a blessing and a blessed condition. They were in this condition until "the faith which should afterwards be revealed," that is, until the coming of Christ. Prior to this time the law has been "our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." A schoolmaster is not a jail-warden, a keeper of a house of correction, or a guard who gets compliance by hitting, shoving, and the use of violence -- thus implying that Old Testament believers were in a most wretched condition. Rather, the word schoolmaster is a delightful word. It is a derivative of *pais*, *paidos* (= a child), and of *ago* (= I guide, or instruction). This is derived from *agogae* (= education), and *agogos* (= leader or guide) and *paidagogos*, which is a keeper, teacher, and director of children. This is expressive of very kind and gentle treatment, consistent with the manner in which one treats children. The law is a schoolmaster or guide to bring us to Christ -- not the moral law when considered independently. The moral law does not reveal Christ and does not deal tenderly with men as one would lead children, but it says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things" (Galatians 3:10). When the gospel is offered to someone who is under the covenant of works, then the law can indeed be the reason that someone, being terrified by the law, flees from it, and that the gospel, intercepting such a person, leads him to Christ. However, it was the task of the ceremonies, as belonging to the gospel, to lead to Christ; they led the sinner to faith in Christ. Thus the ceremonial law was a guide, a teacher, and a director of God's children, leading them to Christ who would come "that we might be justified by faith." That was the sweet manner in which believers were led at that time. "But after that faith is come," that is, when Christ (to whom the ceremonies pointed) has been revealed in the flesh, "we are no longer under a schoolmaster," that is, a tender guide unto Christ. For the ceremonies are then no longer necessary, since we have the matter itself. Therefore, whoever wishes to be guided by the ceremonies again acts foolishly.

We have dealt with this more comprehensively, since it can yield further insight into many matters. It is thus evident that these words "we are no longer under a schoolmaster" do not imply that the moral law is no longer a rule of life for us, but rather that we are no longer under the ceremonial law.

D. "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:18; Galatians 5:23). The apostle states that they are not under the law who are led by the Spirit; they are therefore free from the law.

Answer: To be under the law is to be under the covenant of works; that is, to seek justification by the works of the law -- which is not to be obtained in that manner, the law being weak through the flesh. Therefore, those who are under the law are under the curse (Galatians 3:10). Thus, believers in the Old Testament were no more under the law than we are in the New Testament. They who are led by the Spirit of God are partakers of Christ and are thus free from the covenant of works and the curse. The law is not against such persons and cannot condemn them. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). It is therefore without foundation to conclude from these words, "not under the law," and "against such there is no law," that one must not live according to the law and that one ought not to deem it to be a rule of life. Yes, those who are led by the Spirit have the law written in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:3; Jeremiah 31:33). The Spirit thus causes them to live according to the law. It is therefore far from the truth that they ought not to live according to the law as a rule of life.

E. "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient," etc. (1 Timothy 1:9).

Answer: The apostle contrasts the righteous and the unrighteous. He says that the law has been made for the unrighteous; that is, made to condemn and terrify them. The righteous, however, being in the covenant of grace, are free from the condemning power and the curse of the law. The following conclusion is therefore incorrect: "For those for whom the law has not been designated to be a curse and to be unto condemnation, the law is also not a rule of life." Instead, the latter remains in force and the first has been taken away by Christ.

Christ: The End of the Law and not the Abrogation of the Law

Objection #3: The law came to an end with Christ, and it therefore cannot place us under obligation. "For Christ is the end of the law" (Romans 10:4).

Answer: The apostle declares that the Jews neither knew nor sought the way unto justification. They therefore sought to establish their own righteousness, and did not attain to the righteousness of God. Subsequently, he shows what the righteousness of God is whereby one can obtain the righteousness which can abide before God, namely, Christ. The apostle does not say that the law was terminated, abrogated, and rescinded with the coming of Christ. Far be it from me to suggest such a thing; rather, he says that Christ is the end of the law. End here means: fulfillment or completion. The law demands perfect righteousness, and judgment upon transgressors. Since man now is not able to fulfill the law and thus be justified by it, but is subject to eternal death due to transgression, Christ came and bore the punishment threatened by the law and satisfied the demands of the law. Christ placed Himself under the law and fulfilled it by active obedience, so that the law in all its demands and threats ends in Christ as having been fulfilled by Him on behalf of all the elect "for righteousness to every one that believeth." The word end is also understood as perfection in 1 Timothy 1:5, "Now the end of the commandment is charity." Simply because the law with its demands and threats ends in Christ, the fulfillment, it therefore does not follow that the law ceases to be a rule of life for those who are justified.

Objection #4: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). The law was given to Israel by Moses; this pertained to them. However, Christ reveals grace and truth; this pertains to us, so that we have no dealings with the law.

Answer: If we understand law to refer to the ceremonial law, it is indeed true that it does not pertain to us. It was only for Israel and could not give them the matter itself. It pointed to Christ who brings forth the grace and truth which were foreshadowed in the ceremonies. If we understand law to refer to the moral law, the meaning is as follows: Moses has given the law of the ten commandments; that is, he was the means by which the tables of the law were handed to Israel. By that law, however, no one can be justified. It does not engender grace; only Christ does this by His passive and active obedience. Thus, we do not have a contradiction here between the Old and New Testaments, but it states that which the law of Moses could not give and all that Christ does give, for Old Testament believers also had grace and truth through Christ. It is thus evident that there is not one word in the New Testament about the abrogation of the law as a rule of life.

Objection #5: Believers are now not in need of a rule of life since the Holy Spirit teaches them all things. "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (1 John 2:27).

(1) Believers in the Old Testament also had the Holy Spirit and were taught and led by Him (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:14; Psalms 143:10). Nevertheless the law was a rule of life to them (Psalms 119:98-100). Thus, to be taught by the Spirit does not exclude being led according to a rule of life.

(2) There being no need of instruction does not exclude the need for a rule of life; at most it implies that one can become acquainted with that rule by one's self.

(3) Neither does it imply that they were absolutely lacking any need of instruction anymore, for then they no longer would have any need for the entire Word of God. Why was John then so busy teaching them so many things in this letter? Rather, it means that by the anointing of the Spirit they would be able to distinguish truth from falsehood, and would not have to rely upon the views of another. What does this have to do with rejection of the law?

Objection #6: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:13); "Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). One can thus conclude as follows: God works all things in men, and if Christ lives in them, they are not in need of a rule according to which they ought to live. If we do not need to work, we also are not in need of a rule according to which we must work.

Answer (1) God, and thus Christ, did all this in true believers in the Old Testament, and yet the law was a rule unto them. It would then also not be a privilege in the New Testament.

(2) According to the view of opposing parties it would have to follow that one would now not even be in need of the rule of Christ. If, however, one needs the law of Christ in spite of the fact that He works all things in us, it does not necessarily follow that he is then not in need of the rule of the law.

(3) The apostle is speaking of the operative cause who enables to will and work, and grants life itself, not of the rule according to which one must will, work, and live. The one does not exclude the other -- yes, because God works in us to will and to do, one must therefore "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Php 2:12).

Objection #7: "... the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious. ... For if that which is done away was glorious" (2 Corinthians 3:6-7; 2 Corinthians 3:11). Here the apostle shows the difference between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is the letter and ministration of death, and has been done away with. How do those, therefore, who live by the Spirit have anything to do with the ministration of death, with the letter, and with that which has been done away with?

Answer: The apostle does not make a distinction here between the Old and New Testaments, for also in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit regenerated the elect, and there was a ministry of the Spirit, which was the gospel. They also had the law inscribed upon the fleshly tables of the heart, apart from which they would neither have been regenerate nor be partakers of sanctification (cf. Psalms 116:1-19). Rather, the apostle makes a distinction between the law (both moral and ceremonial) in an external sense as having been written with letters and administered externally, and the internal spiritual disposition and motions of the heart in faith, hope, and love. He maintains that the entire external service, unless imbued by the Spirit, is but a dead letter which killed those who went no further than the external and physical activity and were satisfied with this. This was true then, and is also true today, for what does the sound of the words of the gospel, holy baptism, and the Lord's Supper themselves avail if the Spirit does not operate by means of them? Are they then not also a dead and killing letter? Over against the external ministration as such, the apostle places the ministration imbued by the Spirit and made efficacious by Him. This also occurred in the Old Testament where the Spirit, be it more infrequently, also was active in granting illumination and conversion, causing sinners to embrace Christ (the soul of the ministry of shadows) by faith. This ministration of shadows has been done away with at the coming of Christ. Neither here nor elsewhere is this stated concerning the moral law as a rule of life. It remains in force and the Spirit still writes it upon the heart and in the understanding of the elect.

Objection #8: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). We are thus under no obligation to the law whatsoever, for if one were still under obligation to the law, he would still be subject to the yoke of bondage. Then his activity would still be of a forced and compulsory nature. One is now free, however, and everything is performed out of love.

Answer (1) The Spirit was also present in the Old Testament, and thus there was also liberty at that time. Liberty is therefore not a privilege of the New Testament.

(2) Freedom is not Belial, that is, to be without a yoke, for then you would be free from the law of Christ; then freedom would mean to live according to your own wishes and to be left to fend for yourself. Instead, freedom here means to be free from the covenant of works, the curse, the condemning power of the law, and a state of slavery. In such a condition they once were, and all still are, who are without the Spirit. To have liberty is to be free from the ceremonial law. To do something out of love and at the same time according to the law is not contradictory. The yoke of Christ is light and His burden is delightful, because the believer greatly desires it. They love the law which demands love, and it is therefore their meditation all the day. The law is a law of liberty;

it is freedom to live according to that law. Even a pagan says: "Only that is true freedom when one is obedient to the authorities and the law." Freedom is thus to live according to the law out of love and to be delivered from the dominion of sin. The Law of the Ten Commandments: A Perfect and Complete Rule

Question: Is the law of the ten commandments a perfect rule, or did Christ improve upon and enlarge this law, it being imperfect? The Papists claim that Christ has improved the law by the addition of evangelical commandments and directives, and they in turn add their traditions to it. The Socinians and Anabaptists in essence reject the entire law, although at times they express themselves somewhat more moderately and maintain that Christ has improved and spiritualized the law, having added three other commandments to it: 1) self-denial, 2) cross-bearing, and 3) the imitation of Christ. We maintain that the law is a perfect rule in every respect.

First, this is evident from such texts which declare expressly that the law is perfect. "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Psalms 19:7); "I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Psalms 119:96). Therefore the psalmist prayed, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psalms 119:18). When Scripture declares the law to be perfect, who would then have the audacity to say: "This is not so; the law is not perfect, but has been improved upon and enlarged; it is insufficient and the traditions of the church need to be added to it"?

Evasive Argument: "Perfect" must be translated as "undefiled." And furthermore, each commandment stands on its own, for "law" is written here in the singular. It can thus not be concluded that the ten commandments are sufficient. The word "perfect" is also understood to mean "upright," even though much may yet be lacking (Php 3:15).

Answer (1) The literal meaning of the word in the original text is "perfect," that is, not lacking in anything. The popish translators themselves translate the word as "perfect" here. The correctness of the translation is evident from that which is added: "... converting the soul: ...making wise the simple." Thus, the law is a perfect rule.

(2) To apply this to an individual commandment of the law simply because it is stated in the singular, and thus to conclude that the law is not regulative while making room for tradition instead, is without foundation. The psalmist does not have a single commandment in mind, but rather the law in general, which can also be expressed in the singular. The apostle also uses it in this way in Romans 7:10 : "And the commandment, which was ordained to life"; he frequently uses it as such. The psalmist also uses the words "law" and "commandment" in the plural: "The statutes of the Lord ... the judgments of the Lord" (Psalms 19:8-9).

(3) Even if the word "perfect" is at times applied to a person who is upright, but in whom much is lacking, it is placed in such a context that one can observe that it is stated by way of comparison and used in reference to the measure of uprightness. It can never be proven, however, that it is thus to be understood in reference to the law. Scripture speaks in an absolute sense of the word in regard to the law.

Secondly, this will be evident from such texts in which God forbids to either subtract or add anything. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you"

(Deuteronomy 4:2; cf. Deuteronomy 12:32); "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19). From Deuteronomy 4:10-13 it is evident that Moses is speaking of the moral law. In forbidding any type of addition he not only includes such traditions which are diametrically opposed to the law of God, but at the same time all those traditions which one would add to the law. It would be an addition, and one is here commanded not to add. He not only forbids the addition of what one would deem to be the laws of God, but he forbids all additions by whatever name they may be called, the reason for this prohibition being that the law of God is perfect. His prohibition to either add or subtract is not only issued to the Jewish church, but also to the Christian church -- as Christ Himself does in Matthew 5:19. This furthermore is proven in the answer given to the previous question, namely, whether the law is binding in the New Testament.

Thirdly, this is evident from Matthew 22:36-40. The Lord Jesus states the contents of the law to be its requirement of perfect love to God and one's neighbor with the whole heart, soul, and mind. Perfection beyond this does not exist. He does not only make mention of the superior and inferior object, but also of the purest and most perfect effort and activity of man in reference to these objects, the reason being that God has commanded it in His law.

Fourthly, it is evident from such texts in which eternal life is promised to those who keep the law. "The man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Romans 10:5); "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? ...keep the commandments. ... Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness" (Matthew 19:16-18); "What shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law ... this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:25-26; Luke 10:28). What could be required in addition to this? That upon which eternal life follows must necessarily be perfect.

Fifthly, the obedience of Christ is, without controversy, characterized by utmost perfection; however, Christ's obedience consists of the keeping of the law as Surety for the elect, by which they obtain a perfect righteousness with which they can abide the righteous judgment of God, the righteous Judge. This is to be observed in the following passages: "For what the law could not do ... God sending His own Son ... that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Romans 8:3-4); "God sent forth His Son ... made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Galatians 4:4-5); "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17); "So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). From all this it is evident that the law is a perfect rule.

Objection #1: Christ has commanded many matters in Matthew 5:1-48 which are not commanded in the law of the ten commandments. Yes, he expressly contradicts them by saying, "Thou hast heard ...but I say unto thee ..."

Answer: Christ does not reject anything here which was commanded in the law, nor does He add anything. He also does not give a meaning to the law which departs from the meaning of the words themselves. Rather, Christ refutes the distortions of the law of which the Jews were guilty, and demonstrates what the correct meaning is. This is evident:

(1) in verse 20 where He shows that He was opposed to the righteousness of the Pharisees -- not that of the law;

(2) from the declaration of the Lord Jesus: "Thou hast heard -- not what God has said in the law -- but what has been said by them of old (or to them of old); that is, the old distorted traditions which had made the commandment of God of none effect (Matthew 15:6).

(3) In Matthew 5:43 we read, "Hate thine enemy." This was not commanded in the law, but rather forbidden (cf. Leviticus 19:18; Exodus 23:4-5; Proverbs 25:21-22). It is this the Lord Jesus demonstrates: The meaning of the law was to love one's enemies (Matthew 5:44). The leaving of one's wife was not commanded in the law, but it was permitted due to the hardness of their hearts, and the parameters were well-defined.

Christ does show, however, that it was not so from the beginning, and that it may not occur, except by reason of adultery (Matthew 5:32).

Objection #2: Christ has given a new commandment: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another" (John 13:34).

Answer: Love was commanded in the law (Matthew 22:39). One must love in the New Testament because it has been commanded in the law (cf. Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). It is thus evident that "a new commandment" does not refer here to a commandment that did not exist previously but rather which was renewed, that is, presented and insisted upon anew.

Objection #3: Christ has commanded various matters which were not commanded in the law.

(1) He commands faith in Christ. Answer: The law demands that one must have God as his God, which includes believing all that God says and trusting in Him in the way He prescribes. The matter is commanded in the law, but the object is revealed in the gospel, and one is commanded to believe in that object, which is Christ (Psalms 2:12).

(2) He commands self-denial.

Answer: The law requires that we love God above all, be fully subject to Him, and obey Him. This necessarily includes self-denial. This self-denial was practiced in the Old Testament by Abraham in the sacrificing of his son; by Moses and the Levites, who did not spare their own fathers and brothers; and by Daniel and many others who forsook their own will in order to do the will of God.

(3) He commands cross-bearing. Answer: This was included in having God as one's portion and in being subject to Him. This was likewise practiced in the Old testament by Job in his patience, and by David in tolerating Shimei's curse and enduring other afflictions (Psalms 39:9). It was practiced by the church (cf. Lamentations 3:27-28; Micah 7:9) and it is also commanded (Proverbs 3:11).

(4) He commands that we imitate Him.

Answer: The law requires that we follow after God both in holiness and in the keeping of the Sabbath. Christ, in His obedience to the law, has given us an example for imitation. It is thus one and the same thing to obey the law and to imitate Christ in holiness. This matter has been commanded in the law, although the object of imitation is revealed in the gospel -- as well in the Old as the New Testament. "Beware of Him, and obey His voice" (Exodus 23:21).

(5) The law does not require repentance. Answer: The law requires perfect love and holiness. This obligates everyone, who by transgression has deviated from holiness, to repent. The Papists

destroy the law of God by their institutions, doing so under the pretense of giving evangelical directives. These, they claim, are indeed not commanded, but are nevertheless implied and ought to be embraced. Thus, he who does not adhere to them does not sin; however, he who does adhere to them practices holiness in a manner which exceeds the holiness resulting from the doing of the law, and he thus performs surplus works. These are: 1) celibacy, 2) blind obedience, 3) voluntary poverty, 4) life in a monastery, etc. We, on the contrary, do admit that there are indeed matters of which the performance is a matter of indifference. However, once you either do or not do it, it is no longer a matter of indifference, but one must do them in the manner and for the purpose prescribed in the law. Doing such things is neither more holy than not doing them, nor is there greater holiness implied than doing other matters which are expressly commanded or prohibited in the law. We entirely reject the notion, however, that something would have been added to the law, such as evangelical directives, which would not pertain to matters of indifference, but rather to moral issues, the performance of which would constitute a greater measure of holiness, and would merit a greater measure of glory. There are no such things as evangelical directives.

For, first of all, as there is no transgression where there is no law, there likewise is no virtue in the absence of a command. If one does things for which there is no command, they are institutions of men, of which it is said, "But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

Secondly, the law is perfect (as has been shown) and demands perfection of the purest sort (Matthew 22:37). Therefore, there can neither be virtue nor vice, unless either commanded or prohibited.

Thirdly, some matters, which they refer to as "evangelical directives," are indeed expressly commanded, such as 1) loving their enemies, 2) the bearing of the cross, 3) patience in enduring maltreatment, 4) purity, 5) the forsaking of all and the suffering of poverty for the name of Christ, and 6) obedience and subjection to each other -- each according to his station and rank. Other matters which they recommend as evangelical directives are expressly forbidden, such as:

(1) Blind obedience to men; for one may not be subject to anyone except it be in the Lord and in harmony with the revealed will of God. In doing so one will serve the Lord. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21); "With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:7); "... be not ye the servants of men" (1 Corinthians 7:23).

(2) Celibacy. God has not given the gift of abstinence to all men (cf. Matthew 19:11; 1 Corinthians 7:36). Those who do not have the gift of abstinence are commanded to marry (1 Corinthians 7:36), and one, whether married or not, must be pure (1 Thessalonians 4:4).

(3) Voluntary poverty. It is contrary to God's will to squander one's goods, cast them away without reason, or give alms in such a manner that one must live of alms himself. The apostle exhorts that everyone ought to work, and thus eat his own bread, rather than bread obtained through begging (2 Thessalonians 3:12). If confessing Christ means that one must forsake his belongings, it is his duty to forsake everything for the sake of Christ (Matthew 10:37). We have thus observed that all their evangelical directives are either no directives but commandments, or are nothing but willworship and contrary to God's law.

Objection #1: To abstain from marriage is not commanded in the law; instead it is recommended by way of an evangelical directive. "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment" (1 Corinthians 7:25; 1 Corinthians 7:40).

Answer: In verse 7 Paul wishes that under those circumstances, that is, a time of persecution, all believers would be as he was; namely, that they would have the gift of abstinence and would not be compelled to marry -- being able to either do so or not do so according to the dictates of the moment. He gives as a reason the imminence of great persecution. To be married at such a time results in many concerns and temptations as far as spouse and children are concerned. By being unmarried, one was free from all this. He therefore advised to remain unmarried if one has the gift of abstinence -- not because the one state was more holy than the other, but because it would be more convenient during the present distress. "I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress; nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh" (1 Corinthians 7:26; 1 Corinthians 7:28). During that time frame he deemed those who were unmarried to be happier; that is, they would have it much easier during times of persecution -- which is something everyone will agree with. When he says that he has no commandment from the Lord, he thereby declares that he had no express command as to what ought or ought not to be done as far as marriage was concerned in the case of persecution. In such a case, one needed to conduct himself most prudently and he thus judges it to be the most prudent thing not to marry at such a time. He declares that he has the Spirit (vs. 40) and that by the Spirit he had light and wisdom to judge what would be best in such a case. Thus, there is nothing here in support of evangelical directives. The law demands prudence.

Objection #2: The apostles were unmarried.

Answer: What does this prove? Must all men therefore remain unmarried? Ought all daughters not to marry, and must ministers then remain unmarried? Or ought they to leave their wives even though God hates this (Malachi 2:16) and even though they who are married are not to seek for dissolution (1 Corinthians 7:27)? Who can tie all this together? Furthermore, all apostles were not unmarried. "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas" (1 Corinthians 9:5). The Lord Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14).

Objection #3: "There be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (Matthew 19:12).

Answer: The Lord Jesus speaks of those who have the gift of abstinence and have the intent not to marry as long as they have the gift of abstinence in order that they may serve God more freely and be less restricted during times of persecution -- which is evident from Matthew 19:11-12. What support does this lend to their monastic vows?

Objection #4: "Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 56:3-5). A glorious promise is made here to eunuchs. In order to be the recipient of these glorious promises one must remain unmarried.

Answer: The text speaks of those who were robbed of their masculinity contrary to their will, and thus were not able to have children -- all of which is not a special blessing. The blessing is not pronounced upon them because they were eunuchs. Rather, if they would serve the Lord, they would not be despised by the Lord as they were despised of men, and not permitted to enter into the congregation (Deuteronomy 23:1).

Objection #5: "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Matthew 19:21). This proves that voluntary poverty constitutes a high level of perfection.

Answer: Christ does not say that this constitutes perfection; rather, He addresses the young man who imagined that he was perfect. Christ, having the authority to issue a command, ordered him to do so. He should have known that Christ was the Messiah, and thus God. He therefore should have obeyed. This was therefore not an evangelical directive, but rather a command. This was not a command for all men, but a specific command to this man in order to convince him that, instead of being perfect, he idolized his belongings. When it is said in Mark 10:21 that Jesus loved him, this was not because he sold everything, for this he did not do. Rather, He loved him for his sincere desire to be saved, even though he did not know the way, for it was said, "One thing thou lackest." This does not imply that he was perfect, except for that; rather, he presupposed this in his imagination, and it needed to be shown to him that he yet lacked everything: obedience and faith in Christ.

Perfect Compliance with the Law Not Attainable in This Life

Question: Can man perfectly obey the law of God? The Papists answer in the affirmative, and in addition to this perform superfluous works. The Socinians also answer in the affirmative. We, on the contrary, answer negatively. This is first of all evident from express textual references. "There is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings 8:46);

"Who can understand his errors" (Psalms 19:12); "In thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psalms 143:2); "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin" (Proverbs 20:9)? "For in many things we offend all" (James 3:2); "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). In these texts the saints speak both of God's people and of themselves, declaring that no one is perfect, but all sin daily.

Evasive Argument: Motivated by humility, these texts make use of an elevated and lofty manner of speech, speaking of small sins and small offenses which ought not to be reckoned. Or else the saints are speaking in this way of the unconverted -- whom they personify for the moment -- and of the common lot of men. However, this neither implies that one cannot be perfect, nor that many are not perfect.

Answer: Such talk is nothing but untruth; it says what it says. The texts themselves, however, rebuke them. Sins are sins, regardless of whether they are great or small. He who offends in one is guilty of all; Scripture knows of no excusable sins.

Secondly, this is evident from the saints. If anyone attained to perfection in this life, then this must have been true of Noah, Abraham, Job, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, James, Peter, and John. They were not perfect, however, for their failures have been recorded in Scripture. Who would

dare to exalt himself above these holy men? And if perfection were to be found in popery, it ought to be found in the pope, cardinals, bishops, etc. If they were perfect, however, it would be time for them to dismiss their confessors and no more soul masses ought to be performed for them -- for thereby they confess that they are not perfect.

Thirdly, this is evident from the warfare which rages between the flesh and the spirit in the best of them. "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am!" (Romans 7:23-24); "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). Wherever there is a battle, there are two parties; here we have flesh and spirit. Wherever there is flesh, there is no perfection.

Fourthly, it is evident from the necessity to pray daily for the forgiveness of sins. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). One must pray all the petitions of the Lord's prayer daily -- if not with the same words, then the matters must be there. One must daily forgive his debtors, pray daily for daily bread, and thus also daily pray: "Forgive us our debts." If this must be a daily occupation, it follows that one also sins daily. Where sins are no longer present, prayer for forgiveness ceases.

Objection #1: Many are said to be perfect. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect" (1 Corinthians 2:6); "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (Php 3:15); "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age" (Hebrews 5:14). Add to this the examples of those who are said to have been perfect, such as: Noah (Genesis 6:9), Job (Job 1:1), David (Psalms 119:10), Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:3), and Zacharias and Elisabeth (Luke 1:6).

Answer (1) It is evident that the persons mentioned were not perfect in every respect, for the sins of each have been recorded, so that perfection must be understood to refer to their uprightness.

(2) There is a partial perfection which is expressive of being upright in all things and as such is the opposite of not being upright and of being hypocritical. We shall readily admit that there is such perfection -- yes, he is not a believer who does not possess this, for that is the new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17), and the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). However, no one reaches the measure of perfection in this life. This has been demonstrated and is evident from the quoted examples themselves.

(3) There is a perfection in comparison to others who have not made such progress. Such is true for fathers in comparison to young men and children (1 John 2:13). Of such the apostle speaks in the quoted texts.

Objection #2: Christ's yoke is easy and His commandments are not grievous. "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30) ; "...His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). It thus follows that a man can easily become perfect.

Answer (1) That which is light for a man, is indeed heavy for a child for whom it may be impossible to carry a given object. That which was easy for Adam prior to the fall, was impossible after the fall.

(2) The law in and of itself is holy, righteous, and good; there is no inherent impossibility. Rather, the difficulty is on the side of man who has brought himself into a state of impotence.

(3) The law is easy when considered from the perspective of the desire and love which the godly have for it. They are not obligated to the law against their will; rather, they rejoice that God commands them something and that they are privileged to serve God in something. The law is their delight, the rejoicing of their heart, and their song (Psalms 119:1-176). Whatever one does with delight is not difficult, even though it is not done to perfection.

(4) The law is not held before them as a condition of the covenant of works and as threatening with a curse; rather, it is a rule of love. Therefore it is not difficult, cumbersome, and grievous for them, but easy and delightful, even though they fall short in all things.

Objection #3: God demands perfection and therefore it must also be obtainable, for God does not demand that which is impossible.

Answer (1) This is required from all men, and therefore all the unconverted would then be able to keep the law perfectly; this, however, the disputants will not admit.

(2) God created the human nature perfectly and thus He may demand perfection, even though man has brought himself into a state of inability due to his blindness, wickedness, and impotence.

(3) Perfection is the goal which is held before man. God stirs His children up to strive for this. He who approximates this as much as possible is in the best condition. This however is not to suggest that man can attain to the highest level of perfection in this life. A godly person will most certainly attain to this perfection held before him -- however, not here, but after this life. Presently he speaks and acts as Paul does: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Php 3:12).

Heaven: Not Merited by Good Works but by the Finished Work of Christ

Question: Is it possible to merit heaven by keeping the law either fully or partially? Answer: The Papists generally answer in the affirmative. They disagree with each other as to the manner in which good works are meritorious. They maintain that there are two sorts of merits. First, there is a meritum congrui, that is, a merit of suitability or propriety. By this is understood that when man performs a good work purely by reason of his free will and own strength, without being assisted by divine grace, it then behooves God to infuse grace into the man who does his best. Secondly, there is a meritum condigni, that is, a merit of equivalence. This is understood to mean that when man performs a good work by the strength of his free will, being assisted by divine grace, he merits heaven by the inherent worthiness of the work, so that there is a proportionate relationship between the work and the reward. Some maintain that good works merit heaven, even if there were no promise or agreement between God and man in which God promises heaven upon good works. Others do not relate the efficacy of merits to the inherent worthiness of the work which is performed with the assistance of divine grace, but to the behavior relative to which God promises heaven upon good works. Others maintain that good works merit heaven neither in reference to the one nor to the other, but rather by reason of conjoining the two, and understand it as follows: Heaven is put on display by God as a prize, promising to those who do good works that they will attain thereto, and that man being thus engaged, due to the inherent worthiness of the work, merits heaven by reason of the righteousness of God. The Socinians speak of acceptation. This means that God accepts a part as the whole, and thus grants heaven to man due to his good

works, even though he is not perfect.

We maintain on the contrary that good works are pleasing to God, and that God rewards them graciously. Man must have both of these things in view and be motivated by both to the performance of good works. We furthermore maintain that God has decreed to bring those who will be saved to this point by way of holiness and good works. Thus, man must not expect salvation as long as he is not on the way of holiness. We also maintain that God, having promised this and in accordance with His truthfulness, will give this heaven, merited by Christ, to those whom He sanctifies. And since He is faithful, it is also right and righteous that He would give it to them. We deny, however, that good works are meritorious by reason of some inherent worthiness. The proofs for this are:

First, everyone will have to agree that whatever is to be meritorious by reason of inherent worthiness, must have these qualifications:

- (1) It must be something which one was not obligated to do and originated in our free will, irrespective of whether one wanted to do this or not; one would thus be able to desist therefrom without sinning.
- (2) It must be one's own doing, for one cannot merit something from the same person from whom he receives that which is to be merited.
- (3) It must be perfect and entirely without blemish.
- (4) It must be consistent with the reward; if one were to receive more than the work deserves, that would be a gift and not be meritorious.

However, doing our works is not a matter of our own choice.

(1) If one neglects to do them, he will sin; and if he is under obligation to do them, he cannot merit something with them. "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10; cf. Romans 8:12).

(2) Our good works are not inherent to our nature; while in the state of nature one cannot please God (Romans 8:8). Such are dead (Ephesians 2:1), blind (1 Corinthians 2:14), evil and unwilling (Romans 8:7), impotent and unto every good work reprobate (Titus 1:16). Such a person cannot, in and of himself and by his own strength, do any good work. Therefore in order for man to do any good, it must first be given him. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it" (1 Corinthians 4:7); "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:13); "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17); "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5).

(3) Not one of our works is perfect. In the very best of them there are deficiencies in regard to faith, obedience, love, and zeal. It is written: "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6); "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18). Add to this that if man fails in one

aspect, even though in the most insignificant circumstance, he is guilty in all (James 2:10).

(4) There neither is nor can be an internal and truly proportional relationship between the work of man and heaven. For there is no comparison between the finite and the infinite, nor between that which is temporal and that which is eternal (Romans 8:18).

If we now consider all this together, we shall arrive at a syllogism. Whatever is to be meritorious must be something which we were under no obligation to perform. It must be our own work and be generated by our own strength. It must be perfect and be proportionate to the reward. We are, however, obligated to do good works, this obligation being all-inclusive and requiring complete perfection. However, they do not proceed from our own strength, are completely imperfect and defiled, so that our work and heaven have nothing in common. It thus follows that our good works cannot merit heaven.

Secondly, salvation is an inheritance and a gift proceeding from grace alone; it is not obtained by merit. This is to be observed in the following passages: "... inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34); "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:24); "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23). If heaven could be obtained by merits, then the contrast should be as follows: As death is the wages of sin, so heaven is the wages of good works. However, the apostle shows the distinction by referring to the one as wages and the other as the gift of God. He clearly does not say that the work upon which salvation is awarded is a gift of God. Rather, he states that salvation itself is a gift of God.

Thirdly, Christ is a perfect Savior. Christ has earned and merited salvation for His people. "And I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:28); "... but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:15); "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12). One of two things must be true: Either Christ did not merit heaven for His people, or their works do not merit heaven. Christ has merited heaven, however, and thus their works have not. And in what fashion would their works merit? Completely or partially? If completely, then Christ would be no Savior. If partially, then He would be no complete Savior. Christ is Savior, however, and He is a complete Savior. Thus, our works -- neither entirely nor partially -- are of no avail as far as meriting salvation is concerned.

Evasive Argument: Christ has merited the meritoriousness of our works.

Answer: This does not amount to anything and does not unravel the fabric of our proof. If Christ has perfectly merited heaven, our works cannot be admitted as being meritorious -- even if Christ were to have merited the meritoriousness of their works for them. We deny expressly that Christ has merited the meritoriousness of our works. It is ludicrous to state such a thing, for it is as much as to say: Christ's merits beget other redeemers and saviors. It thus remains certain that works cannot merit. The following objections are brought forth against this: 1) One is justified by works; 2) God is pleased with good works; 3) man will be judged in reference to his works; 4) man receives salvation because he is worthy of it; 5) retribution is made in response to works; 6) good

works merit reward; and 7) good works are beneficial. For our answer to these objections, please refer to Volume 2, chapter 34, on Justification.

Final Exhortation to Observe the Law Diligently as a Rule of Life

All that has been considered in the foregoing is not merely for the acquisition of knowledge, but is to be practiced. First, if the law is a perfect rule of life for us, then learn to understand the law in its comprehensive and spiritual nature. Let it be your prayer: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psalms 119:18). Read it over and over again, and search out in the Word of God all that is comprehended under the law. Meditate and reflect continually upon the law until it be clear to you and you acquire a habitual inclination toward the law. May you thus continually focus on it in your entire conduct and permit yourself to be continually illuminated by that light.

Secondly, continually hold this law before you as being the will of God; approve of it, love it, obediently subject yourself to it, and in your entire conduct behave yourself according to this rule, and keep it in view as a carpenter does his blueprint.

Thirdly, examine yourself daily by means of this law, and ascertain which commandment you have transgressed and which commandment you have observed; this will humble you. You will thereby become more careful in the future, it will cause you to pray for the guidance of the Spirit, and Jesus will become all the more precious to you.

051. Chapter 46: The First Commandment

----- CHAPTER FORTY-SIX ----- The First Commandment Prior to proceeding with an exposition of each individual commandment, some matters need to be noted by way of preface.

God's Gift of the Law to Man: The Manifestation of His Character

Just as God has created in man the knowledge of a Godhead, He has likewise given him an innate knowledge of the will of God. Both are, however, very obscure and entirely imperfect in man, and due to continual sinning they become even more obscure. The knowledge that one must abstain from evil and do that which is good remains in all men. However, what constitutes evil and good is more clearly discerned by one than by another. The most intelligent and virtuous among men neither know all that God has commanded and prohibited, nor the manner of observance. Paul himself says: "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7). It is as if the law of nature has been recorded in writing upon a slate, which has been wiped off with the hand so that here and there a sentence, some words, or letters are left, but the rest has become illegible. The heathen are acquainted with an occasional commandment. However, other commandments, as well as the manner in which they are to be observed, are mostly unknown to them (cf. vol. 1, ch. 1). The Lord has perfectly revealed the law of the ten commandments to His church, and partakers of the covenant are obligated to live accordingly. We must therefore not make the dim light of nature to be the judge which determines which commandments we are and are not obligated to observe. Nor ought it to be a touchstone determining whether or not they pertain to us (and are thus binding for us) simply because reason -- that is, the dim light of nature -- judges it to be so. Rather, it is so because God as Lawgiver commands it to be so, and we must judge by means of the law declared on Sinai what the conduct of all men (heathens as well as Christians) ought to be, as well as what sin and virtue are -- all of which nature and reason should have taught them. Our reason even originates with God and He declares by means of it what His will is. Thus, the heathen must judge as to whether a matter is evil, not because their reason affirms it to be so, but because God wills it and makes His will known to them by means of their reason, that is, by means of the light of nature.

God is holy and therefore cannot but demand holiness from man. Some ordinances which God has prescribed to man have proceeded from the sovereign will of God, so that He would have been free not to have given them. Having given them, they are thus good, and man is under obligation to observe them solely because it pleases the sovereign Lawgiver. Such was the command given to Adam not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; and the ceremonial laws were of this nature. However, as it is commensurate with the nature of God and of the reasonable creature that there be an obligation to be obedient to God and to have commandments by which the creature obey God, it likewise issues forth from the character of God that man have such commandments, as comprehended in the ten commandments, to be the measure of man's holiness. This holiness is the image of God; that is, the harmony with the communicable attributes of God. It was therefore not possible for God -- having thus created man

in harmony with His holy nature -- to either gift or command man contrary to His nature, so that man, created in His image, would hate Him, not serve Him or only serve Him in a physical sense, dishonor Him, and not publicly and corporately call upon and glorify Him. He could not have created the bearer of His image to be disobedient to authorities and parents, evil, immoral, and impure; either publicly or secretly rob his neighbor, harm the reputation of his neighbor, lie, and have a dissatisfied heart which seeks its fulfillment in that which is tangible. For all of this is contrary to the holy character of God, whose image the perfect nature of man bore. If man were still perfect, he would understand all this clearly; that is, that the ten commandments in their entirety, as well as individually, are not only law merely because God willed it to be so, but because the will to give such a law issued forth out of His holy character. Furthermore, it was inherently righteous that the holy God gave, and was willing to give, such laws to man created after His image. It thus follows that God, consistent with His holiness could neither relieve man from the obligation to obey, nor could He relieve him from accountability for the disobedience of a single commandment out of the ten and instead command the contrary, for then He would have denied both Himself and His holiness. Much less can any man relieve himself from his obligation toward any commandment, nor one man relieve another man, nor authorities their subjects from this obligation. If anyone were to undertake this, he would oppose God. If we were to have perfect light, then such questions as: "Why could God not have commanded this in such and such a fashion?" etc. would never arise in the heart of man, and one would observe that God has never relieved anyone from his obligation to obey any of the commandments. Whatever the corrupt intellect would issue forth in opposition to this, would then readily disappear.

Guidelines to Be Observed in Ascertaining the Meaning of the Law The law is perfect, and man -- also regenerate man -- is imperfect as far as the intellect and the will are concerned. Therefore he not only needs to pray, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psalms 119:18), but he must also be very diligent in acquiring a more thorough knowledge of the law in order that he may discern the holiness comprehended in it, have a clear knowledge of his transgression, humble himself due to this, have a higher esteem for Christ's satisfaction and live more purely in accordance with it. It is thus needful that man does not merely focus on the words of the law in the brevity of its presentation without moving beyond this, but he must painstakingly search out all that is comprehended in those brief statements. To that end it will be useful to have the following guidelines at his disposal while thus engaged.

First, the content of the law is love toward God and our neighbor (Matthew 22:37; Romans 13:8-10). Therefore mere observance of the law is not sufficient; rather, it must all be done out of love. God and the neighbor are not placed on the same level, but God is infinitely above man and thus love to God must exceed love to the neighbor. Love to the neighbor must flow out of love to God. If the exercise of love to the neighbor were to conflict with the exercise of love toward God, love to the neighbor must yield to love for God. We must love and obey father and mother; however, if in time of persecution, attachment to them prevents us from confessing God, in such a case -- and in that respect alone -- we must have no contact with them, but rather depart from them.

Secondly, the law is spiritual (Romans 7:14), and "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24). Therefore external and physical activity does not suffice, but our entire conduct must involve soul, mind, will, and affections -- and all of this in a perfect, holy, and spiritual manner. The motivating principle, as well

as the manner and purpose of observance must be perfectly spiritual, and thus, the involvement of body and soul are required in the obedience of the law. "Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Thirdly, each commandment implies a prohibition and each prohibition a command. He who does not kill has not observed the sixth commandment; instead, as much as he is able, he must preserve the life of his neighbor and live in love and peace with him. Neither has the eighth commandment been observed by not stealing; rather, he must preserve the belongings of his neighbor and assist him in doing so. He also has not observed the ninth commandment who merely does not bear false witness; rather, it implies the promotion of the honor of his neighbor.

Fourthly, the imperative commands are always binding in reference to a particular object; however, the prohibitive commands are binding without exception. An orphan cannot honor his father and mother, for they do not exist. God and the neighbor are, however, always present, and therefore there is no instance in which he may behave himself improperly toward either one of them.

Fifthly, when a virtue is commanded and a vice forbidden, then all virtues and vices which are of the same nature are simultaneously commanded and forbidden. The measure of something does not alter its nature. To the external also belongs the internal, and this is also true for all motives which are the basis for virtue and vice. Included in murder are hatred, envy, wrath, and vengeance. The commandment, however, also implies the contrary: love, affection, peace, and being good-natured. Included in adultery are all immoral inclinations and deeds, but the commandment also implies the contrary: all internal and external purity, as well as concern that our neighbor be not defiled, but rather lives an unblemished life. The Two Tables of the Law The content of the law is love and in that respect it can be said that the entire law is one. The objects are God and our neighbor, and in consequence of this the law is divided into two commandments (Matthew 22:40), and thus likewise was also recorded on two tables. It is observed in a tenfold manner and is therefore denominated the ten words or ten commandments (cf. Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 10:4).

Concerning the tables of the law, there could be the conjecture that since they were written upon both sides, there was no distinction made between the commandments and they were thus recorded in a continual and sequential manner -- the suggestion being that as much as possible had been written on one table, the remainder being written upon the other table without making an interruption at a certain commandment, the second and fourth commandment being very long. This is not credible at all, however, for then everything could have been written upon one table. It is also not credible that five commandments were written upon each table. Rather, it is obvious that the commandments upon each table are distinct as far as content is concerned. The first four are those that have reference to God and are recorded on the first table. The commandments having reference to our neighbor, being the latter six, are recorded upon the second table. This is, first of all, to be observed in Matthew 22:38-39, where the Lord Jesus makes a distinction between the tables according to their content, and in reference to God and our neighbor. Secondly, this is evident from Ephesians 6:2, where the fifth commandment is called the first commandment with promise. This cannot refer to all the commandments, for the second and fourth commandments also have promises, and it must thus be understood as the first commandment of the second

table. Thirdly, this is evident from Matthew 19:18-19. There the commandments of the second table are enumerated and none of the first -- and among them the fifth is mentioned as well. The Papists, in order to more fully conceal from the common people the fact that their worship of images is idolatrous, hide the second commandment in the first and make one commandment out of them. They thus maintain that there are three commandments upon the first table, a viewpoint wherein the Lutherans follow them. In order to come up with ten again, they divide the tenth commandment into two commandments, and maintain that there are seven commandments on the second table. The second commandment is a distinct commandment from the first. This is first of all evident from the fact that it commands an entirely different matter, and has an entirely different objective. The first commandment states whom we should honor and serve; the second pertains to the manner in which God is to be honored and served. It is thus possible to sin against the one and not against the other. One can serve the true God in a manner which He has not commanded, and which displeases Him. Secondly, it is therefore expressly separated from the first and presented as an independent commandment (Deuteronomy 4:23). Thirdly, there would then only be nine commandments since the tenth commandment cannot be torn into two commandments; for:

(1) Paul comprehends it all in one, as forbidding covetousness (Romans 7:7).

(2) The law is recorded in both Exodus 20:1-26 and Deuteronomy 5:1-33. In the one place the coveting of our neighbor's house has precedence, and in the other place the coveting of our neighbor's wife comes first. This shows that this commandment focuses only on covetousness, irrespective of the object that is coveted.

(3) It would then also be uncertain as to which would be the ninth and tenth commandment. This is inconsistent with the wisdom and clarity with which the Lawgiver speaks.

(4) Also, these two parts are not separated by a period, by which every other commandment is distinguished. Rather, there is a colon, which indicates that the matter is not yet finished. The fact that the words thou shalt not covet are repeated also renders no proof. Furthermore, a different word for "coveting" is used in Deuteronomy 5:1-33 which also means "to covet"; however, this occurs frequently in God's Word, and the latter usage is frequently an explanation and enlargement of the first usage. For instance, in the second commandment we find: to make, to bow down, and to serve. Also in Joshua 1:5-6 we read, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage." The Preamble of the Law The preamble of the law is a very remarkable and powerful incentive for obedience. Three specific things are to be noted in it: 1) who is giving the law; 2) what relationship there is between the Lawgiver and those to whom He gives the law; and 3) an alluring incentive.

First, He who is the Lawgiver proclaims His Name, and by His Name demonstrates His authority, in order to incite attention, reverence, and obedience. I am Jehovah. I, who am speaking to you, am Jehovah, the eternal God who is, who was, and who shall be. I am the living God who lives from eternity to eternity, who has given life and being to all and to whatever lives; and who maintains and governs all by My influence. I am worthy of all honor, service, and obedience. It is the felicity of rational creatures to know, honor, fear, and serve Me as Jehovah. I, Jehovah, am the only Lawgiver who can save and destroy. Therefore, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken" (Isaiah 1:2).

Secondly, the Lord adds a word to this which makes known the relationship and connection there is between Him and the church. "I am thy God." I, God -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- have chosen you to be a peculiar people unto Me. I have offered My covenant to you in the Son and by the Holy Spirit have brought you under the bond of the covenant. You have given Me your hand and you have entered into a covenant with Me; you have chosen Me to be your God. It is thus My prerogative to give laws to you, to direct you, and you are obligated to obey Me by virtue of the covenant of grace. Therefore, "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of My mouth" (Deuteronomy 32:1).

Thirdly, an incentive is added to this which is derived from the benevolence He so recently had manifested toward them. "... which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:1-2). You were strangers in Egypt and were oppressed and treated very harshly there, and there was no deliverance. I took you by the hand, however, and delivered you by a strong hand. I plagued your enemies and put them to death in the Red Sea. You, however, I led dry-shod through it and liberated you in order to give you that desirable country as an inheritance. Should you then not fear Me and give heed to My voice? This is fitting and places you under obligation. "... that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74-75). The Exposition of the First Commandment

We have now arrived at the exposition of each commandment in particular. We shall begin with the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." There are no other Gods besides the Lord our God. "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God" (1 Corinthians 8:5-6). The angels are called gods since in a certain sense there is a reflection of God in them as far as glory, power, and wisdom, etc. is concerned (Psalms 8:6). Governmental authorities are also denominated as gods, since something of God is reflected in them as far as having dominion over others (Psalms 82:6). Furthermore, men fabricate creatures whom they honor and serve as gods. Even the devil is called the god of this world due to the power he exercises over this evil world (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Since man is so obsessed and concerned to satisfy the desires of his belly, the belly is also called a god (Php 3:19). All of these are rejected here as objects that are to be honored, feared, served, and trusted as God, and from whom any good is to be expected.

God forbids us here to have any other gods before Him. God is present among His people; He looks upon them and they upon Him. Therefore, the fact that this sin is committed in the presence of God, greatly aggravates it. The more extraordinary, clear, and glorious this presence is, the more abominable this sin is. In the place where God is served and by a people in whose midst He resides, no sin is more heinous than to put something in the place of God or to have something besides God which one honors and serves as God. In every commandment there is something which is commanded and something which is prohibited -- and thus also in this commandment. We shall therefore first present what the prohibited sins are and then the commanded virtues. The prohibited vices are the following:

Atheism Forbidden The first sin is atheism; that is, the denial of God, ungodliness, and being estranged from God. The knowledge and acknowledgment of a Godhead is as innate to man as

his rationality. As the rationality of one man is more distinct and more exercised than in other men, and as some are without reasoning ability, and are insane due to alcoholism, brain damage, or another indisposition, and all rationality seemingly almost lost, the natural knowledge of God is likewise more clear in one than in another. Moreover, many have very much darkened or nearly extinguished this natural knowledge due to yielding to ungodliness, continual sinning against light, and by contending with God. Nevertheless, a spark always remains in the heart which now and then, contrary to their will, manifests itself. To this atheism belongs forgetting God and not retaining God in our knowledge; that is, not to continually focus our attention upon God. If it be that one yet remembers Him, His attributes still make no impression and have no effect upon the heart. It neither draws him away from sin nor motivates him to conduct himself in love, filial fear, and obedience, to which the perfections of God obligate him. In short, it is to live -- be it for a shorter or longer time -- as if there were no God, or as if God is not the God who He is. (Concerning atheism see volume 2, chapter 43).

Idolatry Forbidden The second sin is idolatry. One can divide this sin into three categories: blatant, moderate, and refined idolatry. Blatant idolatry is the setting up of something in the stead of God, or to esteem, honor, and serve something as

God as if it were God Himself. Such blatant idolatry is not even found among the heathen, who indeed have their secondary gods, but who acknowledge a Godhead superior to that, whom they served as the unknown God (Acts 17:23). *Nescio quis Deus*: a God has made heaven and earth, but I do not know who He is. Such is the confession of a pagan. Even when the heathen honor and serve an image, they nevertheless know that this image is not God Himself. Rather, they want to depict God by this and deem Him to be present in and near that image. They also consider it to be pleasing to Him to be served in this manner. This blatant idolatry is committed, however, by popery in the worship of the wafer in their mass, for they deem the wafer to be God Himself. They themselves admit that if the wafer is not God, they are then the most abominable idolaters of the world -- which indeed they are, for it is not God. A less blatant form of idolatry is when one designates something alongside of God to which he renders divine honor. Such was and is the idolatry of the heathen (cf. Romans 1:25; Galatians 4:8; 1 John 5:21). They formerly had their Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, and countless others, who either had been humans, or who had been fabricated and deified by them. The papists imitate them by also worshiping angels, deceased persons, or imaginary objects, rendering them divine honor if the pope has declared them to be holy and placed them among the number of saints to be worshiped. **The Worship of Angels and Deceased Saints Denounced**

Question: May and must angels and deceased saints be worshiped? **Answer:** Papists make a distinction between *latreia*, *douleia*, and *huperdouleia*. *Latreia*, so they say, is a service which one may only render toward God. *Douleia* is a service which one must render to angels and deceased saints. *Huperdouleia* is a service on a somewhat higher plane than the service of angels and saints, and which they render to the human nature of Christ and the Virgin Mary. They answer the question in the affirmative, maintaining that one must worship angels and the saints with *douleia*, and the human nature of Christ and the Virgin Mary with *huperdouleia* -- supplicating them for help, the forgiveness of sins, sanctification, and salvation. They also manifest this distinction by their practice. The Socinians, believing that Christ is not the eternal God, but only a mere man in nature, worship Him because He has been so highly exalted by God and has been made to be a

god. In order to conceal their idolatry, they make a distinction between worship and invocation. They insist that the Father as the supreme God must be worshiped; however, they insist that invocation is inferior and may and must be practiced toward Christ. As far as the popish distinction is concerned, we maintain that this distinction of words is but a vain fabrication, which is neither to be found among the Greek writers nor in God's Word. Yes, if one were to consider these words etymologically, *douleia* would be a much higher level of service than *latreia*, for *douleia* is a service which serfs render to their masters, and *latreia* is a service which a hired servant renders for wages. Scripture knows of no such distinction. Not only must God be served with *latreia*, but also with *douleia*. Consider only the following passages:

"Serving (*douleuon*) the Lord with all humility of mind" (Acts 20:19); "... serving (*douleuontes*) the Lord" (Romans 12:11). The word *latreia* signifies both the rendering of service to creatures as well as to God: "God ... gave them up to worship (*latreuein*) the host of heaven" (Acts 7:42); "... and worshiped and served (*elatreusan*) the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). Yes, Scripture considers it idolatry to serve with *douleia* those who are not very God: "Ye did service (*edouleusate*) unto them which by nature are no gods" (Galatians 4:8). The distinction made by Socinians is equally without foundation, for both worship and invocation are attributed to the Father: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:10); "... whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:21). Also Christ is both invoked and worshiped: "... all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:2); "And they worshiped Him" (Luke 24:52); "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Hebrews 1:6).

We maintain that angels must be acknowledged as intelligent, holy, powerful, and religious spirits, whom God sends forth for the benefit of the elect (Hebrews 1:14). One must therefore conduct himself in a reverent and appropriate manner, and refrain from sin and from offending the children of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:10; Matthew 18:10). We maintain that we must commemorate the lives, deeds, strife, and victories of the saints, and hold before us their holy example to be emulated by ourselves and others (cf. Luke 1:48; Matthew 26:13; Hebrews 12:1). We deny with abhorrence, however, that one may and must render religious honor to either angels or saints. We shall prove this as follows:

First, we must worship God alone, thereby excluding everything that is not God. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). Two words are mentioned here: to worship and to serve. Christ, upon the demand of the devil that He worship him, answers that neither of the two are permitted, that is, neither worship nor service. This is reserved only for the true God, for the word "only" excludes all creatures.

Evasive Argument: The word "only" is mentioned relative to "serve" and not relative to "worship." Furthermore, service is expressed by *latreia* and not by *douleia*.

Answer (1) The word "only" refers to both and is not limited to "serve." It is common in regular conversation as well as in Scripture that two verbs are joined with "and," and with an adverb modifying the one, must be understood as modifying both. If one were to say, "I want you to serve me and obey me only," this is as much as to say, "I want you to serve me only and obey me only." Observe this in Scripture: "Only be thou strong and very courageous" (Joshua 1:7). The word "only" must be understood to modify "very courageous" as well as "strong." Likewise, the word "only" must be understood as modifying both "worship" and "serve." These words are not joined by

the adversative "but" (which would give the argument more of an appearance of validity), but by the conjunction "and," which itself eliminates any indication of it.

(2) The fact that the word *latreusis* is recorded here carries no weight, as we have shown. The insignificance of the distinction is all the more evident, since it is even idolatry to serve creatures with *douleia* (Galatians 4:8). Thus, only God is to be served with both *latreia* and *douleia*.

Secondly, one may not render religious honor to anyone who is not God by nature, for this is idolatry. "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods" (Galatians 4:8). However, the angels and saints are no gods by nature, and thus one may not serve them, not even with *douleia*, which is the word used here.

Evasive Argument: Paul speaks here of pagan idols and not of angels and saints.

Answer: The apostle makes no distinction as to whether they served pagan idols or other creatures. Rather, he makes the foundational statement that we may not serve anyone who by nature is not God. This common rule must be applied to all individual cases. Prior to engaging in worship and rendering religious honor, we are to observe whether the person whom we worship and serve is very God. If not, one may not do so, it being idolatry. It does not matter whether this is a Jupiter or a Peter, for both have this in common that they are not God by nature. Therefore neither one of them may be honored religiously, even though there is a distinction between them, the one being ungodly and the other holy.

Thirdly, in the entire Scriptures there is neither a command nor an example, nor are there promises concerning the worship of angels and saints. God has caused all religious practice in all its particulars to be described carefully in His Word; however, there is not one word mentioned about the worship of saints or angels. The religious practice of the godly has been recorded in abundant measure; however, not one of them has worshiped angels or saints. And if someone was stirred up to do so -- maybe erroneously thinking that it was the Lord Jesus -- then he was rebuked and instructed (Revelation 19:10). God has made rich promises to those who worship Him, but not one promise is to be found for worshipers of the saints. Therefore it is nothing but will-worship and idolatry.

Fourthly, it has been expressly forbidden. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshiping of angels" (Colossians 2:18); "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant" (Revelation 19:10). Those who are fellow servants may not be worshiped; the angels and saints are fellow servants and therefore they may not be worshiped.

Fifthly, the angels and the saints do not have the qualifications which are required of those who are to be worshiped. They are not omniscient and do not have a specific knowledge of everyone's need. They do not know the heart as to whether it is sincere, and they do not hear any requests. "... though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not" (Isaiah 63:16). They have no power to help and they do not want to be worshiped (Revelation 22:8). They are not even our advocates or intercessors; this is only true of the Lord Jesus. "We have an Advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1). It is thus pure idolatry.

Objection #1: We do indeed request believers to pray for us here upon earth; it is much more true that one may do so of the glorified saints in heaven.

Answer: Nowhere are the Papists so foolish as when they seek to prove this matter and the worship of images. How ashamed they ought to be if this is their entire proof (which it nearly is) for the worship of angels and saints -- thus idolatry -- basing their entire service of them upon so insignificant a proof! They ought to show a command, but this is not to be found, and they must therefore improvise. As far as the matter itself is concerned, are they satisfied with merely making a request to the saints in the same manner as one does to believers upon earth? Not at all. In honor of the saints, feast days are instituted, and they bow their knees and fold their hands for them, religiously supplicating them for the forgiveness of sins, holiness, salvation, and help for soul and body, in both life and death. Images are made in their honor and are erected on altars. They bestow gifts upon them, and make the service of saints meritorious as well as efficacious for the absolution of sins and punishment. They are ten times more involved with the service of angels and saints than with the service of God. What resemblance is there then between their worship of saints and the request for believers to pray for and with them relative to a certain case -- in order that God, having been supplicated by many, may also be thanked by many? There is no connection between the two whatsoever. The one practice does not consist of a mutual worship of one another; the other practice does. The one practice is commanded; the other is forbidden. In the one case men are acquainted with each other's needs and desires, and the other case they are not. In the one case there is not a devotional trusting in the other, whereas in the other there is. The first pertains to the second table and the latter to the first table. There is thus no relationship whatsoever, and therefore also no logical deduction can be made.

Objection #2: "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants" (Exodus 32:13). Here Moses takes refuge to those saints.

Answer: Moses does not pray to the saints, but to God, holding before the Lord the covenant which He had made with them and in which they were included.

Objection #3: "To which of the saints wilt thou turn" (Job 5:1). Here Job is exhorted to take refuge to the saints, and thus man is permitted to do likewise.

Answer: Eliphaz declares that he would derive no advantage from the saints. He does not refer here to the saints in heaven, but to the saints upon earth, declaring that not one of them would be of the same opinion as Job.

Objection #4: "If there be a messenger with Him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness: then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom" (Job 33:23-24). Mention is here made of an angel who is said to be gracious to him, to deliver him, and to have found a ransom for him. If this is what angels do, one may also seek this from them and pray to them for it.

Answer: Mention is not made here of a heavenly angel, that is, a spirit, for then Elihu would not have said "one among a thousand," since the least angel would have been capable of that task. Rather, the reference is here to an extraordinary minister -- ministers frequently being called angels -- as also the Lord Jesus was called an angel. Thus, from the word "angel" alone one cannot conclude that it represents a created spirit. This extraordinary minister having been sent to

someone (and therefore called an angel or messenger), would declare to the needy what his proper duty is and how he must humble himself when the Lord visits him with affliction, quietly bowing under the hand of God. Then it says that He -- that is God, who generally is called the "He" par excellence in the book of Job -- would be gracious to those who were humble and well instructed. To that messenger He would say: "Deliver, strengthen, comfort, and refresh him," as deliverance and salvation are frequently attributed to ministers (cf. 1 Timothy 4:16; James 5:20). To that end the word of reconciliation has been put in their mouths (2 Corinthians 5:19). The reason for this charge is as follows: I have found a ransom, and I have ordained My own Son to be a ransom by His blood. Make this known to him and strengthen him with this. His spirit, thus having been refreshed, his weak body will also be restored. No reference is thus made here to a heavenly angel whatsoever. An inference from this, as far as the worship of angels is concerned, is entirely erroneous. This is all the more evident because an angel cannot reconcile man with God and thus cannot deliver him from destruction and hell. That is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and therefore one would sooner understand this to refer to the Lord Jesus -- although we do not deem this to be the meaning here. It is blasphemous to attribute reconciliation to anyone else, and it is thus a case of horrendous idolatry to worship an angel on this basis.

Objection #5: "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them" (Genesis 48:16). Here this angel is expressly worshiped, and Jacob wants his name to be called upon by the lads (Hebrew: ■yikkare').

Answer (1) The Angel is not a created angel, but the Angel of the Covenant, in whom is the name Jehovah (Exodus 23:21). This Angel had blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he prayed to this Angel for a blessing upon the two children of Joseph.

(2) That Jacob wanted to be worshiped by these children, either in this life or after his death, is neither conveyed by these words nor by the Hebrew word kara, which means "to call." Rather, he wanted these two to be accounted as his own children, and that they would be called the children of Jacob rather than of Joseph. They would thus each constitute a tribe and receive a portion of the inheritance of Canaan as well as the other children of Jacob did.

If it is idolatry to worship angels and saints, it is also foolish idolatry to render any religious honor to the bodies and remains of the saints, as well as to the cross (the wood of which they do not have anyhow), the sole of Mary's shoe, and similar fabricated matters. It is true that one may not dishonor the bodies of deceased saints, but rather must let them rest in the grave. However, for the living to honor the dead (Isaiah 8:19) and to build up the graves of the prophets as the Pharisees did (Matthew 23:29) is neither commanded anywhere, nor is there a promise relative thereto. It is foolish idolatry and the miracles which one ascribes to it are fabricated and untrue. The case of the dead person who was cast into the grave of Elisha, and became alive upon touching his bones, was but an isolated incident. God permitted this as a confirmation of the prophecy prophesied by him that Israel would defeat the Syrians three times (2 Kings 13:17-20). The woman who was healed by the touching of the hem of Christ's garment, and the healing of the sick by the shadow of Peter (Acts 5:15) and the handkerchiefs and aprons of Paul, occurred while they were alive and not after their death. The power of healing was not inherent in these matters, but they were only signs and wonders which the Lord Himself did by the hand of the apostles for the confirmation of doctrine. However, to allow this as the reason for rendering religious honor to

the remains of the saints, and to consider them as having inherent power, is outside of and contrary to the Word.

Having refuted the most blatant and less blatant forms of idolatry, we now add the third manifestation of idolatry to this -- that is, refined idolatry. This exists when we depend upon and look to secondary causes or means; that is, to begin and end in them as far as our hope, fear, and trust are concerned, without looking unto God as the only Giver of our desires, and without a lively recognition that the Lord either gives or withholds the means, must bless them, or make them of none effect. One is guilty of this when he endeavors with all his might to obtain the favor of men who are able to grant our desire, or be either advantageous or detrimental to us, doing this so intently that he does not even notice that in seeking the favor of men one sins against God and loses His favor. This is also manifested when, in seeking the fulfillment of one's desire, one does not solely depend upon God and thus does not use the means conscientiously, simply because God has commanded it. One then quietly thinks that it will either happen or not come about due to secondary causes, and thus is either glad or sorrowful contingent upon whether the means appear to be for or against it. The fear of man, the favor of man, love toward men, and the love of people toward us are generally the beginning of idolatry and a wellspring for numerous idolatrous deeds. One is thus led astray by strength, soldiers, ships, confederates, money, friends, intellect, ability, power, food, drink, beauty, charm, pride, and by whatever else he may endeavor to acquire something -- or wherein he finds rest, delight, and joy. Thus, Goliath relied upon his strength, Asa upon his physician, Rabshakeh upon his mighty army, and Samson upon Delilah, etc. All of this is idolatry, for God is lost sight of. His providence and government are then secretly denied and not believed, and the focus is on the creature instead.

Witchcraft Forbidden The third sin prohibited in this commandment is witchcraft, which is to perform, with the help of the devil, those things which are beyond the reach of man's ability, doing so by either making a pact with him, or by wilfully making use of some symbolic devices whereby he operates. I experienced an example of this when I was a minister in Stavoren. [Note: A village in the province of Friesland.] A member -- an upright man -- together with some others who had interest in this, wanted to know who had robbed the home of a deceased person, which they would inherit. The other honest men -- men with good minds -- were said to have heard that one could know this by putting a key at a certain place in the will and then to make use of it in a specified manner. They executed this procedure and thereby found the person. They did their utmost, and even used force to keep the book with the key in their hands. Upon mentioning the thief, however, it wrested itself out of their hands and would turn about several times as a top, doing so not only once, but as frequently as they would do so. Not only did they find the thief, but by the same means they also found the secret place where the loot had been buried in a garden. The people said that it was not their objective to ask the devil for counsel; rather, they had only heard that in this way they could find out things and thus made use of it as a natural means. One person related this to me the following day, I believe, as a historical fact, without realizing that he had done wrong. When I confronted him with his sin and seriously rebuked him, he was greatly frightened and humbled himself deeply, promising never to commit such a deed again, and declaring in uprightness his not having been aware that this was an evil deed. I thus perceived that the devil also carries on his work when people, who have no objective to avail themselves of him, make use of his devices and depart from the way of the Word.

It is very evident from both the Holy Scriptures and experience that there are witches and that there is witchcraft. He who does not believe this is truly bewitched by the devil and his senses have been hardened and blinded. He then stubbornly adheres to his prejudice and blind intellect, and denies the existence of all devils and witchcraft, and will not believe this until God will command judgments to show that it is true, and it will be to their hurt. The Egyptian magicians, who changed their rods into serpents and did other strange things, confirm the existence of witches (cf. Exodus 7:11; Exodus 8:18). Then there are the witch of Endor, who brought forth an apparition of Samuel (1 Samuel 28:11), Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-10), and Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:6; Acts 13:8). It is also confirmed by God's commands to put wizards to death (cf. Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:11-12; Revelation 21:8). It is also abundantly confirmed by the experience of people being harmed in a peculiar manner, or in the occurrence of strange things. This is not to imply that the devil can do miracles which are supernatural, for this is God's prerogative only (Psalms 72:18). Rather, he understands the nature of secondary causes, knows how to make use of them, and in this way executes things which are not supernatural, but are beyond human strength. Because the cause of these activities are not known by men, they are therefore strange and miraculous to them. It is for this reason that the Frisians call a male witch a *tjoener* and a female witch a *tjoenster*, meaning one who does strange and miraculous things, for *tjoed* means miraculous and strange. The idolatry of witchcraft is confirmed by the fact that man thereby departs from God, does not expect good from Him, nor the fulfillment of his evil desires, and turns to the devil -- God's enemy -- to achieve his purpose and get his way. This agrees with the well-known rhyme by Virgil (Aen. VII, 312): *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo*. This means: If I cannot move God to give me my way, I shall seek the assistance of the devil.

Fortune-telling Forbidden The fourth sin is fortune-telling; that is, when one, with the help of the devil, unveils contingent matters which are hidden, current, or future. The devil is acquainted with that which is current but hidden, and by the arrangement of secondary causes (of which he has better knowledge than man), he guesses that such and such will be the outcome; if he does not guess it, it will turn out wrong. He can also know many things by reason of what God has foretold in His Word. God may possibly also reveal various matters to him as a judgment upon man, who, by the fulfillment of such predictions, will increasingly believe in the devil (Exodus 8:12-13). In predicting he frequently makes use of signs. My deceased father recounted to me that a young man in Makkum [Note: A village in the province of Friesland.] (where my father was minister), being desirous to know who would be his wife, greeted the morning star with such ceremonies as had been taught him -- which I shall not mention. Upon this a coffin was shown him, which so frightened him that he went to bed; when it became day, he asked my father to come. He told him the entire transaction and died after a day or two. Others made use of signs and predictions, and the fulfillment of them has been recounted to me in Harlingen by those who have made use of these themselves. To this belongs the prediction of the future from the lines of the hand, from searching out under which sign of the zodiac one has been born, etc. These predictions are falsehoods, drawing the heart away from God unto vanities, and therefore God has commanded that fortunetellers be put to death (cf. Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 20:27).

Superstition Forbidden The fifth sin is superstition. This is practiced when one deems natural things to have a supernatural power or meaning, has respect for it, and is thereby either comforted or frightened. For example: one has respect for a wooden image, not daring to either break or burn

it; one fears evil when the salt shaker topples over; one gives heed to dreams, and the manner in which birds fly and call. Then there are such things as the renouncing of fevers, benedictions from witches, consecrated water, wax candles, crosses, etc. "Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven" (Jeremiah 10:2); "Neither shall ye use enchantment" (Leviticus 19:26).

These sins are the primary sins prohibited by this commandment. The Virtues Enjoined in the First Commandment The primary virtues enjoined in this commandment are, first of all, to rightly know God. It is not sufficient to know that there is a God -- either by an impression received from nature or by way of deduction. Rather, the knowledge which is enjoined here is to know wherein the image of God consists. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:10). It is the internal and immediate beholding of God in His perfections by the enlightened eyes of the understanding from which all holy motions proceed. This is the knowledge by which Moses "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27); of which Job said, "Now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5); of which Paul said, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed unto the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18); and which is the walking in the light of God's countenance (Psalms 89:15). It is that light by which the soul, being irradiated by God Himself, loses itself in adoration, in deep reverence bows before Him, leaps up for joy, and is set aflame with love. The second virtue is love for God, which consists in esteeming and exalting God far above all creatures, which become as nothing in the acknowledgment of the fullness to be found in God, and in rejoicing that God is such a God. It also consists in the pure inclination to have communion with God and to be satisfied in and with Him, to be in willing subjection under Him, to be in agreement with His will in regard to His doings and the manner in which He leads, and joyfully to live for God with the totality of one's being. This is the great commandment (Matthew 22:37); this was David's practice: "I will love Thee, O Lord" (Psalms 18:1); and to this he exhorts everyone: "O love the Lord, all ye His saints" (Psalms 31:23). The third virtue is the fear of God. If the soul may perceive God in His majesty, glory, and holiness, it cannot but be that the soul will tremble out of respect for God. This will manifest itself in deep humility, in the manner of approach unto God, in fellowship with God, and in giving careful heed not to conduct one's self in a manner contrary to His will. It is to this David refers: "Fear Him, all ye the seed of Israel" (Psalms 22:23); "O fear the Lord, ye His saints" (Psalms 34:9); "Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him" (Psalms 33:8). The fourth virtue is obedience. This consists in acknowledging the Lord's majesty and His worthiness to be obeyed, as well as an immediate subjection under God. It consists in the approbation of and joy in being subject to Him, in willingly offering to do whatever it pleases the Lord to command, in seeking His counsel in every specific situation, asking, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do," and in the ready acceptance of the task (as being the will of God) as well as in the zealous and complete execution of the task. "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed ..." (Exodus 19:5); "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22); "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exodus 24:7). The fifth virtue is patient submission under the hand of the Lord. This is practiced by continually looking unto God, also recognizing and acknowledging His sovereignty, and thereby seeing how appropriate it is that all bow before Him, acknowledging with delight that it is He who "doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou" (Daniel 4:35). Thus we surrender ourselves to Him in order that He may completely deal with us according to His will; that is, either make or

break us, comfort or hide Himself from us, give us prosperity or adversity, and honor us or cause us to be despised. All of this is done without striving with the Lord or demanding a reason from Him as to why He deals in such a way with us, His sovereign will being our delight. It is to know and to be assured that all the ways of the Lord with us are right, only wise, faithful, good, and that the end will be peace. Job did this: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21); David did this: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Psalms 39:9); as well as Peter: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God" (1 Peter 5:6). The sixth virtue is to trust in the Lord; that is, when considering the perfections of God -- viewing Him as one's covenant God -- one looks away from everything which appears to be potentially to our detriment or benefit, or to help or hinder us, perceiving that all this has no power in itself, and that everything -- both in its operation as well as its existence -- is in the hand of the Lord. We then perceive that the Lord, by His influence and government, causes everything to function in such a manner as pleases Him -- be it for us or against us. He changes the hearts of our friends to hate us and the hearts of our enemies to love and help us, so that all secondary causes fall away, and nothing remains but the Lord, who works everything according to His counsel and decree. One will thus be at rest in Him and be quiet without fear, being satisfied with the outcome, since it will be according to His good will toward us and according to His pleasure. We shall thus permit Him to care for us and shall depend upon Him, while using the means, because He has ordained them and desires that we shall use them. We shall use them to reach that goal and to attain to that result which is according to the Lord's decree, and which no creature can change. David was in such a condition: "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved" (Psalms 62:1-2). He exhorts others to do likewise: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:3;Psalms 37:5); "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalms 73:23-24). The seventh virtue is to honor God. This occurs when we inwardly (in the heart) know and recognize the perfections of God -- in general, as well as each of them individually, as they immediately reveal themselves to the soul or manifest themselves in the various works of God. We honor God when we rejoice in this contemplation, delight ourselves with sweet enjoyment, and when thereby all glory of the creature disappears from view. Then in the acknowledgment of the honor and worthiness of God everything stirs within us to honor, glorify, magnify, and praise Him. This is to be observed in the following passages: "Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works" (Psalms 145:2-3;Psalms 145:5); "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name" (Psalms 29:1-2). We honor the Lord if we dare to rely upon His omnipotence, His promised help, and His truth. It was thus that Abraham was "strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans 4:20). Hallelujah!

052. Chapter 47: The Second Commandment

----- CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN ----- The Second Commandment The second commandment requires the proper manner of worship. Each master wants to be served according to his dictates. It is neither a matter of indifference to God as to how we serve Him, nor ought we to be of the opinion that He will be pleased just so long as He is served, even if it is in a manner which is acceptable to us. No, He wishes to be served in a manner pleasing to Him and which He has prescribed to us. He indeed takes note of the manner of service as carefully as the service itself. God is a Spirit and therefore He also wishes to be served in Spirit and in truth. He has therefore given us the second commandment in addition to the first commandment in order that we would not err in this, thereby decreeing the manner whereby we must serve Him. In this commandment we are to note 1) the matters which are prohibited and commanded, and 2) the added incentives. The Content of the Second Commandment

First, the matter itself is presented within a covenant context. The subject matter pertains to graven images and likenesses -- and lest an excuse be made, the matters of which we can make likenesses are distinguished and elaborated upon. Images may thus not be made of:

(1) that which is in heaven above. Heaven is the residence of God, the angels, and the deceased saints. In the second heaven are the sun, moon, and stars, and in the lower heaven are clouds, hail, snow, and the birds.

(2) that which is in the earth, that is, animals of all sorts, people, trees, and herbs. (3) that which is in the waters under the earth, which pertains to all manner of creeping animals and insects, as well as all kinds of fish. By way of this delineation, all things (and thus all that exists) are excluded. All that exists is to be found in heaven, earth, or the waters -- and of all that exists there, no images may be made.

There are three types of activities relative to these objects: we Song of Solomon 1:1-17) make them, 2) bow before them, and 3) serve them.

(1) We can make them. This pertains to any method by which we can make an image -- be it by way of carving, sculpturing, painting, or whatever other method can be devised. This command is a command of the first table, and thus the making of images for religious purposes is forbidden, but not the making of images relative to the second table; that is, as pertaining to civil use -- be it the imprints upon money, the decoration of homes, or whatever other purpose there may be (for which stipulations have also been defined). The Lord Jesus approved of the image of the emperor imprinted upon his money (Matthew 22:20-21).

(2) We can bow before such images in a pious, worshipful, and reverent manner, be it that with such reverence one ends in the image or that one wishes to honor God thereby.

(3) We can serve such images. This is done when we decorate them, put them upon altars, worship them, sacrifice gold, silver, or whatever else to them, carry them about the streets, or put

them on display in order that they may be honored by everyone -- as well as any other manner in which one engages in any religious exercise relative to them.

The Incentives Conjoined to this Commandment

Secondly, the incentives which are conjoined to this are as follows: The first incentive is derived from its appropriateness. "I am the Lord"; that is, I am an invisible and incomprehensible Spirit, and it is therefore inappropriate for Me to be served by anything that is tangible. "I am thy God"; that is, even if other nations behave themselves in this manner, then you must not imitate them for you have entered into a covenant with Me, have chosen Me to be your God, and are My people. It therefore behooves you to serve Me according to My precepts. I do not want to be served by images, and thus, you must refrain therefrom. The second incentive is derived from the awesome majesty of God: "I am a jealous God." A husband will take careful notice of the conduct of his wife, and if she does not behave herself appropriately, he will be overcome with jealousy and will zealously exert himself with vehement and dreadful passion to chastise her. This is likewise true for Me. I take careful notice of your conduct, and I shall readily detect any deviations in it. My jealous anger will thus be kindled against you, and I shall punish you for dishonoring Me and for your idolatry. The third incentive is derived from the detrimental consequences. "... visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me." I shall not only punish the transgressor himself, but I shall also punish him in his children (which is the severest judgment upon parents), and I will do this to the third and fourth generation. God dealt in this manner with the first world, for their children who had not yet committed actual sin drowned as well as the fathers (Genesis 7:21). All the descendants of Eli were punished because of his sin (1 Samuel 2:31). Due to Jereboam's sins all that had breath among his descendants were destroyed (1 Kings 14:14).

Objection: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" (Ezekiel 18:20).

Answer (1) Scripture does not contradict itself. God states plainly that this is the manner in which He acts, and whatever He wills not to do, He refrains from doing. In this case God promised that He would not do this.

(2) Even if the son were to be punished for the unrighteousness of his father, he is nevertheless not held accountable as if he himself had committed the sin of his father. Everyone's commission of sin is personal, but judgment may come upon the children -- not eternal judgment, but temporal judgment.

(3) Children are also sinful and thus worthy of all punishment. However, God is and can be very longsuffering. Yet if the fathers aggravate matters greatly, this will create a situation where God's wrath may also be poured out upon the sinful children. The fourth incentive is derived from that which is to our benefit. "And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments" (Exodus 20:5-6). Since the fall no one has been able to perfectly love God and keep His commandments, and therefore no one can be justified by the works of the law. Since the law has not been given unto justification, however, but as a rule of life for partakers of the covenant, God is pleased with the upright efforts of His children and rewards them -- not meritoriously but on the basis of grace and mercy. After Nehemiah had completed the work of the

Lord with great zeal in rebuilding Jerusalem and reforming the people, he said, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy" (Nehemiah 13:22). The Sins Prohibited As we did with the previous commandment, we must first consider the sins which are prohibited, and then the virtues commanded. The sins which are prohibited are the following: The first sin is the worship of images, concerning which the following question must be considered: Question: Are men permitted to make images of God -- that is, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit -- and of deceased saints, in order to worship and honor them, or to serve God and the saints by them?

Answer: The Papists are in disagreement with each other as far as their manner of image-worship, the one insisting that they must be worshiped, and the other that they should only be honored. The one maintains that he must literally worship the images themselves, so that in this act of worship he ends in the images themselves, whereas others maintain that it must be done figuratively, solely for the purpose of worshiping and honoring, by means of the image, the person represented by this image. They are in agreement that the making of images of the divine Persons is permissible, as well as that men are permitted to make images of the saints -- images to be used in the churches for religious purposes in order to thereby honor God and the saints. The Council of Trent commanded the worship of images in session 25, and appealed to the second Council of Nicea, which pronounced an anathema upon all who do not worship the images of saints and who, to some degree, waver in this -- yes, upon all who admit that images must be honored, but who refuse to worship them. The papists are currently embarrassed about their idolatry with their images, and seek to cover it up somewhat. They teach their people to say: "We do not worship the images, but we have them to bring thereby to memory that person whom it represents. We do not honor them for their own sake, but for the sake of the one whose image it is, whom we honor by means of these images." However, their actions contradict their words. They perform all that can be done externally in a religious sense toward their images. They remove their hat with deep reverence, and reverently bow themselves before the images. They kneel before them and with folded hands recite the Lord's Prayer or other prayers before them. They put them on display upon altars and adorn them with all manner of expensive decor. They light candles before images that cannot see, and celebrate a mass for them, etc. He who will not honor them is in danger of being beaten or killed. What more can the heathen do as far as their idols are concerned? The Lutherans maintain that men are indeed permitted to make images, but that they may not honor them. They are only put within the church to represent sacred history, in order thereby to be stimulated to engage in religious activity.

We declare, on the contrary, that the making of images of the Trinity is absolutely forbidden. We neither know the spiritual nature of the angels nor the true physical appearance of Christ and the apostles. Thus, the images made of them are without resemblance, and it is vanity to make an image and say: That is Christ, that is Mary, that is Peter, etc. Yes, even if we had their true pictures, we may nevertheless not worship, honor, nor engage in any religious activity toward them. We may not honor Christ, Mary, Peter, and other saints in this manner. The question is twofold, and we shall refute each part individually. In the first place, one may make no images of God whatsoever; that is, of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

First, this is absolutely forbidden in this commandment and in many other passages. Consider only the following passage: "Ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; take ye therefore

good heed unto yourselves ... lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven" (Deuteronomy 4:12;Deuteronomy 4:15-19). Who then, while believing the Word of God, would be so bold to act blatantly contrary to this and make images of God -- a practice clearly forbidden?

Secondly, God cannot be depicted and it is therefore God's will that such ought not to occur. "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him" (Isaiah 40:18).

Thirdly, it highly dishonors God. "And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Romans 1:23). The Papists readily imitate this. They depict God the Father in the appearance of a man, that is, of an old man; God the Son in the appearance of a four-footed beast, that is, of a lamb; and God the Holy Spirit in the appearance of a bird, that is, a dove. They thus dishonor God as the heathen do.

Fourthly, it corrupts man. "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves ... lest ye corrupt yourselves" (Deuteronomy 4:15-16). For this prompts man to think of God -- who is a Spirit, and who must be served in Spirit -- in physical terms.

Objection #1: God has manifested Himself in such appearances, and therefore He may also be depicted in this manner.

Answer (1) We deny the deduction. God has expressly forbidden it and thus this is the end of all controversy.

(2) These manifestations were prophetic visions and not images, and were no manifestation of the extraordinary presence of God.

Objection #2: Both the images of God and of the saints have educational value.

Answer (1) God has nevertheless forbidden this. This is pagan thinking and we should not pretend it to be beneficial, since it is forbidden.

(2) God will not have us taught by dumb images, but by His Word. "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:24;Psalms 119:105).

Objection #3: God has commanded the making of images, such as the brazen serpent (Numbers 21:8) and the cherubim in the temple (Exodus 25:18; 1 Kings 6:35).

Answer: The serpent was erected at the time the Israelites had been bitten by the fiery serpents. The serpent was not a portrayal of God nor of the saints, and the making of images of them can thus not be proven by this. It was a sacrament -- which must always be an external sign -- conveying that all who have sinned and have been caused to fall by the devil, that old serpent,

would be saved if they would look to and believe in Christ, the seed of the woman who would bruise the head of the devil (John 3:14). It was not erected in order to have honor rendered to it, for when the people began to honor it, it was crushed and destroyed (2 Kings 18:4). The cherubim as well as the palm tree associated with the temple were but shadows -- just as all religious practice was conducted by way of shadows. They were neither images of God nor of the saints (which is the point of contention here), nor was honor rendered to them. Rather, they served as ornaments of that building, which, as the most glorious building upon earth, at once directed them to Christ. The second part of the question deals with the worship of images. May one render any religious honor to images? The papists answer in the affirmative and we in the negative. Our reasons are as follows:

First, there is neither a command nor an example of the worship of images. Thus, it is at the very least willworship, which is forbidden in Matthew 15:9. In its very essence it is idolatry, however, for it is the rendering of religious honor to that which is not God. It is already idolatry to render religious honor to angels and deceased saints, and if one then furthermore honors their image (or them by means of the image), there is a double offense.

Secondly, the worship of images has been so clearly and expressly forbidden, that it cannot be forbidden any more clearly. It is done so frequently that it is an act of the greatest obduracy and defiance imaginable to yet worship images. Out of a multitude of texts consider only the following:

(1) This commandment not only forbids the making of images, but also the bowing before and the serving of them. And in order to remove every excuse, there is a delineation of the images when we read, "... any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." Their images are images of that which is in heaven and upon earth. Their use is thus expressly prohibited.

(2) Add to this: "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 26:1). The opposition makes a distinction between idols and the images of saints. This text, however, removes this excuse, for not only the making of idols for the purpose of bowing before them is forbidden, but also the making of a graven image, a standing image, or any image of stone. Their images are, however, graven images -- images erected upon their altars -- images of wood and stone which are placed in the street and elsewhere in order that one can bow down to them, which they indeed do.

(3) Add to this Deuteronomy 27:15 : "Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen." Their images are, however, graven and molten images and the work of the hands of craftsmen, and they do not only put them in secret places, but they even put them on public display. Their images are thus an abomination to the Lord and the threat which has been added is thus applicable to them.

(4) "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols" (Psalms 97:7). They serve their images, however, and boast themselves of their idols, concerning which they relate so many miraculous incidents. They will thus come to shame.

Evasive Argument #1: This commandment (and all the texts which have been quoted) pertain to pagan idols, which are images of fabricated things that either have never existed, or been designated as gods. Our images are not idols, however. They are images of things which yet exist and have existed: God, angels, Christ, Mary, and other saints -- and we do not deem these images to be God. Thus, these texts do not oppose us.

Answer (1) This commandment and all the quoted texts do not make such a distinction. Even if one would have to understand the word *pesel* to refer to a pagan idol (which is nevertheless not the meaning of the word -- it being the graving and sculpturing of various images), the word *temunah* (= a likeness) is added to it. The making of a likeness of anything that is in heaven, upon earth, or in the waters is as much forbidden as the making of an idol. Their images are likenesses of something and are thus forbidden.

(2) A heathen has never yet deemed the image which he honored to be God Himself, who has made heaven and earth, nor have they done so in reference to their deified saints. They knew quite well that they or another person had made that image. The Ephesians indeed made an express distinction between the great goddess Diana and the image which fell down from heaven (Acts 19:35).

(3) The Israelites made a golden calf, but they knew that this calf was not Jehovah nor had it delivered them out of Egypt. Rather, they wanted to honor God thereby and therefore said: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord" (Exodus 32:4-5). They did not consider this calf to be God Himself, but instead, they wanted to honor God thereby.

(4) This calf was the image of something that existed, and yet it was an idol. It is expressly referred to as an idol: "And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands" (Acts 7:41). It is thus very evident that images are idols and that the worship of images is idolatry.

Evasive Argument #2: It is forbidden to honor images with *latreia*, but not with *douleia*. Answer: (1) In the previous chapter we have shown this to be an invalid distinction. They ought to give proof that one may honor images with *douleia*.

(2) In the Hebrew language, no distinction is made between the honoring of God and the honoring of idols; the honoring of both is expressed with the same word.

(3) Even they themselves maintain that one must honor the image of Christ and the cross with *latreia*. Cajetan speaks in this vein (in *Not et G. Biel. lect. 49. in can. mis.*): "As far as images of Christ are concerned, let them be worshiped with the same veneration with which Christ is worshiped, that is, with the worship of *latreia*." Concerning the cross they say (in *Pontif. Rom. f. 205*): "The cross will be at the right hand of the apostolic legate since one is under obligation to render *latreia* to it." Their evasive arguments are thus invalid, and therefore the thrust of the texts mentioned above is fully preserved.

Since their idolatry is so blatantly contrary to the Word of God, and they can find neither a command nor an example for their worship of images, they help themselves with the following

evasive argument: "Our images are not pagan idols, nor do we worship these images." We already have responded to this. However, to have some argument as yet, they furthermore produce these texts:

Objection #1: "And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exodus 3:5-6). Here (so they say) God commanded Moses to conduct himself reverently toward the burning bush, and Moses demonstrated great veneration.

Answer: This was not an image, for it remained a bush; moreover Moses did not render honor to the bush, nor was he commanded to do so. Rather, he was charged to conduct himself reverently toward God who in an extraordinary manner revealed Himself to him in the burning bush. Moses did not cover his face for the bush, but for God, "for," it reads, "he was afraid to look upon God."

Objection #2: "In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple" (Psalms 5:7); "Worship at His footstool" (Psalms 99:5). One is charged here to render religious honor to the temple.

Answer: The temple, and all that was to be found in it, was a shadow of Christ. When approaching unto God, one can only do so through Christ. When they therefore turned to the temple and bowed before it, they worshiped neither the temple nor God by means of the temple, nor did they render religious honor to it. By means of the shadows, however, they looked unto Christ portrayed in the temple.

Objection #3: "... before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you" (Galatians 3:1). Here it is stated expressly that the Galatians had Christ set before them.

Answer: This is not stated here at all, for He was set before their eyes as being crucified among them; however, He had not been crucified in Galatia, but upon Golgotha. It is as much as to say: "Christ has been declared among you with such clarity as if He were crucified among you, as if He had been painted before your very eyes, and as if the scene had been displayed before you." Also here there is no instance of rendering honor.

We have thus discussed the first sin forbidden in this commandment: the worship of images. More sins are comprehended in this commandment, however, and we shall present them briefly. The second sin is to have a nonreligious disposition of heart. This occurs when there is no impression of God, no fear of God, and no love for God; no effort to either know, seek to know, or do His will; no esteem for the Word of God or for ministers; no desire to be united with the people of God, to confess the Lord, and to live to His honor; and therefore no coming to church, or doing so only on rare occasions when one does not know what else to do, or else merely to observe or to be seen. We read of this as follows: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalms 14:1); "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words" (2 Chronicles 36:16); "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Hebrews 10:25). The third sin is will-worship. This consists in serving God in a manner of our own devising, or in a manner which has been suggested to us by men -- doing so without concern and investigation as to the manner in which God wants to be served. We then imagine that God will be pleased with our work as long as we have a good intent to serve Him by means of that activity. The Lord Jesus rejects this in Matthew 15:9. The fourth sin is laxity and listlessness in the performance of religious duty. This occurs when there always seems to be an obstacle at the time for engaging in specific

religious activity, and one is then satisfied if he is lawfully hindered. He goes up as a criminal to prison. It is quickly done, and, just as a child, he is glad when "amen" may be said. His conscience has then been put somewhat at ease. There is no time to read the Word of God, or if he reads it to do his duty, it is without desire and without attentiveness. He selects a short chapter or a short psalm, and is glad when he is finished with it. This will also be the case relative to public worship. For the least little reason he will stay out of church, and if he is there, he allows his thoughts to wander in all directions. He then goes to sleep and blames the minister -- his preaching being so unspiritual and long. To reflect upon what has been heard, or to relate it to others, is a task which is too cumbersome and not according to custom. When the sermon is finished, all is finished. To such it is applicable: "Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! " (Malachi 1:13); "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16). The fifth sin is to rest in such a routine performance. One has said his morning and evening prayer, read a chapter, been to church twice, never neglected the Lord's Supper, and given his alms. What more is needed? All is well; I have done my duty and with this one is satisfied. One is of good courage that the Lord will take him into heaven, even though he has neither knowledge of the way of truth nor of spiritual motions. Of such the Lord says: "Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me ... therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:13-14). The sixth sin is hypocrisy in religious practice. We practice this when in the engagement of religious exercise we have ourselves in view so that we may be honored by men. This occurs when a minister stirs up his gifts, appears to be filled with the spirit in prayer, preaches with much fire, but with all this, his objective is to be esteemed as godly and learned and to have the praise and esteem of the people. How abominable! This occurs when a person faithfully comes to church and sits there gravely and attentively in order to gain the reputation of being pious, or sings to let his voice be heard and how well he knows the tune. This also occurs when one sighs loudly during prayer, and makes worshipful and even foolish gestures in order to be seen and heard. This takes place when a person puts on a show of being very attentive during the sermon, while in the meantime he is secretly looking about to observe whether others see him. It is also the case when one casts but little in the basket of the deacon and is desirous that it sounds as if it were a great gift. In one word, hypocrisy is to create the appearance of serving God while in reality having men in view, and thus one's self (cf. Isaiah 58:2-3; Ezekiel 33:30-32). The seventh sin is to make physical representations of God in our minds. God reveals Himself to the soul of men as a Spirit, doing so in a manner much more devoid of the physical than can be expressed. When the natural man initially thinks upon God, however, he spoils this initial reflection upon God and changes that which is spiritual into something physical. One will either seek to maintain this physical representation of God, finding delight in creating various representations of God in the mind, or it will be contrary to the will of the person engaged in thought, who wishes to have spiritual thoughts of God but cannot do so -- this being caused either externally due to people speaking of God, or due to Satan's influence upon the imagination. The latter is not the sin of the person, but of Satan; that is, if the person is only passively involved, abhorring this, and laboring to resist it (John 4:24). The eighth sin is to have fellowship with idolatrous religious practices. This occurs when one goes to the mass out of curiosity for its idol (be it in their church or carried about on the street); or when one bows himself out of secret respect

or reverence for their images; or if one observes the popish holidays known for their revelry (such as St. Nicholas, Three Kings, Copper Monday, Halloween, etc.) and revels, drinks, and plays likewise. One ought to follow in David's footsteps, who said, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips" (Psalms 16:4).

These then are the primary sins forbidden in this commandment. The Virtues Enjoined The virtues enjoined in this commandment are, first of all, the full surrender of one's self to the service of God in all things, with all things, and at all times. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

Secondly, the serving of God according to His will; that is, our entire conduct is to be governed by the will of God as revealed to us in His Word. This engenders purity in our religious practice. "As the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:6-7).

Thirdly, the serving of God with the soul; that is, with the spirit, in a spiritual manner, and with the intellect, will, and affections. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Psalms 103:1); "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early" (Isaiah 26:9); "They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

Fourthly, the serving of God with a perfect heart; that is, without a divided heart, having and seeking something in addition to God. Rather, one must wholly and solely be devoted to this, doing so with exertion of all the faculties of the soul. "... know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (1 Chronicles 28:9); "... they had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire" (2 Chronicles 15:15).

Fifthly, the serving of God with a joyful zeal; that is, it must not be a burden, but a delight, rejoicing in the fact that God as yet wishes to be served by us. One must consider it a great privilege that he may serve God and that He commands him to do something; he shall therefore carry it out with great earnestness and zeal. "Who maketh ... His ministers a flaming fire" (Psalms 104:4); "(Be) fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11); "Be zealous therefore" (Revelation 3:19).

Sixthly, the opposing of false religion and eradication of idols and images. Everyone must do so according to his own station. The governments are charged to do this. "... ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire" (Deuteronomy 7:5).

Moses did this to the golden calf (Exodus 32:20); Hezekiah did this to images and the brazen serpent (2 Kings 18:4); and Asa did this to the dreadful idol which his mother had made, and therefore he removed his mother from being queen (1 Kings 15:13).

053. Chapter 48: The Third Commandment

----- CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT ----- The Third Commandment This commandment is also presented as a prohibition. It first of all consists of the matter forbidden, followed by a strong and urgent incentive. The Focus of this Commandment: The Name of the Lord

First of all we shall consider the matter forbidden. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The object here is the name of the Lord. We understand this to refer:

(1) to the words Jehovah, Elohim, Lord, and God;

(2) to God Himself. "And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 24:16);

(3) to God's perfections: "And the Lord ... proclaimed the name of the Lord ... merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:5-6); "Save me, O God, by Thy name" (Psalms 54:1); "...I will wait on Thy name" (Psalms 52:9);

(4) to God's help: "Through Thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us" (Psalms 44:5); "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts" (1 Samuel 17:45); "The name of the Lord is a strong tower" (Proverbs 18:10);

(5) to the works of God by which God manifests His glory: "How excellent is Thy name in all the earth" (Psalms 8:1);

(6) to God's praise among the people: "Let them also that love Thy name be joyful in Thee" (Psalms 5:11); "... what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name" (Joshua 7:9).

We thus understand the name of God to refer to everything by which God reveals Himself and in which He is either praised or despised. "... to bear my name before the Gentiles" (Acts 9:15). The prohibition "Thou shalt not take ... in vain" pertains to this name. It thus pertains to saying or doing something by which God is neither honored nor acknowledged to be the God who He is, but rather is dishonored. "Vain" has the following meaning: that which is without purpose, unsuitable, thoughtless, irreverent, careless, frivolous, and without a holy objective -- thereby engendering an irreverent impression of God in others.

Secondly, the incentive added to this commandment is extracted from the threat of harm: "I will not hold him guiltless." Man may consider it to be a very insignificant matter, but God deems it to be a very great matter. Even though man is not sensitive to this and does not believe that he has committed a great sin, God considers him guilty and worthy of being punished, and He will also certainly punish him. For it is an act whereby one greatly despises God as well as a clear manifestation that he does not love God -- and thus a direct affront toward God. "... with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward" (Psalms 18:26). The Sins Prohibited The first sin prohibited is blasphemy. This occurs:

(1) When one ascribes something absurd to God, and with either words or gestures, despises or ridicules God, causing others to despise and ridicule Him also. "And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed" (Leviticus 24:11).

(2) When denouncing the veracity, power, or other attributes of God, and denying and rejecting His providence, preservation, and government. "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten. ... Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it" (Psalms 10:11;Psalms 10:13); "What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him" (Job 21:15); "the men ... that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil" (Zephaniah 1:12).

(3) If one attributes to others that which properly belongs to God alone and which He alone can perform. "But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils" (Matthew 12:24).

(4) If one despises, ridicules, distorts, and slanders the grace which God has implanted in someone as well as the manifestation of that grace -- that is, if one refers to the godly as hypocrites and to their godliness as hypocrisy. The Jews thus ridiculed Christ's confidence in God. "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias" (Matthew 27:43;Matthew 27:47).

(5) If one denies and ridicules the truth of God as revealed in the Scriptures. "That there shall come ... scoffers ... saying, Where is the promise of His coming" (2 Peter 3:3-4).

(6) If one has the name of being a partaker of the covenant, but does not live accordingly, thus causing others to blaspheme the doctrine of truth and godliness. "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (Romans 2:24); "And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:2).

Cursing The second sin is cursing; that is, to wish that God, the devil, thunder, or something else would manifest evil upon other people or one's self. The saints, inspired by God's Spirit and upon God's command, have cursed some men (cf. Psalms 35:4;Psalms 109:6;Psalms 109:20; 2 Kings 2:24). This is not to be imitated by others. Such curses are not prohibited in this commandment; instead, it pertains to such cursing which is done in mockery, playfully, without reflection, and proceeds out of hatred, vengefulness, or grief; or is done to confirm something and to be believed all the more fully. Forty men thus put themselves under a curse, so that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul (Acts 23:12). This was the sin Peter committed out of fear (Matthew 26:74), and in this manner Job, in sorrow, cursed the day of his birth (Job 3:1). Similarly, one person can curse another person. "... they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly" (Psalms 62:4); "... lest thou hear thy servant curse thee" (Ecclesiastes 7:21).

We must not give someone the opportunity to curse, and if someone curses us, we should not be disturbed, for it is not in the power of others to bring a curse upon us. "... so the curse causeless shall not come" (Proverbs 26:2). Rather, God will change the evil curses pronounced upon us into a blessing, as David said concerning the curse of Shimei: "Let him alone, and let him curse. ... It may be that the Lord ... will requite me good for his cursing this day" (2 Samuel 16:11-12). It is indeed our duty: "Bless them that curse you" (Matthew 5:44). The third sin is swearing

unnecessarily, when, in general association with others, we swear an oath to confirm our words, without this being necessary and required. The Lord Jesus warned against this: "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. ... Swear not at all" (Matthew 5:37; Matthew 5:34). The fourth sin is to swear falsely; that is, calling upon God's Name -- be it with or without imprecation -- to confirm a matter to be true which we either do not know to be true, or which we know to be false. This also occurs if we promise to do something we do not intend to do, or know in advance that we shall not do it. This can occur in the testimonies of a lawyer, defendant, or witness, and in accepting an office which is to be confirmed by oath. "I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name" (Zechariah 5:4); "And ye shall not swear by My name falsely" (Leviticus 19:12). The fifth sin is perjury. If we have sworn an oath to do something God has forbidden us to do, then we must not do so; we shall not sin by forbearing to do it. Rather, we have sinned by swearing an oath which pertains to such an evil matter. David swore that he would eradicate the house of Nabal (1 Samuel 25:22) which he nevertheless did not do and was happy that he was hindered from doing so (1 Samuel 25:32). If, however, we have sworn an oath which pertains to a good matter, we must be true to this oath, even if it were to cause bodily harm. "He that sweareth to his own hurt (Hebrew: to do evil, i.e., that which is to his own detriment), and changeth not" (Psalms 15:4). Since Saul killed the Gibeonites contrary to the oath which had been made toward the Gibeonites at the time of Joshua, there came a threeyear famine upon Israel (2 Samuel 21:1). "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths" (Matthew 5:33). The sixth sin is the misuse of God's Name, when we carelessly, lightly, and without reverence say: "Oh Lord, oh God, oh Jesus! -- doing so out of custom, when astonished, in pain, upon sneezing, in toasting someone, in countermanding poor people, in sorrow, in foolish joking to stir up laughter, or whatever the case may be. To this also belongs the reading of vain books in which God's Name is misused; and being present unnecessarily at conversations in which God's Name is taken in vain -- as generally occurs during theater performances. To this belongs furthermore the irreverent hearing or reading of God's Word, for not only does God speak at that time, but the Name of God is then continually mentioned. Such is also true for thoughtless prayer and when one uses the Name of the Lord as a stopgap in the absence of verbal fluency. This also occurs when we make fun of Scripture texts, using them to engender laughter and to appear humorous. The seventh sin is to be silent when hearing God's Name blasphemed. "And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it (that is, to those who are appointed to administer punishment), he shall bear his iniquity" (Leviticus 5:1); "He heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not" (Proverbs 29:24). We must make a distinction between the express blaspheming of God's Name and the misuse of God's Name. The first we must make known to the authorities, or else we are accomplices in this blasphemy. The second we must rebuke with our countenance, and also with words if time and circumstances permit this; that is, if there is opportunity. We are not to make bitter the person who is guilty of misuse (due to the shame which -- in his opinion -- is imposed upon him in the company of others), but rather to correct him. Or else one must find an opportunity afterwards to instruct and convince him in all humility, doing so without being pedantic and wanting to have the last word. All of this easily engenders bitterness. The eighth sin is the abuse of casting of the lot. The casting of the lot is an extraordinary or unusual request made to God that He would reveal His will in an important controversy which cannot be resolved by either wisdom, skill, or

strength. It pertains to an issue that must be resolved, as there would otherwise be danger or great disadvantage to the country, church, or individual. From the injunctions given it is evident that the lot may be used (cf. Leviticus 16:8-9; Numbers 26:55-56); the saints have also made use of it (Acts 1:26).

God governs the lot and permits it to be cast according to His will. This is evident from Proverbs 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Casting the lot is a religious activity. It is the making of a request to God and must be preceded by prayer. "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship. ... And they gave forth their lots" (Acts 1:24-26). In the casting of the lot one expects the outcome to be to the glory of God and the welfare of country and church. It is thus a religious activity and must be conducted with a religious heart. The casting of the lot is only to be done in important controversies and in the event of a significant circumstance upon which the welfare of society is contingent. It is also to be used in matters which otherwise cannot be resolved, or in matters wherein the hand of God must expressly be observed, such as the division of the land of Canaan, the selection of the two goats, and the election of the twelfth apostle. "The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty" (Proverbs 18:18).

It seems that in the Old Testament the lot has also been used to discover the guilty party. In all likelihood Achan was singled out in this manner (Joshua 7:18). This is also true for Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:40-41), and Jonah (Jonah 1:7). However, this is not to be imitated. Even if Achan were singled out by the lot (which is not certain), it nevertheless occurred by divine revelation. Saul's behavior cannot be regulative, for he often did that which was not right. Finally, in Jonah's case the sailors were Gentiles.

Since the casting of the lot is a religious activity of an extraordinary nature by which important controversies are resolved, one must be fearful of abusing the lot either to satisfy curiosity, discover a secret, or neglect the use of the only rule of God's Word. The latter occurs when one asks God by means of the lot what needs to be done in doubtful cases in which he cannot make a decision, such as: whom to marry, the giving of counsel concerning a matter, the choice of a profession, whether or not one should move, etc. This would be a tempting of God and would arouse His wrath -- and rather than answering by means of the lot, He could let the lot fall to your disadvantage and destruction.

Abide by the Word of God and neither tempt nor provoke Him. If you cannot make a decision and are in doubt, then refrain from action, for you may not do anything except by faith.

Games of Chance

It is thus also evident that the abuse of the lot in games, entertainment, and gambling is a dreadful abuse of the providence of God. There are games which are played solely with one's skill or strength, and there are games played together with others such as chess, checkers, handball, fencing, shuffle board, etc. These are lawful in and of themselves, but they must be played with a holy objective: to refresh a weary mind, to preserve the health of the body, or to render one more fit for his next task. It must occur neither too frequently nor too long, for then you would fail to achieve the objective. You would waste your time and the heart would be estranged from God and

become attached to the game. There are also mixed games which are partly played by chance and partly by skill, such as the game of cards, backgammon, etc. These are as unlawful as games of pure chance, for the casting of the lot also rules such games. If chance is entirely against someone, his skill will be of no avail. Then there are games which are entirely dependent on chance, such as games in which dice only are used, straws are drawn, etc.

It is unlawful to play games of chance, be it all by chance or in conjunction with skill. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, there is neither a command, example, nor argument in God's Word from which one can logically deduce the legality of games of chance.

Evasive Argument #1: This can also be said of other games in which use is made of either skill or strength.

Answer: This is not so, for it is founded upon God's Word that one may rest, sleep, eat, and drink, and at the same time, may endeavor to keep soul and body in good condition in order to be fit for the service of God.

Evasive Argument #2: A game of chance can also serve that purpose.

Answer: This cannot be so, since it is nothing but sin -- and a soul, if it were sensitive to sin, would be distraught. One may not draw a conclusion by relating that which is founded upon God's Word to that which is not founded upon it.

Secondly, the use of the lot is a religious activity governed by the Word of God, which states the circumstances when, the manner in which, and the purpose for which it may be used. It is a religious activity; that is, it is a seeking for guidance from the Lord and a making request that He would reveal His will. Therefore prayer precedes its use (Acts 1:24-26). It must be used in weighty circumstances wherein God's hand needs to be observed in an extraordinary manner. This was true for the selection of the two goats, the division of the land of Canaan, and the selection of a twelfth apostle. It must be done in faith, believing that the entire disposal is of the Lord (Proverbs 16:33), that He will reveal His will, and that one must rest in this with delight. It must also be used to settle disputes (Proverbs 18:18). All these dimensions are absent, however, in the game of chance, and it is thus unlawful.

Thirdly, the lot is an extraordinary means by which to discern God's will in a situation of extraordinary importance. However, in a game of chance there is neither a weighty matter to be determined, nor a dispute to be settled. One does not endeavor by such a game to know the will of God in order to be subject to it. Thus, to play a game of chance is to tempt God, and is therefore forbidden. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7). To tempt God is to depart from the ordinary way prescribed to us and to desire something extraordinary from God. It makes a mockery of God's providence and makes Him a servant of our foolish will.

Evasive Argument: The gambler may say: "I do not even think about this; I am only interested in honor and financial gain."

Answer: It is sinful to have such objectives, and it is even sinful not to think about God. One must think about God in everything. If one does not think about God in the act of lying, is it therefore no

sin? Fourthly, the outcome of the casting of the lot -- which the gambler hopes to be to his advantage -- is not in the hands of the player; and yet he is hopeful. In whom does he put his hope -- in the devil? No. Is it fate (which the heathen designate as an idol) as if it were able to bring something about? No. Does one expect it then from the dice? Then one designates them to be his God. It is abominable to expect any happiness from any other source but God.

Evasive Argument: The gambler may say, "I do not expect the outcome from anyone; I only look to the outcome."

Answer: This would be the answer of the atheist; the outcome is ruled by God (Proverbs 16:33). It is thus inherent in the issue itself that one expects happiness from God in an extraordinary way -- this being by a game. This is nothing else but a tempting of and mocking with God, and to make Him a servant of one's lust.

Fifthly, games of chance -- not due to chance itself -- inherently engender harmful consequences. They draw the heart from God, which, due to His righteous judgment, is occupied with a bewitching power. If the outcome of the casting of the lot is disappointing, a silent fretfulness toward God arises in the heart, even though this may not be expressly stirred up. From this comes cursing, blaspheming, and displeasure toward the winner. The one loses his goods (be it much or little) and the other receives a profit which is corrupt and contaminated.

Sixthly, add to this the general witness of the godly and scholars of all ages, as well as of synods and imperial decrees. If there is occasionally one who favors games of chance, it is a papist or a worldly person who has no regard for the Bible. Or if there is an occasional scholar who approves, there are those who have refuted them and stopped their mouths. In doing so, such a scholar has brought a blemish upon himself and upon his other writings. Public Lotteries That which has been said also proves that public lotteries, instituted by the government to support the poor or churches, are unlawful.

First, games of chance and lotteries are essentially the same. The one is unlawful, and therefore, also the other. Consider therefore the reasons mentioned above as having been advanced here as well. The government's approval of the lotteries does not change the nature of the matter. Governments are not authorized to annul divine commandments and to make an unlawful matter lawful. The legality would supposedly be derived from either the government's approbation or from its objective. It cannot be related to the government, for one must obey God rather than man. The objective to support the poor and the churches can no more justify lotteries than Saul's objective in sacrificing to the Lord that which he had been prohibited to take. One must not do evil in order that good may come forth from it. A good objective must be attained in a lawful manner. The poor can also be helped in different ways, such as by charity, taxation, or other means which are founded upon God's Word. It is not even to the advantage of the poor, but rather to their detriment, for many who can scarcely earn a living, will in this way tend to poverty and must then also be supported.

Evasive Argument: Such ought not to participate in the lotteries.

Answer: They are forced by their landlord to participate in order to improve their circumstances. And if they cannot handle little, they will also not be able to handle much; everyone is obligated to preserve in an appropriate manner that which God has given him.

Secondly, lotteries take away from the one and give to the other, for many need to make a contribution and but few walk away with it -- doing all this without any skill, and apart from an inheritance and other honorable means.

Evasive Argument: The money is not taken from anyone, for they all contribute voluntarily.

Answer: No opportunity ought to be given for subjects to squander their goods, for God has forbidden this. Thirdly, participation in lotteries proceeds from the heart of a person who is not satisfied with his condition, wants to become rich, and consequently falls victim to foolish lusts. Everyone yearns for the highest prize, doing so in a way which has not been commanded in, founded upon, nor exemplified in God's Word, which teaches that the casting of the lot is a religious activity and an extraordinary means to ascertain what God's will is in a matter of dispute. This is not the objective of lotteries.

Evasive Argument #1: I participate in a religious manner; I am in need and have very limited means, and here is an opportunity to improve my condition. I expect the outcome from the Lord and pray for a blessing.

Answer: All religion is founded upon the Word of God; this is not true for lotteries. They are not a religious activity. One can therefore neither pray in faith nor expect a good outcome from God. It is a tempting of God, for one departs from the ordinary way and seeks it in an extraordinary way.

Evasive Argument #2: I do it religiously, for I give to the poor.

Answer: This is not valid. If you wish to give to the poor, give without expecting anything in return, for the poor will receive no more than a small percentage of your gain. You know in your heart that it is not your intent to give to the poor, but to acquire a good lottery ticket.

Evasive Argument #3: I have promised a good portion to the poor if I receive a favorable return from the lottery.

Answer: This is engaging in a business transaction with God: Give me this and I shall give Thee that in return.

Furthermore, it is nothing more than the price for a dog and the wages of a prostitute. God does not wish to have goods deposited in the offertory-box which have been acquired unlawfully. From these reasons -- together with those advanced against the playing of games of chance -- it is evident that lotteries are unlawful, just as games of chance are.

Fourthly, consider also that if lotteries were lawful, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances would then be permitted to establish lotteries among themselves. Everyone could then deposit something, and thereupon cast the lot as to who will have it all. This, however, would make the godly uncomfortable and the government would not permit it. The government thus admits that the legality of lotteries, which are of a religious issue, is contingent upon their judgment, or that lotteries are inherently either unlawful or detrimental in regard to the affairs of the republic.

We have thus demonstrated which sins are prohibited in the third commandment. The Virtues Enjoined The virtues enjoined in the third commandment are the following: First, to speak (and want to hear others speak) of God and divine things with all humility, reverence of heart, and

manifestation of respect. It must become evident how glorious and awe-inspiring God is; and that He is worthy of being feared. Our very conduct must therefore cause others to have such an impression of God. How father Abraham humbled himself when he spoke to God! "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27). Even Eglon, the king of the Moabites, showed great respect for God, for when Ehud said to him, "I have a message from God unto thee," he "arose out of his seat" (Judges 3:20). The apostle exhorts us to speak reverently about God and divine things. "In doctrine showing ... gravity" (Titus 2:7); "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11).

Secondly, to confess the Lord holily and boldly; that is, we must confess that He is such a God as He is, that we are loyal to Him, honor and fear Him, put our trust in Him, and that we are loyal to His truth, cause, and children. We must furthermore confess that we are not ashamed of this, but deem it to be the greatest honor to be known for this. "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32); "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16).

Thirdly, to glorify God in all that we say or do. This is to be our objective and must stimulate us to declare His virtues. "But ye are a chosen generation ... that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9); "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Colossians 3:17); "... do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Fourthly, to be zealous for His Name and cause. This was true for Moses (Exodus 23:19-20), Elijah (1 Kings 19:10), and David as a type of Christ. "For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me" (Psalms 69:9).

Fifthly, to call upon the name of the Lord; that is, to bow reverently before Him, worship Him due to His glory, and humbly request from Him all that you have need of in every given situation -- privately, or publicly with the church. "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name; they called upon the Lord, and He answered them" (Psalms 99:6); "...My suppliants ..." (Zephaniah 3:10).

Sixthly, to swear by His Name in a holy manner. We shall dwell upon this a bit more in order that everyone may be instructed as to what an oath is, as well as all that it implies. This will be done so that everyone may examine himself in regard to the oath, and to give instruction, as well as to refute opposing parties. The Oath

We do not understand the oath to be a general reference to all that pertains to religious practice, such as we read in Isaiah 19:18 : "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts." Rather, we speak of it in the narrow sense; that is, the calling on God to be a witness in a certain situation. The Heidelberg Catechism describes the oath as follows: "A lawful oath is calling upon God as the only One who knows the heart, that He will bear witness to the truth, and punish me if I swear falsely." To swear an oath is to call upon God to be a witness. "Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul" (2 Corinthians 1:23); "The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us" (Jeremiah 42:5); "Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth" (Malachi 2:14). The oath is a calling upon God which renders one subject to either a blessing or a curse. "... upon my soul" (2

Corinthians 1:23). Sometimes this condition is not expressed and at other times it is. "So do God to me, and more also" (2 Samuel 3:35). The form differs. At times it is: "As the Lord liveth" (1 Samuel 20:21), and our form is: "So help me Almighty God!" The external form also differs; we raise the first two fingers. [Note: Such is the custom in the Netherlands until this day.] It is as much as if one says, "Oh omniscient, omnipotent, true, and righteous God, who dost delight in truth, whose eyes look for truth, and Thou who hatest all falsehood -- Thou who knowest the truth of this matter, my heart, and this my mouth and my deeds -- I pray Thee that Thou wouldest look down upon me in this case, and hear my voice, and that Thou wouldest be a witness of that which I now say and promise. I pray that Thou wouldest punish me in body and soul as an example to others, if I do not state and strictly adhere to the truth as far as I am acquainted with it (which I promise to do) -- and on the contrary, bless me according to soul and body if I state the truth and am faithful to that which I promise. Let it thus be evident that Thou art an omniscient, omnipotent, true, and righteous God." Who would then not fear to swear an oath?

There are five matters which belong to a proper oath: 1) by whom one must swear; 2) who may swear; 3) the matters which are to be sworn; 4) the manner in which the oath must be sworn, and 5) the purpose for which it is performed.

First, the One who is called upon in the oath and by whom one must swear is the only true God. One may not swear by angels and saints as the papists maintain and do, for 1) they may not be worshiped, as has been shown earlier; 2) they do not know the heart; 3) they have no power to either bless or punish; 4) God is angry with those who swear by something other than the true God, and punishes them. "They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth" (Amos 8:14); "... and them that worship and that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham" (Zephaniah 1:5).

Evasive Argument: Those were idols, and were neither angels nor saints.

Answer: The reason why it was unlawful to swear by those mentioned was because they were not God. This is always applicable, for it makes no difference who is put in the stead of God when swearing an oath.

Objection #1: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things" (1 Timothy 5:21). Paul swears here by the angels.

Answer: No mention is made here of an oath. Paul certifies Timothy in the presence of the elect angels. We do likewise in general conversation when we say: "I believe it, I confess it, or I say it before all who are here present."

Objection #2: Joseph swore by Pharaoh: "By the life of Pharaoh" (Genesis 42:15).

Answer: One is to conduct himself according to regulations, without which examples cannot be followed. For otherwise, one could conclude from this that we may swear by a living person -- yes, even by a heathen. Furthermore, there is here no calling upon Pharaoh and thus also no oath.

Secondly, those who are permitted to swear an oath may not be children, demented persons, drunkards, angry persons, liars, etc. -- not only because they are not credible, but also because they are not capable of having a right impression concerning God and the oath, and thus they cannot swear in a godly manner. In order to swear an oath rightly, one must be illuminated,

regenerate, and godly. Since we cannot judge a person's internal state, however, all citizens are rightfully admitted to this. If they do not swear truthfully, they are responsible themselves. One thus accepts the oath of an idolatrous person and of others -- not because of the quality of their oath, but due to the condition which is placed upon them. It also urges them to be faithful, and it settles disputes.

Thirdly, concerning the matters which are to be sworn, the following applies: (1) These matters must be important, and it must be true that they cannot be settled in any other way (Exodus 22:11).

(2) Since the oath is a public testimony, one must be very sure of the matter and be without doubt, so that the oath be in truth (Jeremiah 4:2). "He that ... speaketh the truth in his heart" (Psalms 15:2).

(3) Since these are matters which one promises to do, they must be inherently good. Evil oaths, or oaths to do evil, ought not to be made (Mark 6:23; Mark 6:25-26).

(4) They must be matters which we can perform, which are within our power, of which we are conscious, and of which we are capable. Thoughtless oaths render us guilty (Leviticus 5:4-5). To this belong also the solemn obligations pertaining to specific promises to be faithful, it being in our power to do so. One can also add to this, promises made at baptism and at the Lord's Supper -- which are made upon the condition that the Lord gives grace and strength.

Fourthly, the manner in which one must swear must be as follows:

(1) It must be done out of love for the truth. "Therefore love the truth and peace" (Zechariah 8:19).

(2) It must be done with great respect for God, and while being conscious of His presence, for one speaks to God and by means of the oath calls upon God. "In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple" (Psalms 5:7).

(3) It must be done thoughtfully. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God" (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

(4) It must be done when the government requires this, or even outside the courtroom if an emergency demands it; that is, if there are no other means to settle the dispute -- and thus to engender trust, so that the truth of a matter (which is of the highest significance) can be believed. "An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife" (Hebrews 6:16).

(5) The oath must be stated clearly and distinctly, without disguising and distorting the matter, and without ambiguity. One may thus not say something which means one thing in his mind and suggests something different to the one who hears it, the words expressed having the meaning which the hearer assumed. These practices are generally referred to as Jesuit pranks, since they promote and make use of such practices. An example of this would be if one were to ask someone: "Have you seen that man?" and if having seen him, he were to answer "no," for he would understand it to refer to having seen him "on that tower," or "flying in the air."

Question: May not one make use of such ambiguous statements when swearing an oath or at other occasions?

Answer: The Papists answer in the affirmative and we in the negative. We do concede, however, that a person may say one truth, and be silent about another truth which is not asked. We also permit the use of words with a twofold meaning, doing so either artistically or to exercise the mind of others. Such are the riddles by which men have tested each other's intellect of old. Such riddles we also find frequently in God's Word, such as the riddle of Samson, the riddles of the Queen of Sheba to prove Solomon's wisdom, as well as the riddle of Jotham, Gideon's son, and of others. If, however, we are asked about a certain matter, or if a matter is to be confirmed by oath, we must answer clearly and distinctly in accordance with the intent of the questioner, lest he delude himself by interpreting our answer differently than we had intended, or that we would mislead him. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, to do so is lying, and the portion of liars is in the lake of fire, that is, in hell.

Evasive Argument: It is not a lie, because the words do not contradict the intent of the heart. One interprets it according to the manner in which it is said.

Answer: The circumstances at the making of an oath are such that one may not have a hidden meaning in his words. One's meaning must agree with what the words themselves suggest and be consistent with the meaning of the questioner. One not only lies if the words are contrary to what is in the heart, but he also lies if the words do not agree with the matter about which he is asked, and with which he is nevertheless acquainted. The oath is therefore restricted by those words, "without subtlety." If your answer is therefore without subtlety, you are not lying.

Secondly, to speak in this manner is to be deceitful. "The Lord will abhor the ... deceitful man" (Psalms 5:6).

Evasive Argument: One is not deceitful, since he says it as he means it.

Answer: This has already been answered, for it is expressly his intent to deceive. The objective is to mislead another by his words, who accepts that word or oath at face value. Thirdly, it renders oaths unprofitable and useless since one cannot depend on them, the oath being "an end of all strife" (Hebrews 6:16). It creates confusion throughout human society, for then one can believe no one else, and must always think that the person is adding something in his mind, secretly understanding it as such. All fidelity has then been removed.

Fourthly, then martyrs needed not to have suffered for the truth, for then one can answer in the affirmative to all errors, making them all to be the truth if he but gives a different meaning and intent in his mind.

Objection #1: The saints have made use of such ambiguous statements. Abraham said that Sarah was his sister.

Answer: It was the truth, for he was not asked whether she was his wife and thus he could be silent about that.

Objection #2: Samuel made an ambiguous statement when he said that he wanted to go to Bethlehem to sacrifice, since he really went there to anoint a king.

Answer: He was not asked whether he went there to anoint a king, and thus he could be silent about this. He spoke the truth when he said that he went there to sacrifice -- which indeed he did.

Objection #3: Christ made as though He would have gone farther, whereas He really wished to remain with them (the men of Emmaus).

Answer: Here is no verbal ambiguity. Christ, by making as though He would go farther, wanted to give them the opportunity to request Him to enter, upon which the Lord would be willing to do so. Nothing else is meant by this.

Fifthly, the purpose of the oath must be the glorification of God as being omniscient, omnipotent, true, righteous, worthy of worship, and majestic. Its objective is furthermore to promote fidelity and truth and to safeguard human communication. The Oath: Lawful for Christians

Having demonstrated what the nature and the required circumstances of the oath are, the following question presents itself:

Question: May a Christian swear an oath in the manner stated?

Answer: The Anabaptists answer negatively and we affirmatively. Our proof is as follows: First, the oath is a vestige of the law of nature, which is evident from its use among all nations. Secondly, it has expressly been commanded. "Thou shalt ... swear by His name" (Deuteronomy 6:13). Add to this all the cases in which God commands the use of the oath. It will not suffice here to say that this was for the Old Testament only, for it was not a ceremonial practice, but a moral practice, which is obligatory for all times. It has not been abolished anywhere in the New Testament; on the contrary, it has been used.

Thirdly, it has been prophesied that one would swear in the New Testament. "... that unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Isaiah 45:23); "... and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth" (Isaiah 65:16).

Evasive Argument: These texts do not refer to the swearing of oaths, but to the spiritual nature of New Testament religion.

Answer (1) The oath can therefore not be excluded, for it is an act of spiritual worship, it being a calling upon God's Name.

(2) We deny that especially in the last text mention is made of the spiritual dimension of religion; instead, it expressly speaks of the swearing of an oath. This is conveyed by the words, and the usage of the oath in the New Testament confirms this.

Fourthly, God has sworn (Hebrews 6:17), the angel has sworn (Revelation 10:6), and Paul has sworn (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). Thus, the swearing of an oath is a holy and lawful work. Add to this that the apostle determines the swearing of an oath to be a lawful matter: "For men verily swear by the greater" (Hebrews 6:16).

Fifthly, the purpose of an oath always remains the settling of disputes and controversies which cannot be settled in any other way but by oath. "And an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife" (Hebrews 6:16). Oaths, lawful Objection #1: The oath is dreadfully misused.

Answer: The abuse does not negate its use.

Objection #2: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:34;Matthew 5:37).

Answer (1) It is evident that Christ did not abolish the proper oath, for it is confirmed by the prophecies that one would swear in the New Testament.

(2) Christ refers to those oaths which the Jews were accustomed to swear. They swore by all manner of objects and made a distinction between them. "Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!" (Matthew 23:18); And, "Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty" (Matthew 23:18). Christ is opposed to this swearing and in reference to this He says: "Swear not at all; neither by heaven ... nor by the earth ... neither by Jerusalem ... neither shalt thou swear by thy head" (Matthew 5:34-36). When the Jews swore a solemn oath, they would swear by Jehovah, but in common conversation they immediately had an oath ready for this or that situation. In reference to common communication Christ says, "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay." It is evil to go beyond this by adding an oath each time.

(3) There can be circumstances in which one may go beyond "Yea and nay," for Christ frequently uses the word "amen," and "verily," and the opposing party itself goes further than that when they confirm something by saying, "By the very truth of my manhood!" They thus cannot make use of this text here. The same answer also suffices for James 5:12, where almost the identical words are recorded. The Need for Self-Examination due to the Solemnity of the Oath

Many will be rebuked by what has been said thus far about the oath. This is true, in the first place, for careless individuals who can hardly say anything without adding an oath, such as: "By the truth of God!" or "by my soul!" and similar dreadful expressions by which God is provoked.

Secondly, many ought to be convicted of their thoughtless and perhaps false swearing of oaths in giving of testimony. This is true for the prosecutor who summons someone to court and under oath presents evidence, for the defendant who under oath must answer to the presented evidence, as well as for the witnesses. Let me ask you some questions, and answer them before the Lord. Did you indeed have a clear and distinct understanding of what you were going to confirm by oath? And if not, did you take the liberty to ask for the correct meaning of the evidence? Were you sure of your case? Did you proceed uprightly without distortion, ambiguity, or bias? Was the case indeed as you swore it to be? Did you swear with respect for God and out of love for the truth? Did you conduct yourself circumspectly?

Thirdly, many will thus be exposed who have taken the oath of office -- which is true for many who either hold minor or major offices. Were you acquainted with the contents of each article and each word, and did you know what each article required? Were you convinced of your competence to execute all the articles, as well as each one of them individually? Was there a heartfelt determination to fulfil each of them? Did you establish these articles as a rule of conduct from the moment you took the oath, so that they were always clearly before your eyes? Have you been true to your oath in every respect? Examine yourself by these questions, and realize that God knows it. Do not take refuge to this or that excuse, for they will not exonerate you.

Evasive Argument #1: It was my general intent to be faithful.

Answer: That is not sufficient, for with such an oath many would not have been admitted to their office. If the government would have been satisfied with this, it would not have formulated and designated specific articles.

Evasive Argument #2: The oath of fidelity implies a secret condition: as much as possible.

Answer: If you had expressed that condition when you swore your oath, you would not have received your office.

You have fabricated this condition yourself. This was not the intent of the government at all, and you should not have sworn an oath about something unless you knew yourself to be competent. And as soon as you discovered that you were not competent, you should have immediately turned over the office to another.

Evasive Argument #3: The oaths are defined in such a way that it is impossible for someone to be true to them. There is no one who faithfully observes his oath.

Answer: It is true that it is impossible to observe the oath as much as you would like. Furthermore, if it is absolutely impossible, you should neither desire the office, nor have taken the oath; or else you should resign immediately.

Evasive Argument #4: We are all weak men and we sin in all things.

Answer: One must not relegate perjury to the category of daily weaknesses. That which has been confirmed by oath must be within the realm of our competence or else one should not take the oath. The transgression has been committed knowingly and willingly, and by reason of the oath there is solemn onus upon you for punishment -- a punishment which you yourself have sought from the righteousness of God.

Consider the third commandment attentively. "The Lord shall not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." Observe what is written in the following passages: "Or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered" (Ezekiel 17:15); "I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof" (Zechariah 5:4). Hear furthermore what the Lord says: "And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness ... against false swearers" (Malachi 3:5). Therefore, you who find yourself guilty ought to fear, and make haste to repent before judgment is executed upon you. From now on, observe your oath with diligence, or let go of your office. It is better to be poor and beg for bread than to be guilty of perjury and have abundance. Be fearful of the oath, and if you are called upon to swear an oath, do not hesitate to bear witness to the truth. However, give heed that you do it in a holy manner, lest you have remorse afterwards.

054. Chapter 49: The Fourth Commandment

----- CHAPTER FORTY-NINE ----- The Fourth Commandment This is the commandment which is contradicted by many, and is assaulted with highly elevated shields. If many would have had it in their power, it would have long been forgotten and rejected. As is true for all other commandments, it is still read to the congregation on every sabbath day as a rule of life, in spite of all who regret this. The Basic Contents of this Commandment The words of this commandment contain: 1) a short exhortation; 2) a declaration; and 3) incentives for observance.

First of all there is a short exhortation: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). At the very outset a *nota bene* is placed; that is, a word of great emphasis, which ought to make a deep impression upon our hearts. "Remember," that is, see to it that you do not contradict, reject, or forget this commandment. Remember it prior to the arrival of that day in order that you may order your affairs in such a manner that nothing will hinder you; prepare yourself for this day ahead of time. Be exhorted and be warned. The subject of this commandment is the sabbath day. This word is a derivative of the word *shabat*, which means to rest. The word "to rest" is used to indicate the cessation of something (Joshua 5:12). *Wayyishbōth* hamān, that is, "And the manna ceased (rested)." "To rest" is also to desist from the activity with which you have been occupied, and to refresh yourself after your labor. This is said of God: "...He had rested from all His work" (Genesis 2:3). Moreover, it is also said of men: "So the people rested on the seventh day" (Exodus 16:30). The earth is likewise said to rest when it remains dormant, is neither plowed nor seeded, and consequently brings forth no fruit. "Even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths" (Leviticus 26:34). From *shabat* are derived *šabbāt* (sabbath) and *šabbā'at* (sabbath), both of which signify rest. It also signifies a period of rest, be it when the word is used in isolation: "To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord" (Exodus 16:23), or that the day or year is added to this: "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane (*yōm hashshabat*) the sabbath day" (Nehemiah 13:17). In this commandment the word "day" is added one time and not the other time. The word "sabbath" has different connotations.

(1) It sometimes signifies a week of seven days or years which then terminates with the sabbath day. "Fulfil her week" (Genesis 29:27).

(2) It signifies the sabbath years (being the seventh year) in which one was neither permitted to plow, sow, nor harvest (Leviticus 25:10) -- and also the fiftieth year (Leviticus 25:10).

(3) It signifies the sabbath of weeks, lasting seven consecutive days, being the three feast days -- Easter, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. There were also the sabbaths of days. These were the first and last days of the three feasts -- be it that they fell upon the sabbath or upon a different day. "On the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath" [Note: The Statenvertaling reads: "On the first day shall be a rest and the eighth day shall be a rest."] (Leviticus 23:39); there was the tenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:27; Leviticus 23:32); and in addition to all these, it signifies the seventh-day sabbath which has its origin in the original seventh day, and which will endure until the end of the world. It is the latter which is referred to in

this commandment. The activity being commanded relative to this day is being sanctified, that is, to be set apart for sacred use (Exodus 13:2). There must also be preparation (Exodus 19:11), a holy and lawful use (1 Timothy 1:8), and a regarding of this day (Romans 14:6). The Observance of the Sabbath The second thing to be noted relative to this commandment is its exposition or enlargement. This pertains to 1) the time of observance, 2) the manner of observance, and 3) the persons called unto its observance.

First, the sabbath is not to be observed every three, four, ten, twenty, or thirty days -- or whenever it pleases the government or the church -- but on the seventh day. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:9-10). It must then be one of the seven days, and it ought not to be repeated any earlier or later.

Question: Is it immaterial which of the seven days one observes, and if not, which of the seven is the sabbath?

Answer: The commandment conveys that it is the seventh, which follows upon six days of labor. "Six days shalt thou labor." This is not a command to work (which belongs to the second table), but a stipulation as to how long one may work, and a direction when one must cease to labor and when the sabbath begins. It says as much as that whatever we are under obligation to do must be performed in six days, for the seventh day is a time of rest; it is the sabbath of the Lord thy God. God rested on the seventh day and has thus given us an example. He has set this day apart for sacred purposes and has commanded man to hallow this day to the glorification of His Name. Secondly, the manner in which this day is to be hallowed is as follows: "Thou shalt do no manner of work." We are enjoined to serve God in the first commandment, and this encompasses all our activity of soul and body at all times, during both day and night. The fourth commandment, however, requires the service of God in the full sense of the word, that is, with cessation of labor. Not to work, or to rest, can be interpreted as doing nothing, being quiet, and being idle. It can also refer to nonactivity due to an injunction of God, commanding us not to work. It can also mean 1) not to do a thing or 2) not to work so as to enable us to do something else, since we cannot do two things simultaneously; or it can also refer to resting conjoined with being engaged in a different activity.

(1) Doing no manner of work does not refer to being idle, for God cannot be pleased with idleness.

(2) We are also not commanded to be idle, for God has not commanded that anywhere.

(3) The commandment not to work has also not been given to enable us to do something else in its place -- something spiritual. The implication would then be that one is not to be active, but rather to be engaged exclusively in the spiritual service of God. The cessation of labor would then be necessary due to labor being a hindrance to spiritual exercises.

(4) The command not to do any manner of work is also not conjoined to another element of sabbath observance, as if being idle and serving God were conjoined as two collateral activities. This would suggest that he who would have done no work would have observed this commandment partially, and this would likewise be true for him who had served God spiritually and nevertheless had done some work.

(5) Rather, doing no manner of work and religious worship must be conjoined as being one injunction. Doing no manner of work must be understood in a spiritual sense, so that it refers to the manner of religious engagement, and thereby is distinguished from religion in the general sense of the word as it is enjoined in the first commandment. It is not rest which is commanded, but rather, a holy rest. "To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord" (Exodus 16:23); "... in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord" (Exodus 31:15). The work which is forbidden here is the labor of one's occupation, generally referred to as "work" -- be it traderelated labor, plowing, sowing, harvesting, business transactions, buying and selling, and all that whereby man earns his living. Not comprehended in this are:

(1) Religious labors, such as when ministers preach in the sweat of their brow, and whatever else transpires in the realm of religion. The priests killed the animals on the sabbath day and nevertheless did not sin.

(2) Works of absolute necessity, which are necessarily engendered by unexpected events on the sabbath -- be it that a fire breaks out, a person falls in the water, etc.

(3) Works of mercy, such as caring for the sick, and some of the labors of pharmacists, doctors, surgeons, and midwives (that is, as far as helping women in need and women giving birth to a child). This also pertains to feeding cattle in the winter, providing protection against the enemy, etc. Then it holds true: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Matthew 12:7); "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

Secondly, the persons by whom the sabbath must be sanctified are: "thy son ... thy daughter, thy manservant ... thy maidservant ... thy cattle ... thy stranger that is within thy gates" (Exodus 20:10). By this delineation, all men without distinction are forbidden to work. It is not sufficient that we rest ourselves, but we must also permit our children and servants to rest, and we must even oblige strangers who dwell or stay with us to rest. They are also men, and the commandment is applicable to them as well as to native residents and members of the church. Yes, even the cattle must rest, since they cannot perform work without the direction of man. God thus wishes to have complete silence upon the entire face of the earth. The third matter to be noted in this commandment is the added incentives. These are three in number.

(1) There is the example of God. God has created man after His image. This holy disposition of soul must also be manifested by man's deeds, and when he is thus active, he must be engaged in harmony with both God's commandment as well as His example. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1). God, after being engaged in the work of creation for six days, rested upon the seventh day, and by so doing has designated this as an example to be followed. Man must be motivated by this to do likewise.

(2) The second incentive is taken from that which is to our benefit. "Therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath say." This does not imply that inherent efficacy was bestowed upon this day in order to render it profitable to man. Rather, it is a promise of blessing made to the conscientious observers of that day; that is, the receipt of comfort, joy, and holiness for the soul, and to render the physical labor of the six workdays to be more prosperous and profitable. For everything is dependent upon the blessing of the Lord, and without this all our labor is in vain (Psalms 127:1-2).

(3) The third incentive is derived from God's command and the appropriateness of obedience to it. He hallowed it. The Lord has set this day apart for sacred usage in order that man may solemnly and uniformly glorify and serve Him with a holy rest. No one may therefore make this day a common day by using it as other days and spending it by working. Rather, according to God's command, we must acknowledge it as having been set apart and spend it in a fashion which is consistent with the purpose for which God has set it apart and designated it. As is true for the other commandments, we must also consider the sins which are prohibited as well as the virtues which are enjoined. The Sins Prohibited The sins which are prohibited can be enumerated as follows: First, we sin when we do not, with joyous approbation, set the sabbath apart from the other days, and when we fail to acknowledge that this day has been set apart by God by virtue of His example and command, having appointed it to be a day of rest, refreshment, and glorification of God. This sin consists in disobedience and a despising of privileges.

Secondly, we sin when we make a workday out of this day -- if we occupy ourselves with the work of our profession; that is, to be engaged as brewers, bakers, laundry men, cooks, tailors, and shoemakers. Furthermore, we sin if, in order to finish remaining work, we then bring work home, even if it is toward noon. This also applies to barbers, those who load and unload ships, those who labor upon ferries, luggage porters, and garbage men; it pertains to all the labor whereby one earns a living. To this also belong miscellaneous activities which one postpones to the day of rest or does on this day to be prepared for the next day; such as mending, washing of children, to either prepare wash, send it to the laundry, or receive it at home, writing out bills, and going shopping -- in one word, all that by which one gains money and time. On this day God wants universal cessation of activity upon the entire face of the earth. This is evident from the commandment itself.

Thirdly, we sin when we transform this day into a market day. This pertains to buying and selling by merchants, store owners, sellers of fruit, vendors of all sorts of edible material, sellers of fish, etc. (cf. Nehemiah 13:15-16; Nehemiah 13:19-21).

Fourthly, we sin when we make this day into a day of worldly pleasure. The sabbath is a delight -- however, a delighting in the Lord. It is a dreadful desecration of this day, however, when we abuse it by delighting ourselves in worldly things and in the lusts of the flesh. This pertains to sailing, horse-riding, fishing, bird-hunting, playing tennis, playing ball, or to the entertaining of one's self with such things that are lawful at the appropriate time and place, in the appropriate company, and with the appropriate objective. This pertains even more to games of chance, playing cards, and playing with dice (cf. Isaiah 58:13-14). However, strolling in the fields or in gardens (be it alone or with others) does not belong to the forbidden sins, if we do so for the purpose of observing the works of God, to glorify Him thereby, and to be refreshed according to soul and body. Even if the world does this in a sinful manner, this cannot prevent the believer from doing it in a spiritual manner.

Fifthly, we sin when we make this day into a day of sin, attiring ourselves with all manner of hideous, worldly garb, and even daring to come thus to church and thereby before God's countenance. This pertains to drinking in bars and inns, where one can hear the violin, the vain chatter and jeering of drunkards, and the playing of drums. This pertains to having cold buffets in one's yard, elaborate meals in the home, and being engaged in all manner of foolish talk and

gossip. This pertains to going courting -- as young men and women are accustomed to do in many villages. In one word, we sin if we spend this day in all manner of looseness and licentiousness. Such sins are double in measure -- yes, they provoke God in an extraordinary manner.

Sixthly, we sin by making this a day of idleness, [Note: à Brakel uses the graphic expression "ezelsdag" here, which literally means: "a donkey's day"!] spending the entire day in a lazy and slothful manner, sleeping the major part of the morning. Having nothing to do, one can then catch up on sleep.

Thus, there are many who sleep away the morning service, eat during the afternoon service, and walk away the evening service. Even if one has attended the worship services once or twice, he may possibly have slept there or have been occupied with other thoughts, and thus derived no more benefit from this than a donkey would. Such persons nevertheless imagine that they have spent the sabbath well, for they have rested and have been to church.

Seventhly, we sin when we reject and speak against the sabbath; draw others away from hallowing this day and give them liberty to do so; ridicule those who conscientiously hallow the sabbath according to God's command, railing at them by calling them ignorant, hair-splitters, and hypocrites (how abominable!); are unwilling to hallow the sabbath ourselves; draw others away from doing so; and mock with those who sanctify this day. The Virtues Enjoined The virtues enjoined in this commandment are comprehended in preparation, observance, and reflection. The necessity of preparation is apparent from the command: "Remember the sabbath day." That this was practiced in the church is evident from Mark 15:42, "It was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath." This is as yet practiced by the Lutherans in many localities -- which ought to convict the Reformed churches. To this preparation belongs:

(1) the knowledge of and acquiescence in our obligation to hallow this day, and the actual separating of this day from other days according to the command and example of God -- thus being engaged in an activity which is so delightful, beneficial, and God-glorifying;

(2) a spiritual desire for this day in order that one may quietly approach unto God and rejoice in Him, so that this day is a delight rather than a burden;

(3) prayer for strength and ability to hallow this day, so that in some measure we may be inclined toward spiritual things -- this in view of the aversion which the flesh has for this day;

(4) the timely cessation of one's daily labors, lest by working until late in the evening one render the body unfit, which in turn prevents the lively frame in which the soul ought to be, and lest there be no time left for preparation;

(5) the provision and preparation of food for the family for that day, so that no shopping need to be done on that day and there be little required as far as cooking is concerned.

Observation not only consists in resting -- as if that were the whole or part of its observance. It also does not consist in serving God in a more spiritual manner than on other days. Neither does it consist in a narrow-minded "touch not and taste not," nor in asking, "May I do this or may I do that?" The sabbath is not a snare, but rather a day of delight -- not, however, for sinful flesh. Those who are spiritually minded will almost always know what either favors or impedes the spirituality of the sabbath and the hallowing of this day.

Sabbath observance consists, first of all, in focusing upon the commandment and example of God which are held before us to be followed. This must be accompanied by obedient subjection and a love to imitate this.

Secondly, it consists in spending this day in holy resting and being completely withdrawn from the world, in being elated and joyful in God, and in holy jubilation.

Thirdly, it consists in occupying one's self in beholding the works of God in creation, preservation, and government. It furthermore consists in meditating upon the great work of redemption through Christ, in all this acknowledging and rejoicing in God's goodness, wisdom, power, truth, omnipotence (and of all that is revealed of God of this in our hearts), and thus glorifying and praising God. It is to be occupied with that sweet work of angels!

Fourthly, it consists in attending the public gatherings of God's people, as well as in rejoicing in the fact that one may be among them and with them, appear together before God's countenance, sing His praises, worship Him, hear the voice of the Lord come to our ears and hearts, and receive the benediction.

Fifthly, it consists in visiting the sick and the destitute, to bestow something of which they are deprived, to read something out of God's Word, and furthermore if they are unconverted, to convince them of sin and judgment and make them acquainted with the Lord Jesus. It also consists in comforting the converted and in stirring them up to be patient.

Sixthly, it consists in exercising the communion of saints; that is, in having sweet fellowship with godly acquaintances in private gatherings where they occupy themselves with the reading of God's Word, the singing of psalms and spiritual songs, and in mutual conversations, exhorting and comforting each other.

Seventhly, it consists in contributing, with a joyful and compassionate heart, something of one's profit -- earned in the previous workdays (or else something of one's belongings) -- to the poor, the common fund of the deacons, individuals with whom one is acquainted, and others whom the Lord causes us to encounter.

Reflection is also needful to preserve the sabbath disposition and blessing. First, this consists in reflecting upon how the day was spent publicly and privately, and upon the sins which one has committed; that is, laxity, listlessness, lack of spirituality, and the failure to abhor these. Confess this with sorrow before the Lord, and seek forgiveness through Christ.

Secondly, it consists in reflecting upon the good we have performed on this day, upon the upright objective to hallow the sabbath, and the efforts to do everything in such a manner as is pleasing to God. It furthermore consists in reflecting upon the blessings, refreshments, comforts, illumination, and quickening we enjoyed from the Spirit of the Lord. One must acknowledge this and rejoice in this, even if it were ever so little. Even if the insatiable desire of our soul has not been satisfied, we should yet thank the Lord for the good we received.

Thirdly, it consists in the acknowledgment of God's goodness to His church in giving her the sabbath, enabling her to gather publicly and conduct all her public worship services, and for the privilege to enjoy a holy rest.

Fourthly, it consists in yearning and longing for the rest which remains for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9), in rejoicing in this hope, in forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Blessed is he who thus begins, observes, and ends the sabbath.

Additional Incentives for a Proper Observance of the Sabbath

Even though the above mentioned matters will motivate a godly person to earnestly observe the sabbath, it will nevertheless be beneficial that we add some incentives in order to stir you up. They are derived from that which is detrimental to transgressors and from that which is beneficial to conscientious observers.

First of all, reflect attentively upon the harm that befalls desecraters of the sabbath -- that which pertains to the sin as well as the punishment. The desecration of the sabbath is a dreadful sin, for:

- (1) it is a violation of God's commandment, and it is all the more sinful because one at the same time rejects the example of God which ought to be followed;
- (2) it destroys external and common religion in its entirety, for all the commandments of the first table converge in this commandment;
- (3) it is a despising of God's friendship and goodness from which the gift of the sabbath has proceeded, and which God demonstrates to His people upon the sabbath, letting them taste of this.

Secondly, God pronounces dreadful judgments upon the desecraters of His day.

- (1) One robs himself of the spiritual and temporal blessings which God has promised to pour out upon those who hallow the sabbath.
- (2) The general curses which pertain to transgressors of the law are applicable to such persons. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10).
- (3) An entire register of plagues is pronounced upon desecraters of the sabbath (cf. Leviticus 26:2; Leviticus 26:14-16, etc.).
- (4) Set your heart upon the following passages as well: "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city" (Nehemiah 13:17-18); "But if ye will not hearken unto Me to hallow the sabbath day ... then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (Jeremiah 17:27); "Yet also I lifted up My hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them ... because they ... polluted My sabbaths" (Ezekiel 20:15-16). Consider also Amos 8:11-12. God enumerates several sins in this chapter -- among others, an aversion for the sabbath. Thereupon several judgments are threatened, among which is the removal of His Word. "I will send a famine in the land ... and they shall wander ... to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it" (Amos 8:11-12). He who therefore fears such judgments as are mentioned in these texts, ought thereby to be discouraged from desecrating the sabbath -- this being the cause of these judgments. In the second place,

meditate on the other hand upon the benefits which have been promised to those who hallow the sabbath. The commandment comprehends all this with the words: "Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day."

(1) It is a delight for a believer to hallow the sabbath, even if there were no other promises. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High: to show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night" (Psalms 92:1-2). This is the work of the sabbath and all that is good and sweet is inherent in this work.

(2) The work of the sabbath is to glorify God, and this is the highest form of felicity. That is the entire content of the above mentioned psalm for the sabbath. See this also in Isaiah 58:13, where we read, "If thou ... call the sabbath a delight," in order that the Lord, who is worthy to be honored, may be sanctified.

(3) It is then that God promises to come to His people, and He brings them to Himself. Felicity, all salvation, and refreshment for believers is to be found in this mutual approach unto, and fellowship with, each other. The Lord Jesus thus revealed and glorified Himself to His disciples, doing so even on two successive sabbaths (John 20:1; John 20:19; John 20:26). It is in this manner that the Lord Jesus glorified Himself to the apostle John and brought him in the Spirit on the Lord's day, making him fit to receive the revelation (Revelation 1:10).

(4) God promises many blessings to those who hallow the sabbath day in soul and body. Regarding this, consider the following two passages: "Blessed is the man ... that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it. ... For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep My sabbaths ... even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off ... every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar" (Isaiah 56:2; Isaiah 56:4-7). Consider also this passage: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah 58:13-14).

He who therefore desires all these benefits ought to hallow the sabbath -- the promise being that they will be given on this day. The Fourth Commandment: Ceremonial or Moral in Nature?

It now remains for us to deal with the great point of contention -- a consideration which we wanted to append since we must express ourselves somewhat more comprehensively here in order to promote the honor of God, His holy service, and the observance of His holy day. The point of contention is this: Does the seventh-day sabbath, as proposed in the fourth commandment, belong to the ceremonial law given to Israel alone, so that it has thus been fulfilled and abolished by Christ? Or does it belong to the unchangeable rule for a holy life -- as is true for the other commandments of the law -- thus obligating all men of all ages to obedient observance, both prior and after the incarnation of Christ?

Many opponents present themselves, who, however much they may differ from each other in other matters, join focus in opposing the sabbath.

First, the Jews -- to whom must be added some heretics in the early church -- admit that the sabbath is of eternal duration. They insist, however, that the seventh day after creation (or the day which has always been observed by the Jews) is to be observed.

Secondly, the Socinians, Anabaptists, and Antinomians (opponents of the law) reject the entire law -- and thus also this commandment.

Thirdly, there are others who designate nine commandments as an eternal rule of life, but who fully eliminate the fourth commandment, considering it to be entirely ceremonial. They state outright that we now do not have ten commandments, but only nine. However, this sentiment has no adherents except ignorant people who neither know what they are saying nor what they are affirming.

Fourthly, there are others who are less offensive with their words, but in very deed reject the entire commandment. They maintain that there is something moral as well as ceremonial in this commandment (which foreshadows Christ). They consider the moral aspect to be the requirement of public worship without any reference to day or time, and that the seventh day is ceremonial, typifying the resting of Christ in the grave. Thus, it has been abolished with the resurrection of Christ.

Fifthly, there are others who interpret it as follows: Prior to the fall God obligated Adam to work all the days of his life. However, his work was to be neither burdensome, grievous, nor tiring. This remains the obligation of all men outside of the realm of the church, and they must do so with grief and pain as a punishment for sin. They maintain that God established the covenant of grace on the seventh day, accompanied by the promise of the coming of the Messiah. He thus would have given His partakers of the covenant a day of respite and relief: the seventh day. Prior to Christ's coming this would have typified the resurrection of Christ, and subsequent to His coming it would have been a memorial thereof. At the same time, it would have signified in both dispensations the benefits merited by Christ's resurrection -- both in this, as well as in eternal life. The church of all ages has been opposed to these propositions. We therefore maintain that this commandment is of the same moral nature as the other nine and does not typify Christ in the least. This commandment not only enjoins public worship, but also the hallowing of the seventh day following six workdays, and that this day be spent in holy resting. In enlarging further upon this we must make a distinction between the commandment and the incentives for observance. It is true that occasionally an incentive is taken from something which was peculiar to Israel alone, such as in Deuteronomy 5:15, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." These words were neither declared from Sinai nor inscribed in the tables of stone, but were used by Moses, as a faithful servant of God, upon repeating the law. He used this incentive to stir them up to let their servants rest on the sabbath.

It must also be noted that the word "ceremonial" is not found in the Bible and that one therefore ought not to dispute about this word. The common usage of the word signifies an ecclesiastical

duty, or an external circumstance, deed, action, or transaction. In this respect there are also ceremonies in the church of the New Testament: preaching with either a covered or uncovered head, sprinkling once or thrice in holy baptism, either immersion or sprinkling at the administration of baptism, either sitting or standing when partaking of the Lord's Supper, etc. These are ceremonies which neither add to nor subtract from the essence of the matter. It is common among theologians, however, also to refer to the types of Christ as ceremonies due to their external mode of administration. We maintain, however, that there is no typification of Christ in the fourth commandment. It is in this sense that we maintain that there is nothing ceremonial in it. If, however, one considers an external circumstance which is changeable to be ceremonial -- the essence of the matter being preserved -- then we can indeed say that there is something ceremonial in it, understanding thereby only the change of day. In the Old Testament this was the last day of the week, and, as is surmised, the seventh day in reference to creation. I repeat, as is surmised; for one cannot be certain, as precise chronological calculations cannot be made retroactively to Adam. Furthermore, men's lives in the east or the west can differ twelve hours and thus half of a twenty-four-hour day. They especially cannot maintain that the sabbath which Israel observed was exactly the seventh day after creation, maintaining that there was no sabbath prior to Moses' time, and that no one was acquainted with such a day. This we deny, even though we would surmise that the hallowing of this day was sometimes very much neglected. Therefore, the essence of the sabbath did not consist in hallowing the exact seventh day after creation, thereby implying that the commandment is violated if one were to miss it by half a day. This has absolutely never been the intent of the fourth commandment; rather the intent is the hallowing of the seventh day which would follow six workdays. This does not imply that they had the choice to select one of the seven days arbitrarily, selecting a different one of the seven each time as it suited them; rather, Israel knew which of the days was the seventh day they had to observe and hallow. Thus it was prior to Christ's coming; but after Christ's coming the day was changed from the last day of the week to the first day of the week, according to Jewish calculation. This change of day did not come about by the will of man, however, but in consequence of the instruction of Christ and of the apostles (on behalf of Christ). The essence of the sabbath remained in full force, and it returns each time after six workdays.

We have thus identified the nature of the argument. It is now necessary to verify our sentiment and then to respond to the objections of opponents. The Sabbath, Having been Instituted Prior to the Fall, is Not Ceremonial

Proof #1. We derive this from the institution of the commandment which predates the fall. From this we make the following conclusion: If the commandment pertaining to the sabbath was given to Adam prior to the fall, it then belongs to the unchangeable rule of holiness -- just as the other commandments of the moral law do. It thus obligates all men of all ages, and neither belongs to the ceremonial law, nor has it been fulfilled and abolished in Christ. Instead, the sabbath has been given to Adam prior to the fall. Consequently, etc. The thrust and veracity of the first proposition is evident from the fact that Adam represented the entire human race prior to the fall. This was due to the covenant of works then in force, and because Christ was neither necessary, known, nor promised at that time. Thus neither the gospel nor the ministry of shadows could have any function. These matters are beyond all argumentation. The second proposition, namely, that the sabbath has been given to Adam prior to the fall, is evident from Genesis 2:1-3, "Thus the heavens

and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." In order to perceive the thrust of this argument, note the following:

First, consider the connection and the historical relationship between the first seven days apart from any intermediary issues. (It must be understood that there are no chapters in the Hebrew text, and therefore read the first and second chapters as one chapter.) It is related there what God performed on each day, and at the same time what function and approbation God attributed to each day. In thus arriving at the seventh day we observe the same sequence. We are told that there was then no work left to be done, but that it had all been completed in the previous six days. We are furthermore told that God rested on this day from His labors and that God -- as He did on the other days -- expressed His approval of the seventh day and assigned it its function. He blessed and hallowed it, not blessing Himself, but the day -- and He hallowed it. He did not do this to the natural day itself, but rather the day as having been designated for sacred usage -- as is pointed out in the fourth commandment. When His rest is given as the reason for blessing and sanctification, God has not only given a commandment to rest on the seventh day, and appointed this example to be followed, but He has established an express ordinance and has blessed and hallowed this day. What else can hallowing a day in this case mean but designation for a sacred purpose?

Secondly, note that this ordinance of the seventh day was made prior to the fall. This is evident for the following reasons:

(1) The sixth and seventh days are joined together (as the other previous six days were) without any intervening matters, and also without any reference to the fall. It is therefore audacious to insist on adding something to this.

(2) The fall is recorded as having occurred after the seventh day, for it is recorded in Genesis 3:1-24, subsequent to the first seven days and all that transpired in them, being described in a continual and uninterrupted fashion.

(3) The Holy Spirit bears witness that all was still very good upon the completion of the seventh day. "And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day" (Genesis 1:31). The fall had thus not occurred.

(4) The Lord rested on the seventh day; that is, He observed all His works with delight, rejoiced in them, and was refreshed. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:17). When God saw the sin of man, it is written, "And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart" (Genesis 6:6). If man had fallen upon the sixth day, then God, rather than having been refreshed, would have had sorrow and grief of heart. This was not so, however, but He refreshed Himself. Instead of pronouncing a blessing, God would have cursed man and the earth. We thus perceive from all this that man did not fall upon the sixth day and that the sabbath was given him prior to the fall -- and thus the sabbath existed prior to the fall.

(5) Although this argument, when considered independently, carries no weight to either confirm or convince anyone, it nevertheless yields some further clarification when joined to the other

arguments. It is not credible that man, having just opened his eyes upon this world, would have fallen immediately and that he would not have had time to delight himself in God and to rejoice in his holy and glorious state. It is credible, however, that God gave him some time to experience that which was good. Man, to some degree, was therefore already acquainted with God, for by the cool of the day he already recognized God's approach unto him (Genesis 3:8).

Evasive Argument #1: Is this text not the announcement of an event prior to its occurrence, [Note: à Brakel uses the peculiar word "voerverhaal" here. Since this word is probably a neologism, it can only be translated in a descriptive manner.] so that Moses, when speaking of the basis for the sabbath, uses this occasion to add to this commandment the institution of the sabbath as it occurred during his time? We do find more such prior announcements in God's Word.

Answer (1) By asking questions one can cause the unstable sentiments of himself and others to totter. Eve herself was deceived by questions. Instead, one ought to state that such is the case and that there is proof. We deny it, for where is the proof?

(2) It is true, as is often the case with historical documents of human origin, that such announcements prior to the fact relating to future events are also found in the Holy Scriptures. However, then the subject matter at hand demands this and its purpose is obvious. Here neither the one nor the other is true. Refrain from such reasoning as: It could be thus, for it is occasionally true elsewhere. Such are evil teachers who cause the soul to be prejudiced and unfit to perceive the truth.

(3) This cannot be an announcement prior to the fact. This is evident from the text itself, for it is stated what God did upon the first seventh day, and not what He did about 2400 years later. Furthermore, when God speaks of the sabbath at the time of Moses, He speaks of it in such a fashion as being a matter which had been instituted on the first seventh day (cf. Exodus 20:11). It is indeed contrary to all probability that God, commanding something after 2400 years, would derive a reason from something which had transpired so long ago, and of which there would have been no knowledge during all that time. Also, if the sabbath were only pointing to Christ, God's resting upon the seventh day in the past could not have been foundational for the sabbath.

(4) If this were an announcement prior to the fact, no original institution of the sabbath could be found in God's Word, for the sabbath was already observed prior to the giving of the law upon Sinai. It was already observed when the manna was given in the desert. Mention is then made of the sabbath as being a known institution, and thus, not instituted at that time.

(5) Such an announcement prior to the fact was devised for the purpose of designating the sabbath as ceremonial. However, this renders the announcement itself invalid. For this announcement would have been made at the occasion when a reason or argument was given for the sabbath, which looked retroactively at God's rest, and not forward to the Messiah.

(6) If such a statement were to have any semblance of validity, it would first have to be determined that the entire book of Moses -- and particularly the first chapters -- were written by Moses after the exodus from Egypt and subsequent to all that transpired at Horeb. However, there is no evidence of this whatsoever, and thus the notion of an announcement prior to the fact is without foundation.

Additional Evasive Argument: God intended at that time to give this day to His people, and had decreed to do so 2400 years later; but He did not enjoin Adam and his descendants to keep this day.

Answer: This is contrary to the text, which does not speak of an intention but of an actual institution. It is an ordinance which is comparable to the resting of God. God's resting was, however, not an intention to rest sometime in the future, but an actual resting. Likewise, the blessing and hallowing of this day were actual occurrences which did not pertain to God but to man. It was thus a commandment given to man, and this at the very outset of time.

Evasive Argument #2: The sabbath was not applicable to Adam prior to the fall for he neither had to work nor became tired. Furthermore, he glorified God every moment, so that the sabbath could not have been given to him then.

Answer (1) Adam had to work indeed. "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15).

(2) The purpose of the sabbath is to rest, that is, to cease from labor -- even if there is no fatigue.

(3) Although Adam was able to glorify God every moment, it was nevertheless God's will that he would do so on the seventh day by ceasing from his labor and hallowing that day.

(4) The law was not given to Adam as an individual, but as being the father of the entire human race, which -- upon multiplication -- would be under obligation to celebrate this day by coming together before the countenance of God to unitedly praise and glorify Him.

Evasive Argument #3: Prior to Exodus 16:1-36 one does not read that either Adam or the fathers who followed him were either acquainted with or observed the sabbath. It is therefore not probable that the sabbath had already been given then.

Answer (1) Little is recorded of the first 2000 years. It has pleased God to record particularly what has transpired with Abraham and his seed. One cannot conclude, simply because it has not been recorded, what they have or have not known and done.

(2) It does not matter what Adam and the men following him have done, but rather, what they were obligated to do according to the commandment. Circumcision was also neglected in the wilderness, and yet it remained a command. This is also true of the sabbath.

(3) Men spoke of the seventh day prior to Moses. "Fulfil her week. ... And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week" (Genesis 29:27-28). It must be noted that in the original text the word shebua is recorded. This in turn is related to the word shebigni (i.e., the seventh), which is recorded in this commandment.

(4) When God gave the law, He spoke of this as a matter which already existed and was known. It reads:

"Remember (not the seventh day but) the sabbath day." It furthermore reads: "Therefore He blessed (not blesses) and hallowed (not hallows) it." And such was indeed the case. "And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the

Lord hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning" (Exodus 16:22-23). The elders did not understand the reason why the bread had thus been multiplied. Moses, in instructing them, brings to mind the instituted and blessed sabbath, which (as they knew) would be the following day -- a day upon which God willed that they should rest, and that He therefore had provided for them ahead of time.

(5) Paul speaks of a rest and, pointing to Genesis 2:1-25, of a rest of the seventh day -- an institution which had been in place since the foundation of the world. "If they shall enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all His works" (Hebrews 4:3-4). From all this we can observe that since the time of Adam and prior to the giving of the law, man has had the institution and the knowledge of the sabbath.

Evasive Argument #4: If there is already mention of the hallowing of the seventh day in Genesis 2:1-25, does this pertain to the hallowing of that one day only, it being done once in reference to God rather than man?

Answer: No; this was the hallowing of the seventh day which chronologically reoccurs. It is very evident from Exodus 20:1-26 that this is for man's benefit, for there the hallowing of the seventh day in chronological order is commanded due to God having blessed and hallowed this day, solely because He -- in view of Genesis 2:1-25 -- rested on the first seventh day. This at once makes it evident that God has given this day to man.

Evasive Argument #5: It appears that God did as yet do some work on the seventh day, for Genesis 2:1 is the conclusion of the six-day creation, and in verse 2 mention is made of some work again: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made." From this it can be concluded that God executed the work of redemption on the seventh day by restoring man.

Answer (1) This is an erroneous conclusion. It is not stated here that God did some work on the seventh day, but that on the seventh day He had already ended the work which He had made; it was finished at that time. To have ended work does not imply the doing of work, but rather the completion of work and the not doing of any work subsequent to that.

(2) This is expressly refuted in Exodus 20:11, for there it is stated that God rested on the seventh day, in contrast to His labor of six days. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day."

(3) If God had done most of His work on the seventh day -- for the work of redemption excels the work of creation -- then God's example of resting on the seventh day after six days of labor could not be held before man as the reason for resting on the seventh day, as is the case here.

(4) If the thought would occur that God had accomplished the work of redemption on the seventh day, it would first have to be a known fact that man had already sinned. Not only is this not so, but the very opposite is proven.

All this proves it to be immovably true that the sabbath was given to Adam prior to the fall -- and thus to the entire human race. Consequently, it is not a ceremonial command, but of the same nature as all other moral commands which are a perpetual rule of holiness for all men. The

Sabbath is Not Ceremonial: Its Observance is Regulated by the Moral Law

Proof #2: This is derived from the commandment in Exodus 20:1-26. I draw the following conclusion from this: Whatever commandment is a commandment of the moral law, is not ceremonial, but belongs to the eternal rule of holiness, obligating all men. The fourth commandment is a commandment of the moral law, however, and it thus follows, etc. The first proposition is irrefutably true. The nature of the whole is also the nature of each part. If the entire law is moral in nature, also each commandment is moral in nature. The second proposition is confirmed as follows: The moral law is the law which God Himself declared from Horeb out of the midst of the fire in the ears of all Israel. God Himself engraved this law, which is the law of love (Matthew 22:1-46), into two tables of stone. This is the royal law (James 2:8-10) which contains in it the requirements of the covenant of works upon which, apart from the gospel, eternal life would follow (Romans 10:1-21). This law is the law of the ten commandments (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13). Every reader will have to agree with this. The fourth commandment is a statement from this law, however. This is evident from the record of the law in Exodus 20:1-26 and Deuteronomy 5:1-33, and it is dealt with in the same way as the other commandments. From this it follows, etc.

Evasive Argument: The law of the ten commandments is indeed the moral law, but one commandment must be removed, namely, the fourth--that is, to the extent that it is ceremonial and of a different nature.

Answer (1) This is not recorded anywhere.

(2) Then there would only be nine commandments. One must give heed not to subtract from or add to the law (Deuteronomy 4:2), nor to nullify the least commandment (Matthew 5:19).

(3) There is nothing in this commandment which resembles anything of a ceremonial nature. It cannot be demonstrated anywhere in the entire Scriptures that the seventh-day sabbath points to Christ nor in which respect it points to Christ. One could say that it points to Christ's resting in the grave, but 1) Christ was in the grave three days. 2) Furthermore, Christ's burial was a step of His humiliation and He was holden of death. 3) How could such a joyful, happy, refreshing, and God-glorifying rest on the seventh day be an example of Christ's state of death when there was to be nothing but mourning? 4) Scripture says nothing of this sort. 5) It is contrary to reason, for the commandment is given in reference to something which has preceded and not to something which was to be in the future. There is not even a semblance of this.

(4) The entire subject of the fourth commandment predicates its moral nature. The matter which is commanded is a holy and God-glorifying rest. The reason for this commandment is God's institution of this rest from the beginning. The example given us to follow is God's very own activity. To our knowledge, He has never made Himself an example in any ceremonial commandment. If we consider all these things together -- the substance of, the reason for, the example for, and the law of which this commandment is a part -- then it will powerfully convince the person (who listens more to the commandment of God than to his own confusing ideas) that the sabbath of the fourth commandment is not ceremonial, but moral in nature, and is thus obligatory upon all men at all times. The Eternal Duration of the Moral Law and thus of the Fourth Commandment

Proof #3: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:16-19). The objective of the Lord Jesus in this passage is to demonstrate that by His coming, conscientious godliness was not abolished. The reference here to the moral law can be determined for the following reasons:

- (1) It is that law which is the rule for good works and thus for a holy life (Matthew 5:16).
- (2) It is that law which Christ did not come to disannul, since He did come to disannul the ceremonial law.
- (3) It is that law which Christ has fulfilled (Matthew 5:17), so that by His obedience we are made righteous (Romans 5:19).
- (4) It is that law which will endure as long as the earth will remain (Matthew 5:18).
- (5) It is that law which one was not permitted to break upon the coming of Christ, but which one was obliged to do and teach (Matthew 5:19).
- (6) It is that law in which murder, the false and unnecessary swearing of oaths, revenge, and adultery are forbidden, and in which generosity and sincere love (even toward enemies) are commanded, this being evident from what follows in this chapter. However, this is the moral law -- the law of the ten commandments. Thus, the reference here is to the moral law. Now, neither jot nor tittle of this law will pass away as long as the heaven and the earth endure. Therefore, since the fourth commandment is a full-fledged commandment of that law, also this commandment will remain and not pass away. Consequently, this commandment is not ceremonial, but an eternal rule of life, as is true for the other commandments.

Evasive Argument #1: The reference here indeed is to the moral law, and the fact that it will not pass away. It cannot be concluded from this, however, that the sabbath will not pass away, for this does not belong to the moral law. Simply because it is listed among the ten commandments does not prove that it is moral in nature.

Answer: This has already been proven in our second proof. Examine the entire New Testament and you will observe that wherever the law is contrasted to the ceremonial law and the gospel, the focus is upon the law of the ten commandments. If one replies, "No, but the focus is upon the moral law," then I ask, "Where do we find the moral law? Is it not contained in the ten commandments?" If one says, "Yes, but with the exception of one," then I reply, "But where is that written?" It is nowhere to be found, and it is thus but an idle thought. The law of the ten commandments is called the moral law, and thus all ten commandments are moral in nature.

Evasive Argument #2: We do not deny that the fourth commandment belongs to the moral law and is thus of eternal duration. However, the moral aspect in it pertains to the public worship of God and not to its ceremonial aspect which is the hallowing of the seventh day.

Answer: This is a self-made fabrication. Let it be demonstrated once that public worship constitutes the moral content of this commandment. Not one jot or tittle can be produced in support of this. This argument is thus rejected as readily as it is advanced. The language of the commandment indicates that the essence of this commandment consists in the hallowing of the seventh day. We have sufficiently shown above that nothing of a ceremonial nature is comprehended in this. Therefore, if this commandment is of eternal duration -- which is according to the intent and understanding of this party -- then the entire commandment is of eternal duration. It cannot be viewed from a twofold perspective. The essence of this commandment is the hallowing of the seventh day after six workdays. The Observance of the Sabbath to Continue After the Abrogation of the Ceremonial Laws

Proof #4: "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day" (Matthew 24:20). It is evident from verse 3 that the return of Christ and the end of the world is discussed in this chapter. It is beyond controversy that the destruction of Jerusalem -- forty years after Christ's ascension -- is also discussed here.

Immediately upon Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, the ceremonies had completely lost their efficacy, and from that very moment it was sin to use them in the Jewish manner, that is, as being shadows of the future Messiah. Nevertheless, the external performance in a general and religious sense was tolerated for some time in order not to hinder those that were weak in the faith, and thus to allow time for instruction to prepare them for their full abolition.

However, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, the Christian church had long separated itself from the Jewish church, and the ceremonies had become as dead to them. They were thus neither permitted to strive nor pray for this.

Nevertheless, we see it expressly stated here that there would still be both sabbath and winter, for no injunction can be given about something which does not exist. We do not maintain that there is an injunction here to hallow the sabbath, but that this injunction concerning the sabbath indicates that there would still be a sabbath. Thus, the sabbath is not ceremonial but of eternal duration.

It also needs to be noted that this chapter does not only speak of the destruction of Jerusalem, but also of the dreadful persecution which would come upon the church of the New Testament, which frequently has come to pass since then. At that time the ceremonies had indeed disappeared, and yet the sabbath, like the winter, would remain.

Evasive Argument #1: Was not this injunction to pray that their flight would not occur on the sabbath, made to Jews in order to inflict temporary misery upon them, since they were not permitted to flee on the sabbath?

Answer: They were permitted to flee, for this was not forbidden in the law. This is evident from various examples in God's Word.

Evasive Argument #2: Was not this injunction intended for weak Christians for whom it would be objectionable to flee on that day?

Answer: They were indeed permitted to flee, for the ceremonies had been abolished and one was no longer permitted to pray in reference to this.

Evasive Argument #3: Was not this injunction given to prevent the Jews -- who would see the Christians fleeing on the sabbath -- from killing them?

Answer: There is neither proof nor argument for this. The reference is here not to a general flight, but to flight which would occur as frequently as they would be pursued. The Jews no more concerned themselves with the Christians than they did with the Gentiles. Furthermore, Jews, Gentiles, and Christians were permitted to flee on the sabbath.

Evasive Argument #4: Why then did they have to pray that fleeing upon the sabbath be prevented? Answer: Since God had appointed this day for refreshment and the enjoyment of an extraordinarily joyous rest, they would then have to miss this, and lose the opportunity to praise God with the congregation and to both edify and be edified. Thus, fleeing on the sabbath would be double misery for the soul -- just as fleeing in the winter would be a double misery for the body.

The Observance of the Sabbath: Practiced by Christ, the Apostles, and the Early Church

Proof #5: In addition to the proofs mentioned above that the sabbath is not ceremonial, but moral and of eternal duration, we wish to consider the practice of Christ, the apostles, and the early church. The Lord Jesus honored the gathering of His disciples upon the first day after His resurrection with His presence, this being the first day of the week. Eight days later the Lord repeated this (John 20:26). Concerning the journeys of Paul we read in Acts 20:6-7, "And we ... came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow." Take note here that a different day is never mentioned in the New Testament, but that the first day of the week is mentioned repeatedly. It is stated as a matter of course that the congregation gathered on that day and that Paul preached on that day in their assembly, and that he would travel the following day. It can thus be clearly observed that they observed the sabbath on the first day of the week.

Consider furthermore what is written in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 : "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Again the first day of the week is mentioned as the familiar day for worship and assembly -- not for some private individuals, but for the congregations. The apostle John, having been banished to the island of Patmos after the destruction of Jerusalem, indicates that the Lord's day was celebrated in a sacred manner. This day he celebrated, calling it by the name familiar to all -- the Lord's day. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). Concerning the sabbath, it is written in the fourth commandment: "But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:10). This is the day which the Lord has instituted, hallowed, and blessed.

Add to this the practice of the churches of Christ from the time of the apostles until today. Take as an example the testimony of ministers in the church who lived shortly after the time of the apostles.

Irenaeus: "God Himself has proclaimed the words of the ten commandments, and they therefore remain with us, having neither been diminished nor nullified by the coming of Christ" (Adv. Hoeres. lib. 4. cap. 31).

Basilius calls the Lord's day the sabbath (Epis. ad Caesar. Pater). Epiphanius: "The first sabbath is that day which God has decreed from the beginning and incorporated into the creation of the world, which from that day on (take note!) until now continues in the sequence of seven days" (Hoeres. 51).

Athanasius: "Formerly they of old greatly honored the sabbath, and this glorious day the Lord Jesus has changed into the Lord's day" (de Senin).

Eusebius: "Christ has obligated all men, wherever they are in the world on water and on land, that they congregate on one day of the week."

Augustine: "The apostles have instituted the Lord's day in the stead of the sabbath of the Jews" (Epist. 3 ad Magn). "One ought to know that not only has this been commanded by our holy forefathers, but rather by God Himself: we must rest upon the Lord's day" (Serm. de Temp. 251).

Justin Martyr: "Upon the day which is called Sunday, an assembly of all takes place" (Orat. ad. Aut. P.). Chrysostom: "This doctrine God has already revealed to us from the beginning, teaching that in the rotation of one week, an entire day must be set apart and be used for spiritual work" (Gen. Hem. 10).

Constantinus Magus: In "Teste Eusebio in vita constantini," he gives this injunction: "Let the entire soul be occupied on that day with the service of God, and that men rest from the work of the market, from legal transactions, and from plying a trade" (lib. 4. 18). The first Christians were also very conscientious in hallowing the sabbath. As the sabbath was previously a sign that God sanctified the Jewish church and took her to Himself as a people, the sabbath was likewise such a sign among the first Christians. The heathen would lie in wait on that day to overtake the Christians, and if they had caught someone, the person was asked whether he had also observed the Lord's day. They would then answer resolutely that they were Christians who had observed the Lord's day with the proper religious zeal because one was not permitted to neglect the observance of this day.

Behold, there you have some evidence from the early churches. We can observe from this that they have celebrated the seventh day by divine ordinance. Now consider all this together. The seventh day has been instituted prior to the fall and has been commanded in the fourth commandment of the moral law -- of which neither jot nor tittle will pass away. Christ declares that the sabbath will endure after His time, and Christ, the apostles, and the early churches have observed the sabbath. How can anyone therefore reject this day with good conscience? Ought not everyone to be convinced of the eternal duration of the sabbath, be ashamed over his unsteadfastness and grieve over its desecration, and furthermore, be stirred up to a conscientious observance?

Various Objections Answered Objection #1: The Sabbath Does not Issue Forth from the Character of God

All commandments which are enduring moral rules, issue forth from the nature of God, are inherently virtuous, and have something of the image of God. These commandments are known from nature, obligate all men, and do not flow out of a voluntary institution which God can either command or not command. The sabbath, however, does not issue forth from the character of God,

has no inherent virtuousness, nor anything of the image of God. This commandment is of a temporal nature, is not known by way of nature, and is not an obligation for all men. Since the heathen have no knowledge of this commandment, they also do not sin in violating the sabbath, which was given to Israel only. It rather issues forth from a voluntary divine institution, so that God potentially could have not commanded the observance of the sabbath. Consequently, the commandment of the sabbath is not an enduring rule of life, nor does it pertain to us in the New Testament.

Answer: Both the first and second propositions are not logical, and rest upon unfounded thoughts proceeding from a darkened and corrupt intellect.

First, we deny the first proposition, for it is not founded upon God's Word and is nothing but imagination. Whether a commandment issues forth from the character of God, it being impossible for Him not to give the command, or a commandment issues forth out of pure sovereign good pleasure, so that He could either give or not give it -- in either case it is equally binding upon man.

Secondly, it is injurious to the sovereignty of God to suggest that He would neither be permitted nor be able to issue commands at will -- commands not necessarily flowing forth from His character -- as an eternal moral rule for the entire human race. His will must be sufficient for the creature; He is the sovereign Lawgiver. You -- whoever you may be -- do not begrudge Him His right.

Thirdly, the darkened nature of man does not understand why God's laws are appropriate under given circumstances for rational creatures. He therefore cannot judge the appropriateness of the laws which he but observes in an external sense, without penetrating to the very essence of them. He is also not acquainted with the character of God, and thus cannot judge what would flow forth from the character of God relative to a creature under given circumstances. It is intolerable to think that such an ignorant creature would have the audacity to summon God before him and demand a reason as to why He has given such and such a law, and that such a fool would dare to establish a rule by which it can be determined what is of eternal duration and what is not.

Fourthly, man's corrupt nature is also not acquainted with all the commandments of the eternal moral law. Paul says concerning the tenth commandment: "For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7). One must make a distinction between the holy and the corrupt nature. We who are darkness do not know what a holy nature would teach us. Man's corrupt nature cannot judge in this, and is thus not the touchstone whereby commandments are to be examined. It furthermore suffices that God has placed the human race under obligation by way of a commandment. Irrespective of whether man has lost that knowledge through carelessness or still has that knowledge, it obligates him just the same.

Fifthly, man, in observing the commandments, must focus upon the will of God. If he then but perceives that the sovereign Lawgiver has commanded this and that it is His will that he do this, this ought to be sufficient for man, "... doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6). The second proposition is abominable: The sabbath does not issue forth from the character of God, does not inherently have any virtue or anything of the image of God, cannot be known by way of nature, has been given to Israel only, and is only a positive command which God can either give or take away. Since the first proposition does not agree with the truth, it is immaterial whether the

sabbath is a necessary or voluntary command. One need but perceive whether or not we have been commanded to do so. In particular, it should first be stated that to say that the sabbath does not flow forth from the character of God is more easily said than proven. Our corrupt nature cannot be our judge in this respect. If you maintain that it pertains but to a limited time frame, I answer that this is invalid. It pertains to a holy rest at a given time, as God has exemplified this by designating His doings to be an example to be followed by us. And why would it not be possible that the circumstance of time be moral in nature, as well as the circumstances of persons or matters? And if the sabbath did not flow forth from the character of God (which we do not admit), then what? The sabbath can still therefore be both enduring and moral in nature. The will of God obligates man.

Secondly, we deny that the sabbath does not inherently have some virtue and something of the image of God in it. It is virtuous to hallow the sabbath for it is the doing of the will of God. Obedience to this commandment belongs to the image of God, for it is a loving acquiescence with the will of God -- yes, it is an act of imitation of and conformity to God, for God has rested upon the seventh day and has therefore given us that day in order that we would follow His example (Exodus 20:11). We are under obligation to be "followers of God, as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1).

Thirdly, it is an invalid argument that the sabbath cannot be known from nature. (1) Furthermore this is no reason to remove a commandment from the moral law. (2) We cannot maintain that man's holy nature would not have instructed him about the sabbath. We believe that man's holy nature, being acquainted with the example of God, would have been instructed to observe the sabbath as well as the other commandments. Man's corrupt nature knows very little of the spirituality of the moral law, except for some external and broad issues, thus excusing it.

(3) The heathen have already spent much time in celebrating special days -- yes, they are even acquainted with the seventh day.

Fourthly, we deny that the sabbath has been given to Israel only. It was given to the church, which at that time existed within the seed of Israel. However, it had previously been given to Adam and thus to all men.

Evasive Argument: Something is stated in this commandment, however, which can only have reference to Israel. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt ... therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15).

Answer: One must make a distinction between the commandment and its circumstantial application. The first is always the same, but the second can be changed time and again. For if one were to conclude from the fact that the circumstantial application pertains to Israel alone, that then the entire commandment pertained to them only, by way of the same conclusion, one would then have to conclude that the entire law is not applicable to us due to the preamble which is applicable to Israel alone. The argument stated there -- which is here advanced in Deuteronomy 5:15 -- is the same: the deliverance from Egypt and from the house of bondage. One could thus conclude in like fashion that the fifth commandment also does not pertain to us, there being a promise which only pertained to Canaan (and thus Israel). Nevertheless, both the entire law and the fifth commandment are moral (Ephesians 6:2).

Objection #2: The Sabbath Is Part of the Ceremonial Law

"Moreover also I gave them My sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them" (Ezekiel 20:12).

(1) It appears that God, having declared the giving of institutions and judgments -- which if a man do, he will live thereby -- says subsequently: "For that purpose I gave them My sabbaths," thereby indicating that the sabbath is of a different nature than the other institutions.

(2) The sabbath is called a sign here, and it is thus a reflection and shadow of Christ. Consequently, the sabbath belongs to the ceremonial law and is presently not a rule of life for us.

Answer: This is contrary to their own proposition, for according to their own exposition they understand the ordinances to be ceremonial laws, and if then the word *wagam* (= and moreover) were to indicate that the sabbaths were of a different nature, then the sabbaths would have a moral connotation. However, we shall answer the matter as follows:

First, the word *wagam* (= and moreover) has as its primary meaning "and also," so that the word "moreover" must be understood in such a sense as meaning "and also." This does not constitute a contradiction, as if the one would be of a different nature than the other. Rather, it frequently indicates that two or three matters are being joined together, without there being an implication of the joining of natures. Such is the case in the following passages: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalms 14:3); "And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also wept" (Genesis 50:17-18); "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord ... I will go also" (Zechariah 8:21). Everyone can readily perceive that the little word "also" does not imply a contradiction of nature, but rather an enlargement of what has preceded. Thus, also here the words "moreover," "or," and "also" imply as much as, "I have given you My ordinances and judgments, and more specifically my sabbaths." The seventh-day sabbath belongs as much to the law -- which Stephen calls the living oracles in Acts 7:38 -- as the other commandments. It is expressly stated concerning the sabbath that, "the eunuchs that keep My sabbaths ... even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 56:4-5). Furthermore, we read in Isaiah 58:13-14, "If thou ... call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable ... then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." It is thus evident that there can be no contradiction here between ordinances and judgments (life being attainable through them) and the seventh-day sabbath -- implying that life could not be obtained through it. Thus, a contradiction can neither be deduced from the word "sabbath," nor from the subject matter under consideration.

Thirdly, it is also evident that the reference is not to the weekly sabbath. It is generally referred to as sabbath, whereas the ceremonial ordinances are referred to as sabbaths. And even if they have the name in common, they are not equal in nature. Arguments would thus have to be presented that the weekly sabbath must also be comprehended in this. As far as the second objection is concerned, namely, that the sabbath is called a sign, this will readily disappear if one notes, first of all, that the entire moral law is also referred to as a sign. "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand" (Deuteronomy 6:8). Divine plagues are also referred to as a sign: "And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder" (Deuteronomy 28:46). Isaiah -- as is true for other prophets as well -- is likewise referred to as a sign. "Like as My servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia" (Isaiah

20:3). The Lord Jesus Himself is also referred to as a sign: "This child is set ... for a sign which shall be spoken against" (Luke 2:34). The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit are also referred to as signs. "And these signs shall follow them that believe" (Mark 16:17). A sign does not always refer to something future, but also to something in the present. "Show me a token (or sign) for good" (Psalms 86:17). From all these texts it is sufficiently evident that all that is referred to as a sign is not necessarily a ceremony or shadow pointing to Christ, nor does it necessarily signify something in the future. It is expressly indicated here that this sign symbolizes a current matter: "a sign ... that I am the Lord that sanctify them."

Secondly, one matter can have many objectives. By stating one objective, one is thereby not negating another objective. Something which existed previously, but did not function as a sign, can become a sign of something while preserving its original function. Thus, the rainbow, which already existed previously, became a sign of the covenant established with Noah (Genesis 9:12). Such is also true for the sabbath, which already had been given to Adam. This day, while preserving its moral nature, could indeed become a sign, when God -- upon the entire world becoming ungodly -- took a people unto Himself from all nations. It was a sign that they were God's people and that it would be recognized by the observance of the sabbath, for sabbath-observance is very noticeable. It is the most unique and public of all religious observances.

Objection #3: The Sabbath was Abolished by Christ

"For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matthew 12:8). It appears that Christ defends His disciples as far as picking corn was concerned, by giving them liberty to do this on the sabbath. Since He was Lord of the sabbath, He thus showed that He was abolishing the sabbath. Or else man has been designated as lord of the sabbath and may do with this day as pleases him.

Answer: First, there is not one word which implies abolition. Simply because someone is lord of something does not mean that he therefore does away with it; rather, he preserves, uses, and governs it. Secondly, this is not a case of sabbath-desecration, for it was indeed permitted on the sabbath to walk through the field, to pick ears, to rub them in the hands, and to eat the kernels of grain. It was but a superstition of the Jews to consider this to be unlawful. This is evident from Matthew 12:3; Matthew 12:5, where we read, "Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?" Thirdly, if the sabbath were a type of Christ in the grave, then it could not have been abolished here, for the antitype had not yet been fulfilled. Fourthly, Christ Himself observed the sabbath: "And he came to Nazareth ... and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day" (Luke 4:16). Fifthly, Christ taught His disciples to pray that after His death no discomfort would befall them on the sabbath (Matthew 24:20). Sixthly, Christ thus wished to say hereby that He, as the Lord of the sabbath, knew the right meaning of the sabbath and was able to explain it.

We shall respond to the second objection as follows:

(1) It was Christ's common manner of speech to call Himself the Son of Man. Having referred to Himself by the one nature, He ascribes to Himself that which belongs to the essence of His other nature. It is He to whom the Father has given "authority to execute judgment also, because he is

the Son of man" (John 5:27). Thus, "the Son of Man" must be understood as a reference to Christ Himself, rather than to every man.

(2) By way of the Son of man the reference was to the entire human race, and thus the sabbath was given to the entire human race, and it is consequently a moral commandment which pertains to all men.

(3) To go a step further, if "the Son of man" signifies the Jews -- although such is contrary to Scripture and reason -- even if this were so, then what? Being the lords of the sabbath, they therefore could act as they wished. Then they would not have sinned if they transgressed the sabbath -- also not prior to that time. If this were understood as referring to the disciples who as lords would have abolished the sabbath, the type would have been removed prior to the coming of the anti-type or the fulfillment.

(4) There is here therefore only a defense of the fact that the disciples had not sinned, and that the plucking and eating of ears upon the sabbath was lawful. Even though it was not permitted without due cause, it would nevertheless be no sin here, since there was due cause, and it would be as much as to say that when those two come into conflict -- man and the sabbath -- injury must be done to one of the two. Either man would have to do something to the deliverance of another man, which, apart from this case, would not be lawful on the sabbath, or that person would have to perish. In such a case the deliverance of the person must have precedence and the sabbath must yield. Man is superior to the sabbath and mercy must have precedence over the sacrifice (Matthew 12:7) -- and thus nothing is stated contrary to the sabbath.

Objection #4: The Sabbath Is Detrimental to the Gospel

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it" (Romans 14:5-6); "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Galatians 4:10-11); "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17). The difficulty which would present itself in these texts is this: It seems as if the distinction of days is removed so that one may not judge another about this. Furthermore, it appears that the keeping of days is detrimental to the gospel, and thus there neither is a sabbath in the New Testament nor may it be observed.

Answer: First, these texts cannot be used as an argument against the sabbath if one maintains that there is still a moral element in the fourth commandment, even though there was merely an obligation to set apart some time for public worship (irrespective of what time this may be and to what extent one may do so). This implies a distinction of time, even if it were but every twentieth day, if it were but a half day or some hours. Thus, according to that presupposition, these texts do not speak of a distinction between times or days which is enjoined in the fourth commandment -- and that is the point in question. And thus in harmony with the sentiments of the opponents themselves, these texts cannot be advanced as an argument against the sabbath.

Secondly, it is a well-known truth that the apostles commanded the churches everywhere to observe the Lord's day (refer to the above). It is common knowledge that there was neither any

contention concerning that day, nor was there any intent to force or eradicate the observance of this day contrary to the wishes of the apostles. It is thus evident when the apostle, in the texts mentioned, opposes those who wished to introduce the observance of days, that he does not have the Lord's day in view, and that no one in the first congregations had any such thoughts as far as this day was concerned. Rather, everyone understood very well that the apostle did not speak of this day, but of other Jewish ceremonial days. If, however, the apostle does not speak in these texts of the Lord's day, one can neither make use of them to prevent the observance of the Lord's day, for one would thus miss the point of the question completely, which is: Ought one to observe the seventh day, which is the sabbath, and is called the Lord's day?

Evasive Argument: These texts are presented, not to prevent the observance of the Lord's day, but to demonstrate that one is not to observe this day by virtue of some divine commandment, and that we observe it only as an institution of men.

Answer: If the apostle does not speak of the Lord's day at all, then he also does not say whether it is to be observed either by virtue of a divine commandment or a human institution. Thus, neither proposition can be confirmed or refuted by these texts. The apostle is referring to the Jewish ceremonial days, so that one would first have to prove that the seventh day -- the sabbath or the Day of the Lord -- is a ceremony and shadow. Only then can one produce these texts in order to refute the observance of the sabbath. To maintain, however, that the apostle forbids the observance of ceremonial days, and that the sabbath is consequently ceremonial, is an invalid conclusion.

Thirdly, if all distinction between days had been forbidden here, the apostles could not have instituted the Lord's day. The church would then also not be able to either institute or observe the Lord's day, prayer days, or days of thanksgiving, as the distinction of days of which Paul speaks in this text is harmful to the gospel. Such observance would thus be contrary to the command of the apostles, and would be such will-worship as is condemned in Matthew 15:9. Indeed, since the distinction of foods is here placed on the same level with the distinction of days, the former being a sign of the antichrist and a doctrine of devils -- "commanding to abstain from meats" (1 Timothy 4:3) -- then the institution of the distinction of days (if the apostle were condemning this in a general sense) would lean greatly in that direction. It is thus very evident that the apostle does not speak in a general sense against the observance of times and days, but he speaks against the observance of Jewish and ceremonial days. One can thus not conclude that the distinction of days, and thus also the sabbath has ceased. And as long as one has not proven that the observance of the sabbath or the Lord's day (by virtue of God's command) is Jewish and ceremonial, one may not advance these texts as an argument against it. If, however, such were the case, only then would they be applicable, and not any earlier.

Fourthly, if we may not judge each other in the observance of this day -- indeed, if those were the strongest in the faith who do not observe such a day and if such observance were injurious to the gospel -- then no one is under obligation. Yes, the best thing to do would be to work on the Lord's day and let those go to church who wish to do so. However, no one will admit to that. It is thus evident that these texts are not general, but refer to the Jewish ceremonial days. However, then they do not pertain to the question whether or not the Lord's day should be observed by virtue of God's command or by virtue of human institution; for this is an entirely different question. We

readily subscribe to and contend for the interpretation that the apostle speaks of Jewish ceremonial days, and that they may not be instituted again. What proof does this yield, however, in opposition to the sabbath of the fourth commandment, which had already been instituted prior to the fall (Genesis 2:1-25)? The proof derived from these texts is thus: The Jewish days must be abolished and consequently the sabbath must be abolished. The Jewish days are ceremonial in nature and thus the sabbath is ceremonial. Who cannot see that such a conclusion is invalid? One would first have to determine that the sabbath is Jewish and ceremonial and then conclude that it must be abolished. However, the first cannot be proven from these texts, as we have demonstrated. Let us now consider each text in particular. As far as Romans 14:5-6 is concerned, the question is whether the observance of all days should be tolerated. The believers among the Gentiles (who constituted the church) understood correctly that one was not bound to the Jewish days, and that the distinction of foods had also ceased. The weak believers among the Jews, who had joined themselves to the congregation, understood indeed that the ceremonies were to be eliminated, for they confessed that Christ had already come; however, they deemed that the Jewish days still had to be religiously observed, and that one as yet was not permitted to eat all foods. The believers among the Gentiles could not tolerate this. Paul exhorts that for the time being one must bear with those who are weak, and that the ceremonial days were not observed in a ceremonial sense, but engaged in as religious exercises. They would thus observe them unto the Lord, which could be tolerated for some time. The Jews, in turn, had to tolerate that the Gentiles did not observe these days. Thus, this text does not apply in the least to the Lord's day, that is, the sabbath.

Let us consider Galatians 4:10-11. Rather than tolerating the weak believers among the Jews (Romans 14:1-23), the apostle does not want it to be tolerated that the Jews would forcefully defend the entire ceremonial service (and thus also the Jewish days), reintroduce it, and compel others to do likewise, as the Jews attempted to do (cf. Galatians 3:1, etc; Galatians 4:9). That which can be tolerated in someone who himself is weak but quiet, cannot be tolerated when someone becomes bold thereby and forces his errors upon others. Not one word is mentioned here as to whether the sabbath is either ceremonial or moral, or whether it ought to be abolished or remain in force. In these general answers it has now been demonstrated that these texts are not to be interpreted in a general sense, and that from a general proposition concerning all Jewish days nothing can be concluded in opposition to the sabbath.

Evasive Argument: This must be understood as a reference to all the holy days of the Jews -- even of the weekly sabbath. Mention is made here of years (to which belonged the seventh year and the year of jubilee), and of times, which are the three solemn feast days Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. It also mentions months (which are the new moons), and days, which can be nothing else but the seventh day, that is, the sabbath.

Answer: First, it must be proven that the apostle understood by these words the feast days mentioned. Secondly, even if it were admitted that it refers to years, months, and times, it nevertheless does not follow that one must understand "days" to refer to the sabbath of the fourth commandment -- unless they, in addition to the times mentioned (years, months, and seventh day) had no other days. However, they had other high-days in addition to those, as is to be observed in Leviticus 23:1-44 and will soon be demonstrated from Colossians 2:1-23. The other feast days were of the same nature as those times, years, and months. Thus, by reason of the mention of

"days" here, it does not follow that the sabbath must be counted among them. Since the seventh-day sabbath is, however, not of the same nature as the other days, but is moral, and is advantageous rather than detrimental to the gospel, it is evident that the apostle does not speak of the sabbath here. Add to this the answers given to the general questions.

Let us consider Colossians 2:16-17. In order to understand this text, it must first be noted that the Jews had many sabbaths. There were the fifteenth day of the first month (Leviticus 23:2-7), the last day of the Passover, and in Leviticus 23:21 yet another feast day is mentioned. Furthermore, there are the first day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:27-28), the tenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:27-28), and the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:36). All of these were ceremonial in nature. In addition to these there was, however, one which already had been there from the beginning, and which has been commanded in the fourth commandment of the moral law. This sabbath was of an entirely different nature; it was of a moral nature.

Secondly, matters of a different nature may have the same name. Judas the traitor and Jude, the author of a powerful epistle, have identical names. In Dutch these two names are identical in spelling. Nevertheless it may not be said of both what is said of Judas. One may thus also not say of all sabbaths what is said of the sabbath, for they are distinct. There are ceremonial sabbaths -- which bear the name sabbath together with the moral sabbath, due to having rest as a common focus -- as well as the moral sabbath.

Thirdly, an unrestricted manner of speech may not be made applicable to all matters which bear a given name; rather, one must limit himself to the subject matter under discussion. This will be understood by every intelligent person. In order to demonstrate this to the inexperienced, however, let us take note of this text. The words "food" and "drink" are used here in the same unrestricted sense as the word "sabbaths." It can readily be understood, however, that under the words "food" and "drink" not all food and drink must be comprehended, even though it bears the name of food and drink. Rather, it only refers to that food and drink in question, which are not vegetables, bread, etc., but the foods forbidden in the ceremonial law, which the apostle gives them the liberty to use. Once more, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3). One may not conclude from this that he ought to keep the ceremonial laws in the New Testament merely because they bear the name of commandments. Rather, one must understand this to refer to the commandments which are now in force. And thus there are numerous texts in which unrestricted usage must be interpreted according to the context, and it must not be extended to all that bears that name. If you apply this rule to the word "sabbaths," the difficulty will have been removed. In the Old Testament there were many sabbaths. Matters of a different nature do bear the same name. From an unrestricted manner of speech one may not make applications to all that bears that name. This being irrefutable, it is likewise irrefutable that one may not come to the conclusion that the seventh-day sabbath has been abolished simply because the apostle uses the word "sabbaths" in an unrestricted sense. Rather, one must apply this to those sabbaths which are of one and the same nature as food and drink, that is, which were ceremonial and typical, as is to be observed in Leviticus 23:17. One may thus not conclude that the seventh-day sabbath is a shadow merely because there are food, drink, feast days, and sabbaths which are shadows.

Fourthly, it can readily be observed that it is not the apostle's intention to prove what is typical and what is not, but rather what needs to be abolished due to being typical. Among them he mentions

the sabbaths, but neither does he say "all sabbaths" or "such and such a sabbath," for it is evident to which sabbaths he refers here. It is likewise understood which sabbath he did not refer to, since the seventh-day sabbath was observed by the congregation, and there was no question concerning this. One ought therefore first to prove that the weekly sabbath belonged to the shadows, and then this text will be applicable as far as abolishing the sabbath is concerned.

Fifthly, consider furthermore that it reads "sabbaths," and not "sabbath," since the seventh-day sabbath is generally referred to in God's Word by the singular form "sabbath"; if "sabbaths" occurs, then it occurs due to the continual repetition of every seventh day. It also needs to be considered that Paul is not speaking here to Jews who were external to the church, so that Christians would be contrasted with Jews and he was thus rebuking their religion, but to those who were within the church and by whom the weekly sabbath, also called the Lord's day, was observed.

Objection #5: The Sabbath is Typical of the New Testament Dispensation

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:1-11). The apparent strength of the argument lies herein:

(1) The rest which remains is understood to be the deliverance from the ceremonial law, and thus represents the New Testament dispensation.

(2) This rest -- said to be the New Testament dispensation -- was depicted by God's rest on the seventh day and by the rest in Canaan.

(3) Since the New Testament dispensation is now upon us, the seventh day -- being a shadow which no longer exists -- has been entirely eliminated. Answer: First, these texts cannot be advanced by those who hold to some moral dimension in the fourth commandment, and who consider the continuation of a day of worship a necessity. For this text absolutely denies the seventh day and all rest -- except the other rest which yet remains.

Secondly, we absolutely deny that by "the rest which remaineth" is understood the abrogation of the ceremonies, that is, to the New Testament dispensation.

Neither in the matter itself nor in the text is there the least proof; instead, heaven is understood by this.

(1) Each and everyone whom the apostle addresses here (also unbelievers) was already discharged from the ceremonial law. Christ had already abolished all shadows and thus all would then enjoy this rest. Nevertheless, the apostle declares that no one but true believers and all the people of God shall enter into this rest which remains.

(2) The apostle exhorts the godly -- who already had been delivered from the ceremonies -- that they should give diligence to enter into this rest which yet remains and is yet in the future for God's people.

Thirdly, the apostle here speaks of such a rest of which they also who lived in the Old Testament could become partakers if they believed, and from which they were deprived by nothing other than unbelief (Hebrews 4:2). Thus, this rest is not a discharge from ceremonies, but something else which one could obtain while partaking of the ceremonies, and which one, due to unbelief, could come short of subsequent to having partaken of the ceremonies, that is, come short of heaven.

Fourthly, we deny at the same time that the New Testament dispensation was typified by the rest in Canaan and by the rest of the seventh day. For 1) God's Word states this neither here nor elsewhere. 2) To designate God's rest on the seventh day as being typical of the New Testament dispensation, and of the abolition of the ceremonies of the Old Testament -- which must necessarily be maintained by those who wish to advance this text contrary to the sabbath -- is without proof, too farfetched, and too brazen an assertion. Since the seventh day existed prior to the fall, it could be no ceremony of something which points to Christ and the New Testament dispensation. It is thus evident that the seventh day was not a depiction of the days of the New Testament.

Fifthly, the apostle demonstrates here that neither Canaan nor the sabbath was the true rest, but that believers must have a different rest in view -- a rest which they as yet did not possess: the eternal rest in heaven, which believing souls would enjoy as soon as they depart from this life. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). This blessed rest is declared by the gospel to both the church of the Old Testament and also now in the days of the New Testament (Hebrews 4:2, etc.).

Objection #6: The Sabbath Is to Be Observed on the Seventh Day Following Six Workdays

If the fourth commandment were to belong to the moral law -- and thus be binding upon us -- then the seventh day after creation ought to be celebrated. However, not this day but rather the first day of the week is celebrated.

Answer: To remove the burden of this difficulty, the following matters ought to be noted. First, in one and the same commandment various things which belong to each other can be commanded, yet in such a manner that the focus is primarily upon one matter. The others being subservient to this are commanded as well. For example, a government commands a specific individual to pay certain taxes on a given day. Three matters are commanded there: the time, the tax, and who will receive them. Everyone can perceive, however, that the tax is the primary issue, even though the other two injunctions must also be obeyed. Such is also the case here. Time and matter are commanded in the fourth commandment, that is, holy rest and the seventh day to that end. The holy rest has the primary position in the commandment. "Remember (not the seventh day, but) the

sabbath day to keep it holy." The time is indicated subsequent to this: "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord." These two may not be separated; nevertheless the holy rest is of primary importance.

Secondly, there is no mystery concealed in the moment as to when the seventh day after creation occurs, for when God commanded the human race in Paradise to hallow the seventh day, it would have been impossible for all men occupying the globe to begin the sabbath at the very same hour. It must have differed as much as twelve hours. Thus, when the one part of the world began and observed its sabbath, the other part was still permitted to work twelve hours, and whereas the other portion was finished and had again begun to work, the other was still observing the sabbath. For when it is day for one portion of the world, it is night for the opposite portion. We also know that during the time of Joshua there was a week which was approximately twenty-four or twelve hours longer, and thus an entire day longer than other weeks (Joshua 10:13). Consequently, all sabbaths subsequent to this came twenty-four or twelve hours later than the previous sabbaths. It also has never created a problem for the dispersed Jewish church that the one began and finished the sabbath a few hours earlier than the other, this being contingent upon whether they were dispersed toward the east or toward the west. We thus observe that there is no mysterious element in the moment itself -- be there a difference of twelve hours -- and that such can occur while the matter itself remains in force in its entirety.

Thirdly, one must make a distinction between the commandments and the circumstances surrounding the commandments. The circumstances indeed change, but the matter nevertheless remains.

(1) For example, the second commandment dictates the manner of worship. However, in the Old Testament God wanted to be served by external elements, as being shadows. God abolished this entire method in the New Testament and replaced it by an invisible manner of worship -- without this ceremonial framework -- although the commandment remained in force. This change is significantly greater than the continuation of some hours. Even though it is not expressed in the commandment, it is a known fact that the ceremonial laws, in regard to their foundation, must be related to the second commandment.

(2) Once more, the fifth commandment promises a long life in Canaan; this only was applicable among the Jews. God abolishes this in the New Testament and replaces Canaan by everyone's residence (Ephesians 6:3), and thus the commandment remains in full force. One must therefore in the fourth commandment also make a distinction between the matter which is commanded, and the attending circumstances. Likewise also here the matter itself can be preserved, even though there is some continuation of some hours, or of one day.

Fourthly, one must strictly observe this commandment and neither add or take away anything, due to prejudice, nor give anything a different meaning. If we thus approach the fourth commandment, we shall find there the injunction, application, and argument for observance. The injunction is: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God." Not a word is mentioned here of the seventh day in the order of creation, but only of the seventh day which follows after six workdays. However, how will one know which seventh day? Is it a matter of indifference? Is this left to the freedom of each man? No. God had already made known since Adam that He wanted the seventh day

observed (consistent with the order of creation) -- which is to be observed from the reason added to this commandment. Thus, this attending circumstance of the seventh day as being in precise harmony with the sequence of creation does not belong to the essence of the commandment. If God thus causes the commandment to remain in force -- that is, the hallowing of the seventh day -- and He changes something in the attending circumstance which preserves the holiness and the hallowing of the seventh day; and if by the advancement of some hours on a given day it no longer is the seventh day in chronological order from creation, no change occurs in the essence of the commandment, but only to a small degree in the circumstances. However, God has indeed advanced the sabbath by one day, so that the sabbath is no longer the seventh day from creation in a chronological sense, but it nevertheless remains the seventh day which follows six workdays. This change has not come about by human initiative, but by the initiative of Christ and His apostles. This is first of all evident from Christ's appearance on that day to His gathered disciples and the repetition thereof on the subsequent first days of the week. We do not read of an express institution here, but it shows, nevertheless, that since the resurrection of Christ, the first day of the week has been observed according to the reckoning of the Jews.

Secondly, consider furthermore the ordinances of the apostles -- who were moved by the Holy Spirit -- and of Christ who instructed them in the forty days prior to His ascension in those things which they were not able to bear prior to that. Consider also the continual practice of the church during the apostolic age, as is to be observed in Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow." Why is mention made here of the day, that is, of the first day of the week? Why did the church gather on this given day and celebrate the Lord's Supper? Why is it recorded that Paul preached on that day? Why is it added that he was ready to depart on the morrow? This confirms that the sabbath was observed on the first day of the week.

Consider furthermore 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 : "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Why was it the first day of the week? Why were alms gathered then? Does not this again clearly indicate that the sabbath was the first day of the week, and that the work pertaining to the sabbath had to be performed? By what other argument and on what other basis did they observe this day, except the institution of Christ commanded to His disciples, be it orally or by His Holy Spirit? For the apostles would not have tolerated any human institutions.

Add to this Revelation 1:10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Observe again how this day is acknowledged. But why is it called "the Lord's Day"? This is so because the Lord has instituted it. For the same reason it is called the sabbath of the Lord, and the Holy Supper is called the table of the Lord. It is also suggested that this day is called the Lord's day because Christ arose from the dead on that day. To this I reply that the matter is indeed true, for the first day of the week is indeed the day of Christ's resurrection. It will never be proven, however, that the apostle focuses only on this in the text. This manner of speech, in harmony with God's Word, points to its institution.

Thirdly, consider also the continual and common use of this day from the resurrection of Christ until this day -- as recounted in the foregoing. From all this it is evident that the change of this day

is not a human but a divine institution. It therefore remains unchangeable, and not a single specific church has had the heart to change that day.

Evasive Argument: Should not the change in the New Testament have been conveyed by an express command?

Answer: We have no right to give God directions. If we did not wish to adhere to this commandment, and did not understand its meaning due to our blindness, would God then be obligated to give us that command by renewal, doing so with words which we ourselves would formulate? That one commandment ought to be sufficient for you, for it is not a new commandment, but only a change in circumstances. Thus, if you presently do not observe the sabbath, you are transgressing the commandment. If there is a sabbath, would you then desire any other day except the day which Christ and His disciples have observed and imposed upon the church -- this being confirmed by the practice of the church for a duration of seventeen hundred years?

Question However, what is the reason for the change of this day?

Answer: It is foolishness to demand a reason from the sovereign Lawgiver. If His commandment is not sufficient for you, no reason will satisfy you. In the entire New Testament I observe a very great change in the entire manner of worship. I observe that the Redeemer of the world has risen on the first day of the week. I observe that by the observance of the first day of the week the church is separated from the Jews, Muslims, and heathen. I observe that thereby the entire Jewish religion stands condemned, and that the heathen ought to be convicted of their ungodliness. This suffices for me and ought to be satisfactory to everyone.

Objection #7: The Sabbath is a Ceremony Typifying Spiritual Worship Would it not be possible to say that we ought to observe the sabbath in the New Testament by reason of the fourth commandment, doing so because it is a ceremony -- the ceremonies being examples of the spiritual worship of the New Testament? Does not the fourth commandment obligate us in that respect to a spiritual rest and a public glorification of God?

Answer: From every angle this objection is fraught with errors and absurdities.

(1) If one maintains and teaches that we must observe the sabbath by reason of the fourth commandment, and one keeps silent about his perception as to the manner in which this is to be understood, he is deceitful by way of *aequivocatio*, or allusion, for he appears to be orthodox, whereas his sentiments are entirely to the contrary.

(2) One establishes a false foundation, namely, that the fourth commandment is ceremonial. It is, however, entirely moral in nature and literally has nothing ceremonial or typical in it, which we have demonstrated comprehensively. The foundation being contrary to truth, all that is built upon this argument is contrary to truth.

(3) It is also untrue that the ceremonies of the Old Testament are exemplary of the spiritual worship of the New Testament. We are entirely and completely free from the ceremonial law, and are under no obligation to it in any part or in any respect. The ceremonies were typical examples of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, and have been fulfilled and abrogated in Him. One can indeed learn many things from the ceremonies about God, Christ, and the duties of true partakers

of the covenant, and cause them to bear upon us by way of application, "for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Romans 15:4); however, they do not place us under obligation. Not the ceremonial law, but the moral law is our rule -- our perfect rule. Only the moral law obligates us to all that is spiritual and to all that must be performed by us; we must live according to that law and not according to the ceremonial law.

(4) To maintain that, by reason of the fourth commandment, we must observe the sabbath in such a sense, is to fully subject us who are in the New Testament to the ceremonies again by observing them from the very beginning. For every ceremony would then obligate us to such and such a spiritual duty -- whatever one can deduce by way of application. The duty can be good, but the efficacy which obligates us proceeds from the moral law; or else, it would again become touch not and taste not.

055. Chapter 50: The Fifth Commandment

----- CHAPTER FIFTY ----- The Fifth Commandment The entire law is love, and this love has two objects -- God and our neighbor. Therefore there are two tables of the law. We have discussed the first table in the previous four chapters, and we shall now proceed to discuss the second table. The first commandment of this table pertains to the relationship between superiors and subordinates. We must note here the commandment and the incentive. The commandment pertains first of all to the subject and subsequently to the work or the duty related to that subject. The Full Scope of the Words "Father" and "Mother" The subject is expressed by the words father and mother. Various persons are denominated as such and likewise various individuals are comprehended under the words "father and mother" -- that is, within the family, church, and civil state.

Within the family circle there are fathers and mothers of different rank.

(1) There are natural parents relative to children whom they have begotten. This pertains not only to the father, but also to the mother, and thus to both of them without distinction -- whether rich or poor, of a high or low station in life, good or evil, or young or old. "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old" (Proverbs 23:22). Yes, in order that the mother (who generally and more readily receives less esteem) be not despised, she is at times mentioned before the father. "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father" (Leviticus 19:3). They are both comprehended under the word "parents." "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1).

(2) There are grandfathers and grandmothers and earlier ancestors (Numbers 2:34).

(3) There are stepfathers and stepmothers who support and maintain children. In this capacity Joseph is called the father of the Lord Jesus (Luke 2:48; Luke 2:51).

(4) There are fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law. Jethro was such as far as Moses was concerned (Exodus 18:17; Exodus 18:24; Exodus 18:27), and Naomi in regard to Ruth (Ruth 3:1).

(5) This is true for the husband in reference to his wife, for he is her lord (cf. Genesis 18:12; Psalms 45:11).

(6) This is true for uncles and aunts, particularly when they have taken the place of deceased parents. To this also belong guardians, and those who have adopted someone to be their child -- as Mordecai did with his cousin Esther (Esther 2:7).

(7) This pertains to masters in regard to their servants. In the church the following are comprehended under fathers:

(1) the ministers; in this respect Elisha called Elijah his father (2 Kings 2:12), the king of Israel called Elijah his father (2 Kings 6:21), and Paul calls himself a father of the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:15);

(2) the elders are the coregents, protectors, and caretakers of the church and therefore worthy of double honor (1 Timothy 5:17);

(3) the deacons are as fathers to the poor, collect that which is needed for their support, and distribute according to everyone's need. In civil relationships the following are comprehended as fathers:

(1) The governments--at the highest as well as the lowest levels, each according to his rank. The word "father" is therefore mentioned in association with their name--such as, Abimelech, my father the king. David thus called Saul his father (1 Samuel 24:11), and Deborah called herself a mother in Israel (Judges 5:7).

(2) The elderly and prominent in reference to those that are young and of a low station. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man" (Leviticus 19:32); "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father ... the elder women as mothers" (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

(3) It pertains to school teachers, master craftsmen, and women, and furthermore, all who function in some relationship with others as superiors and subordinates. Whoever you may be, you are subject to some relationship; or else you are in some respect in either a superior or subordinate position to others. This either has been the case, or is presently true. Call to mind how you have behaved yourself in this respect and what is as yet required from you. The required action toward the subjects is expressed by the word to honor, which implies the duties of superiors to subordinates and of subordinates to superiors. We shall deal with each individually and then make a contrast with the forbidden vices of each party. The Virtues to which Superiors are Enjoined The virtues of superiors toward subordinates are: First, to maintain the station in which God has placed each person, to preserve respect in all dignity, and to adorn this station. "When I went out to the gate ... the young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up" (Job 29:7-8).

Secondly, tender love must be manifested in all their governing, so that it will become manifest that all is executed in a good-natured and loving manner toward the subordinates.

Thirdly, there must be a good example toward others who are in a superior position in order to teach subordinates how they must conduct themselves toward their superiors, so that one may be able to say: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Fourthly, there must be a concern for the well-being of one's subordinates in regard to soul and body, knowing that the superiors are there for the subordinates. The king is there for his subjects, the minister for the congregation, the school teacher for the children, and the master craftsman for the laborers. The subordinates also exist, however, for the benefit of the superiors, thereby upholding them in their station, which in turn is to the benefit of the subordinates. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith" (1 Timothy 5:8); "... the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children" (2 Corinthians 12:14).

Fifthly, the subordinates must be instructed, exhorted, rebuked, and if necessary, be punished in order to mend their ways and preserve them. "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4); "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth

him betimes" (Proverbs 13:24).

Sixthly, the weaknesses of subordinates must be overlooked and patiently endured; the heart may not be withdrawn from them for this reason. "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Malachi 3:17). The Virtues Enjoined of Subordinates The virtues of subordinates to superiors are the following: First, they must be honored. This includes:

(1) Having respect for superiors as having been placed over them by God. "Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thessalonians 5:13).

(2) Subjection to them as being subject to God. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God (Romans 13:1).

(3) The obligation of paying homage to them in words and gestures, doing so either by bowing, the uncovering of one's head, or in a different manner -- all according to the custom of the land.

Secondly, they must be loved -- not only as fellow men, but also relative to that relationship. Even if the person is not lovable and behaves himself unworthy of either love or esteem, he must nevertheless be loved in that relationship as having been placed over us. It is the ordinance of God to love them -- it pleases God, and it is also very beneficial.

Thirdly, there must be faithfulness in maintaining the relationship to the superior in all that this relationship mandates.

(1) As much as possible, we as subordinates must preserve their belongings and give diligence that they be not wasted due to our carelessness.

(2) We must render every service which this relationship toward the superior requires. "Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity" (Titus 2:10).

(3) We must support our superiors according to our ability or as far as the relationship obligates us to do so. "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents" (1 Timothy 5:4). David did this (1 Samuel 22:3), as well as the Lord Jesus (John 19:26).

(4) We must promote the honor of our superiors, and not tolerate their being despised. Fourthly, we must obey them; that is, comply with their orders and diligently execute them. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Proverbs 1:8); "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh" (Colossians 3:22). This is not only true when their government is gentle and good-natured (as it ought to be), but also when they are froward and cruel. If superiors commit evil, they are accountable. The subordinate must, however, be obedient -- not only because this is right and desirable, but also because the superior demands this, his injunction being regulative for the subordinate. "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" (1 Peter 2:18). There is only the following exception: If they command what is contrary to God's law, one may not obey them. Then the direction of Peter is in force: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19).

Fifthly, we must have patience with their weaknesses. They are people, and for the most part are without grace. They give offense, live ungodly lives, and do not behave themselves well toward subordinates. We must pity them for this and pray for them. The latter is particularly true of those who fear the Lord. "Despise not thy mother when she is old" (Proverbs 23:22). To mock with them is the work of Ham (Genesis 9:22; Genesis 9:25). The Sins Prohibited The sins against this commandment can easily be deduced from the commanded virtues by defining the contrary. We shall briefly add them here. The sins of superiors to subordinates are the following: First, they sin when they render despicable the station to which they have been appointed by means of evil and tyrannical conduct, by a careless neglect of duty, by an ungodly life, or by unrighteously taking advantage of subordinates.

Secondly, they sin when they hate their subordinates, have a hostile disposition toward them, treat them cruelly and as slaves, conduct themselves as if the subordinates merely exist for them, to do their bidding, and conduct themselves proudly and arrogantly toward them.

Thirdly, they sin when they give an evil example, are disobedient toward those who have been placed over them, speak evil of them, and despise them. This will cause their subordinates to follow in their footsteps and also deal likewise with them. They sin when they do not perform their duty toward others and yet strictly demand that others perform their duty toward them.

Fourthly, they sin when they do not seek the advantage of their subordinates, but rather their own, utilizing them in such a manner as if they but serve their superiors to help them to gain honor, money, and profit -- getting as much out of them as they can in demanding: give, give.

Fifthly, they sin when they do not care about the welfare of their subordinates, allowing them to go on without any instruction, exhortation, and rebuke; when they allow them to grow up without restraint, and do not care for the physical and spiritual welfare of the children and servants.

Sixthly, they sin when they mete out severe and cruel punishments to their subordinates for their weaknesses -- even the most insignificant weaknesses. They do so not for their benefit, but because they are of the opinion that their own dignity and respect have been violated -- as if they were God and everyone must bow before them. If they are but injured in the least, their wrath arises in order to vindicate themselves. The sins of subordinates toward their superiors are the following: Obedience, lack of causes problems First, they sin when they have no esteem in their heart for their superiors, despising them, not willingly submitting to them, and are impolite, sullen, and conduct themselves contemptuously toward them. "How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents" (1 Samuel 10:27).

Secondly, they sin when they are inwardly opposed to and have an aversion for their superiors. This can be the result of the superior being too insignificant in their eyes -- as is true for some children who, having advanced somewhat in the world, are ashamed of their parents, do not want to see them, wishing that they were either far away or dead. This can also occur when a superior makes himself hateful by pride, miserliness, drunkenness, or other sins, and because subordinates desire to be the master themselves.

Thirdly, they sin when they are unfaithful; that is, when they do not take care of the belongings of their parents -- such as when they foolishly waste or neglect money or clothing. They sin when they secretly rob them of something delightful, or deprive them of other things, as if they had more

liberty to do this than when stealing from others. "Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer" (Proverbs 28:24). They sin when they are lazy and lax in learning to read, write, or in learning a trade; or else when they make no effort to help their father and mother earn a living and keep the family solvent. To this also belongs involvement in fraudulent transactions -- generally referred to as smuggling -- whereby one, as much as possible, renders the government incapable of promoting the general good of the nation.

Fourthly, they sin when they are disobedient, not acknowledging the fact that God has given their superiors a position over them, but reject this. This is manifested by resisting this reality, not doing what the superiors command, doing what they forbid, grumbling, talking back, arguing, and wanting to withdraw from the duty of obedience. It can furthermore be manifested by wishing to compel superiors not to give certain orders, by wishing to dominate them, and by compelling the superior to do as it pleases the subordinate.

Fifthly, they sin when they mock with their superiors, or ridicule them when they see their weaknesses, are rancorous and chagrined, grumbling and snapping when they find fault in them -- or, when they are of the opinion that their superior does not conduct himself correctly and wisely, imagining that it ought to be otherwise.

Consider all this together and observe all who are comprehended in the words "father and mother." Consider in which subordinate and/or superior relationship you are to others. Consider furthermore the duties of superiors toward subordinates and of subordinates toward superiors, and then examine yourself as to how you have conducted yourself to any who are superior to you, and how you have conducted yourself toward those who are in a subordinate relationship to you. Consider your sins, humble yourself concerning them, and seek forgiveness. Be stirred up to order your way in the future in harmony with this commandment. To that end there needs to be a vivid reflection upon the incentive conjoined to this commandment. The Incentive Conjoined to this Commandment The incentive added to this commandment is as follows: "... that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12). Death, which is unnatural, has come upon the human race, and even though for believers it is not a punishment for sin, they must nevertheless all die. Life itself is a blessing, and therefore a longer life is a further blessing. Life is desirable, and no one delights in death. The longer one lives, the longer he enjoys that which is delightful. "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good" (Psalms 34:12).

Objection: Is it not better to be in heaven than upon earth? Is an early death therefore not better for the godly? How can the promise of a long life then be desirable?

Answer: First, there is no distinction here between an eternal, felicitous life and temporal life, but between death and life. Secondly, a believer can perform many things upon earth which are subservient to the glory of God and the welfare of both the church and other people. No one can do this in heaven and the saints were therefore very desirous to live, saying, "For in death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks" (Psalms 6:5). From this perspective a long life is a blessing. Thirdly, one must not only apply the blessing of a long life to individual persons, but also to a family -- that is, each in his tribe and the nation in general. Israel would thus remain long in Canaan, each nation in its own land, and every tribe would continue its

lineal descent. The lengthening of days is not only promised, but there is also added: in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. This refers to a long and peaceful life in one's own land in contrast to exile and banishment outside of the homeland. For Israel, this land was Canaan -- a fruitful and delightful piece of land which God had promised to Abraham and his seed. Israel had to occupy this land because the Messiah had to be born there. For every believer, however, it is that country which is his homeland or the country of his residence. This is according to Paul's testimony: "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:3). It is a blessing to live long and peacefully in one's own country. "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31).

Exhortation to Superiors

You, therefore, who have been placed over others, be diligent to conduct yourself well, in harmony with this commandment.

(1) The names "father" and "mother" necessitate this, amiably and efficaciously obligating you to do so.

(2) Nature teaches that a superior ought to engage his entire person and ability for the benefit of his subordinates. Go to the animals and they will teach you; go to the heathen and they will convince you.

(3) God has given you an honorable position for that purpose and adorned you with this glory.

(4) You will have to give an account to God for your government, and if you have been unfaithful, the damnation of subordinates will certainly be required from your hands in the day of judgment.

(5) However, if you are faithful, a blessing will come upon your children and upon others who are in subordination to you. How sweet it will be to be able to say on the last day, "Behold, here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!"

Exhortation to Children and Subordinates And you children, and all who are in a subordinate position to others -- see to it that you neither grieve nor cause your parents, and those who have been placed over you, to groan due to your disobedience and opposition, for:

First, it is a dreadful sin, a sin associated with the most ungodly times. "In thee have they set light by father and mother" (Ezekiel 22:7); "For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house" (Micah 7:6); "... disobedient to parents" (Romans 1:30; cf. 2 Timothy 3:2). It is an assault upon God, human society, and is contrary to nature -- so that it is the most abominable of all abominations, even being repulsive in a natural sense.

Secondly, such persons will not escape the wrath of God. Hear the threatenings which God pronounces upon them. They do not only subject themselves to the curse pronounced upon all transgressors of the law, but these specific judgments will also come upon such: "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness" (Proverbs 20:20); "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it" (Proverbs 30:17). This means that they will come upon the gallows. "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say,

Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:16). They will be cursed both here and forever.

Thirdly, consider the following examples: There is Ham, whose son Canaan and all his descendants were cursed by God (Genesis 9:22;Genesis 9:25); there is Reuben, who was rejected from the right of the firstborn and whose tribe was the first to be eradicated (Genesis 49:3-4); the sons of Eli, who perished miserably (1 Samuel 4:11); Absalom, who was killed in a frightful manner in battle and was buried with contempt under a heap of stones (2 Samuel 18:14;2 Samuel 18:17); and there are the forty-two children who mocked Elisha and were torn apart by bears (2 Kings 2:24).

Final Incentives Given for Obedience

Just as we must be deterred from these sins by prior judgments, we must, nevertheless, not be satisfied with refraining from evil. Rather, with our whole heart we must endeavor to honor and obey father and mother, and all who have been placed over us -- each in their own rank. Consider to that end:

First, the express command of God -- the majestic, glorious, sovereign, all-knowing, and righteous Lawgiver -- who is able to save and destroy. You neither sin against men only, nor are disobedient to men only, but you do so against God Himself.

Secondly, take notice of the authority with which God has vested father, mother, and all superiors. Yes, consider it to be a reflection of God's majesty, and let this motivate you to be respectful and willing to joyously honor and obey them.

Thirdly, consider the love, care, and labor which they expend, in order that all may be well with you. Consider the joy and delight which they experience when you conduct yourself well toward them, and their sorrow and grief if you despise them and are disobedient to them. If there is therefore a spark of natural love in you, you will be motivated to honor and obey them.

Fourthly, meditate much upon the blessings which the Lord bestows upon obedient children. Shem and Japheth were blessed by the Lord because they honored their father, and it was promised to them that the church and the means of grace would be among their children (Genesis 9:26-27). The following remarkable text ought to be imprinted in the hearts of all children, and parents ought to make them memorize it in their youth: "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever" (Jeremiah 35:18-19).

056. Chapter 51: The Sixth Commandment

----- CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE ----- The Sixth Commandment The sixth commandment pertains to human life, which is the most precious thing that man possesses. God created man to live, but due to sin, death has come into the world. However, God Himself wants to be the executioner of the sentence, and thus forbids all men to do so, saying: "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13).

Murder is the removal of human life by abusing the body to such an extent that the soul can no longer remain there. This neither applies to the vegetative life of trees and herbs, nor to animal life, for God has given both to the benefit of man. (The killing of animals may, however, not proceed from cruel motives.) Rather, the killing which is forbidden here pertains to human life. God gives the following reason for this: "For in the image of God made He man" (Genesis 9:6). Even though man has lost the image of God, He nevertheless created him in His image in the beginning, and man has still retained the picture frame which at one time contained the painting: the spirituality, invisibility, and immortality of the soul. He is still gifted with the faculties of the soul -- intellect and will. It is therefore God's will that one person not kill another person.

All Homicide Not Forbidden The following four instances are not included in the homicide forbidden here. First, there is the putting to death of a murderer by the government. For God has commanded this: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6); "For he (the government vested with authority) is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:4). He who forgives a murderer is opposed to the commandment of God and is an accomplice to the murder. "Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death ... for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it" (Numbers 35:31; Numbers 35:33). Yes, even if the murderer fled to the altar in the temple, he had to be taken from there and be put to death. "Thou shalt take him from Mine altar, that he may die" (Exodus 21:14). Popery does exactly the opposite by designating their churches and monasteries as neutral zones for murderers.

Secondly, the killing of an enemy in a lawful war also is not included in the homicide which is forbidden. A war is lawful when enemies conspire to attack a nation that has not offended them, but which dwells quietly and peacefully -- these enemies robbing them of their goods and making the people their bond servants. If the government of such a country then arms itself against such enemies, resists violence with violence, punishes them, and renders them incapable of returning, this is a righteous undertaking whereby the wicked are punished, and good persons are protected both personally as well as relative to their religion and belongings. The legality of such wars is not only abundantly evident in 1) the Old Testament, where God commanded them and prescribed the time and manner of attack, as well as promising to deliver up the enemy, but 2) also in the New Testament. John the Baptist baptized soldiers and rather than commanding to forsake warfare, he

exhorted them to be satisfied with their wages and not to be a burden to anyone (Luke 3:14). The centurion is praised for his faith and was not dismissed from his service (Matthew 8:10; Matthew 8:13). Cornelius the centurion, a godly man, was visited by Peter, and while Peter was preaching he received the gift of the Holy Spirit. There is no word of rebuke, however, nor of being dismissed from his service (Acts 10:2; Acts 33:34). Paul declares that the government is of divine origin and that it bears the sword to take vengeance upon the wicked and to protect the good (Romans 13:1-3).

Objection: The Anabaptists, having had a bad experience at Munster, no longer approve of wars, and maintain that it is unlawful to engage in war. In support of this they advance Matthew 5:39-40; Matthew 5:44 "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. But I say unto you, Love your enemies."

Answer: These texts do not refer to the work of civil authorities, for they have been commanded to do so. Rather, Christ commands that private individuals may not take vengeance upon each other, but instead must bear with and yield to each other. Yes, their heart must be inclined to do good to their enemies and to pray for them. The rebuke addressed to Peter upon drawing the sword is of the same nature, the declaration being that those who take the sword will perish with the sword (Matthew 26:52). The Lord Jesus speaks of private individuals -- and not of the civil authorities -- of taking the sword and not of receiving the sword from God (Romans 13:4).

Thirdly, inadvertent manslaughter also is not included in the homicide which is forbidden. This is true, for instance, when a person falls down from a house and dies; or if upon using an axe, its head slips from the handle and kills a bystander or passer-by without the person using it having any intent to do so. This is evident in the following passages: "And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee" (Exodus 21:13); "Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past; as when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live" (Deuteronomy 19:4-5). One can, however, be guilty of carelessness here.

Fourthly, the slaying of one's neighbor out of self-protection is also not included in the forbidden homicide. This occurs when either a murderer, a person who is in a fit of wrath, or a demented person attacks someone in order to slay him. The person being attacked flees as far as he can and is overcome in such a way that he can no longer flee. He calls for help, warns the attackers, but there comes no relief. He either must permit himself to be killed, or he must in self-defense kill the attacker. If he kills him, he is not guilty of bloodshed; rather, this is referred to as *moderamen inculpatae tutelae*, that is, self-defense. One is obligated to preserve his life and this is the only objective here. If this culminates in the death of the other person, the attacker is guilty and not the person being attacked. The Sins Forbidden The homicide which is forbidden here can be considered either in regard to the object (or the external deed), or in reference to the internal disposition of heart. The objects are either man himself or his neighbor. The first major sin is suicide. This sin varies in degree.

(1) This sin is committed when a person actually and intentionally deprives himself of his life, be it by way of hanging, drowning, use of sharp objects, poison, or in any other manner. Such people are of evil dispositions, fretful and peevish, and are neither able nor willing to endure discomfort. They renounce God, heaven, and hell, and imagine that with their death they will put an end to their unpleasant circumstances. This is the work of ungodly men, and is tantamount to plunging alive into hell and eternal damnation.

(2) To this also belongs the doing of injury to one's health by wasting one's strength through indulging in lascivious lusts. By this one will bring illnesses upon himself which God inflicts in retribution upon such sins. This also pertains to overindulgence in eating and the drinking of alcoholic beverages, excessive sleeping, or by robbing the body of what it needs by withholding food and shelter.

(3) To this belongs the departure from ordinary conduct by unnecessarily endangering one's self by mountain climbing, diving, and approaching too near to the enemy out of curiosity.

(4) To this belongs fighting in a duel in response to an intentional challenge to do so, for one knows that he will either be killed, become a murderer himself, or be killed and commit murder simultaneously. Such people are not courageous, but reckless fools with unstable emotions who are captive to their passions and cannot tolerate being wrong. The example of David and Goliath cannot be used in defense of this, for that pertains to a public war. David did this by faith and in the name of the Lord in order to punish Goliath for his blasphemy, doing so upon the order of King Saul.

(5) Furthermore, to this belongs the letting of a ship explode if one can no longer defend it. One thus does not permit the enemy to get it in its power; however, he does kill himself. Such was the deed of the ungodly Saul. In doing so, one kills all who are on the ship simultaneously, who in all probability are not aware of such intent, and would not have acquiesced in it. The end, however good it may be, does not justify the means. One cannot do evil in order that good may come out of it. The example of Samson does not vindicate such action. We must live according to rules and not according to examples. That example meets with no approbation anywhere in Scripture. The case is also not identical. If one can no longer defend himself, he must surrender. It is a matter of courage to fight as long as possible, and it is a matter of wisdom to yield to the conqueror.

(6) We can also add to this the murder of souls due to neglect and rejection of, opposition and disobedience to the means of grace, as well as the willful and reckless perseverance in sin -- for the wages of sin is death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." All of this belongs to the sin of suicide, from which everyone must most carefully abstain. The second major sin is the killing of one's neighbor. This is done, first of all, in deed with sharp objects, by drowning, by strangling, with poison, by withholding food and shelter, by leaving someone in the water or in some other danger, whom we were obligated to help, and either could have helped ourselves, or by calling for help.

Secondly, one can do so with words:

(1) By using sarcastic and biting language, thereby revealing one's own wrath and provoking the wrath of others to such a degree that they will kill. This almost cost Nabal and his household his life (1 Samuel 25:10). Murder, definition of

(2) By falsely accusing someone, upon which the death of the accused and of others could follow or does follow. Doeg thus killed eighty-five priests with his accusation (1 Samuel 22:18).

(3) By betraying others by word or letter. It is thus that the pious Uriah perished (2 Samuel 11:15).

(4) By stirring up others against someone; in this manner the death of the Lord Jesus was required by the people (Matthew 27:1-66).

(5) By betraying others in times of persecution for the sake of true religion, by which they could be killed or also shall be killed. "...And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

(6) By arguing, which provokes mutual wrath. Having an argument frequently degenerates into fighting and this in turn culminates in murder. "He loveth transgression that loveth strife" (Proverbs 17:19).

Thirdly, one can sin with his countenance, by looking at someone with a surly, cruel, and wrathful countenance -- laughing at him, shaking the head, motioning and threatening with the fist, or with some other spiteful and provocative gestures. Thereby the murderous heart reveals itself and provokes others to wrath and murder. This is to be observed in Cain, Laban, Israel, and in the Jews with reference to Christ.

Fourthly, one can furthermore add to this the spiritual murder of his neighbor, which is done by ministers if they do not warn the ungodly (Ezekiel 13:18; Ezekiel 13:22). This is true when one either brings soul-destructive errors and heresies in vogue or promotes them; gives evil examples whereby others are enticed, deceived, or offended; keeps others away from the Word and the practice of religion; or persecutes and resists others for their godliness. The third major sin is to have a murderous disposition of heart, although this may be restrained by reason, fear for punishment, the restraining power of God, or restraining grace. To this belongs, first of all, intense and wrenching envy or jealousy. This manifests itself in an inner gnawing, in being grieved if others fare well or even better than we, and if others receive more honor and love than we do personally. This begets unfriendliness both toward those who are doing so well, and against those who show so much honor, love, and favor to the others. The result of this is that we cannot deal with them in love, cannot bear to hear their voice, and cannot see them without being stirred within. We shall search out whether or not we can find fault, and if so, we shall make the most of it; and if we are too sly to do it publicly, we shall secretly deal with them in contempt and by underhanded methods. We are glad if we find someone who hates that person in question and speaks evil of him. We shall laugh and be delighted if the person being envied experiences something which is detrimental to his honor and good. If there are many who do not give heed to their heart and thus do not perceive this hidden serpent, or if there is no opportunity for this envy to manifest itself, one will readily recognize it by its mother, self-love, and sisters, miserliness and ambition. This envy belongs to murder, for one would like to see this person removed, and it occasionally engenders murder. This we observe in Cain (Genesis 4:1-26), in the patriarchs relative to Joseph (Acts 7:9), and in the priests relative to Christ (Matthew 27:18).

Envy is an abominable sin and an offense to all of humanity. People are therefore ashamed of this and conceal it as much as possible.

(1) It corrupts and consumes people's strength and health. "... but envy is the rottenness of the bones" (Proverbs 14:30).

(2) It is the cause of all confusion among people. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16).

(3) It is a work of the flesh -- and sin which proceeds from sin, ends in sin, and ends in death. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these ... envyings" (Galatians 5:19-21).

(4) It opposes the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the hearts of believers. "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy" (James 4:5).

(5) It is a devilish sin to have an evil eye, for God is good. It is to accuse God of unrighteousness when He gives things to someone who is not worthy of it and ought not to have it. It is a desire that God be obligated to give the one more than another, a denial of God's providence, or a refusal to be subject to it. It is tantamount to designating one's self as a God. "... but who is able to stand before envy" (Proverbs 27:4).

Secondly, there is hatred. This is a deep-seated anger. At times this proceeds from envy and at others times from wrath, which cannot run its course, but instead is restrained, and one can thus not avenge himself. One will harbor this until time and opportunity are there. Absalom waited about two years before executing his hatred toward Ammon. He who has such hatred is repulsed by the company of the one who is hated, and it is increased when he sees him or hears him speak -- and even becomes greater the better the hated person fares. He strives for the demise of this person by slandering, dishonoring, and scorning the person. If he could or would dare to contribute more to his demise, he would do so.

Listen attentively to what God says concerning hatred. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15); "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart" (Leviticus 19:17). To this does not belong, however, the hatred against sin and sinners as such. In this manner David hated all vain thoughts and all who hated the Lord (Psalms 119:113; Psalms 119:118). The congregation of Ephesus was praised because they hated the works of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6).

Thirdly, there is anger. This is good if it correctly pertains to sin and sinners. It is thus stated concerning the Lord Jesus: "And when He had looked round about on them with anger ..." (Mark 3:5). However, that anger which is forbidden here is a sinful anger, which is an intense hastiness to do evil to one's neighbor -- a brief moment of frenzy. "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous" (Proverbs 27:4).

(1) It is murder in God's sight and very frequently it ends in actual murder. "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:22).

(2) Anger is enumerated among the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20).

(3) Anger prevents all good work and yields nothing but evil fruits. "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20).

(4) Anger is the work of fools. "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

(5) Anger is a cursed sin. "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel" (Genesis 49:7).

Fourthly, there is revenge. This is the inclination to retaliate against someone for a wrong actually committed or an imaginary wrong -- yes, they are not satisfied with a retribution of a similar degree, but the least wrong which has been done to them is deserving of death in their eyes. This we observe in Lamech who said: "Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold" (Genesis 4:23-24). It is a dreadful sin, for:

(1) It is putting of one's self in the stead of God, an act of outright opposition toward God, and an accusation against God for not immediately slaying the offender. Yes, such a person is not satisfied if God does it, but his own hand and his power must be observed here; he must execute it himself. God says, "To Me belongeth vengeance, and recompense" (Deuteronomy 32:35).

(2) It is to render the devil the opportunity to incline his heart toward all evil according to his will. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26-27).

(3) As long as someone harbors revenge in his heart, he is not permitted to pray -- and if he prays, he is praying against himself. When the Lord Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He immediately adds: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15).

(4) It is a sin upon which God pronounces a curse (Genesis 49:7). These are some of the chief sins against this commandment. If someone transgresses this commandment, he brings upon himself the curse which is pronounced upon transgressors of the law. He excludes himself from heaven and makes himself worthy of eternal damnation. "Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15); "But the ... murderers ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). The Virtues Enjoined The virtues enjoined in this commandment are the following: First, there must be love for life. This particularly relates to the life of our neighbor; that is, when we do not begrudge him his life, and rejoice in that he lives and prospers. We shall thus give diligence that his life be preserved, and utilize everything which would be subservient to that end. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10); "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (1 Corinthians 10:24).

Secondly, there must be tolerance; that is, any wrong that has been committed must be considered insignificant, and there must be no inclination toward retribution. It ought to be overlooked, as not having been committed, while maintaining a quiet and calm disposition toward him in love. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any" (Colossians 3:13); "... forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

Thirdly, there must be a seeking after and preservation of peace; that is, we should not tolerate that our heart be displeased in the least degree toward anyone, and to endeavor that the heart of someone else also be thus inclined toward us. We shall then not be offended by someone's misbehavior toward us, and we shall be no less friendly toward him. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3); "Seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalms 34:14); "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

However peace must not be attained by covering or doing injury to the truth and godliness. "Therefore love the truth and peace" (Zechariah 8:19); "... righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalms 85:10).

Fourthly, meekness is the very opposite of being stern, fretful, and irritable (so that one cannot touch or deal with the person). Rather, to be meek is to be as tender as a mole and as soft as silk, so that it is a delight to have dealings with such a person. It is to have a quiet and dispassionate disposition, and to manifest this by the enduring of wrong, by maintaining a consistently tender disposition, by forgiving wrongdoing as if it had not been committed, and by rendering good for evil -- all this so that everyone may be convinced of their wrongdoing and cease doing wrong against us. A meek person is as a smooth beach upon which tempestuous waves break and then gently flow away, interacting, so to speak, in a playful manner with it.

(1) Meekness is an excellent ornament. "Whose adorning ... be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

(2) It is the garment of the saints. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12).

(3) A meek person is fit to serve God and God invites him to seek Him, being especially pleased with such a disposition. "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment" (Zephaniah 2:3).

(4) This is the foundational virtue from which many other virtues issue forth. The Lord Jesus therefore exemplified this and commanded that this be imitated. "And learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

(5) The meek have the promise that "they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). This does not only imply that they will possess the new heaven and earth after the last judgment, but also now they will have a peaceful portion, and enjoy what is theirs in quietness. People will not rage against such, but much rather will protect them, and if there comes opposition, they will overcome it with meekness. Solomon therefore says: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

Fifthly, Compassion there must be compassion if people experience some measure of trouble. We must have compassion with such persons and, so to speak, put our shoulder under their burden to help them carry it. We must be inclined to help them, doing so according to our ability, giving them food, drink, and clothing, serving them upon their sickbeds, and seeking to rescue their business. This is a precious disposition. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7); "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble" (Psalms 41:1).

Sixthly, there must be friendliness. The opposite of this is to be gruff, impolite, arrogant, and to speak in a biting and grumbling manner. This is how Cain behaved himself toward Abel, Joseph's brothers toward Joseph, and Laban toward Jacob. Instead, friendliness is the manifestation of a loving heart, revealing itself in one's countenance and words. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men" (2 Timothy 2:24).

057. Chapter 52: The Seventh Commandment

----- CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO ----- The Seventh Commandment Marriage: Divinely Instituted

After having created and adorned the heaven and the earth, God created living creatures. He created many animals at once, but He initially created only one human being -- a man. Subsequently, He caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, during which God removed a rib from him. From this He created a woman, Eve, and brought her to Adam to be his wife. Just as they were first one and subsequently became two, the Lord, by way of marriage, made them one again after this. "And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh" (Mark 10:8). After God had brought Adam and Eve together, He "blessed them, and ... said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Thus, God instituted marriage and gave His blessing upon it, not only prior to the fall, but He also repeated this after the fall (Genesis 3:16; Genesis 9:1). God Himself decrees who one's wife will be and gives her to every man (Genesis 24:44). "A prudent wife is from the Lord" (Proverbs 19:14). The Lord Jesus gave His approbation to marriage by honoring a wedding with His presence (John 2:11). Thus, "marriage is honourable in all" (Hebrews 13:4). This is also true for ministers, for Paul calls the prohibition of marriage a doctrine of devils (1 Timothy 4:1), and it is furthermore a sign of the antichrist. Godly ministers, both in the Old and New Testaments, have been married. Aaron was married and had sons (Leviticus 1:7), Samuel was married and had children (1 Samuel 8:2), Peter had a wife (Matthew 8:14), and Paul had license to take a wife, as was also true for the other apostles (1 Corinthians 9:5). As God instituted marriage, the Lord likewise created in man the ability and inclination to procreate. This inclination is good in and of itself, but after the fall everything in man has become corrupted and distorted. Man is also in this respect distorted and frequently desires the means more than the end. Yes, he frequently fears the end, and with heated fervor entertains himself with the means. Consequently he indulges in various sins in this respect, as to both manner and objects -- sins which are forbidden in the seventh commandment. The Sins Prohibited The sins which are forbidden here are numerous. We shall organize them under the following main headings: actions, gestures, words, thoughts, lusts, and opportunities. To unchaste actions belong the following:

First, there is adultery, which occurs when a married man or woman has a relationship with another person -- either married or unmarried. If this sin is committed by two married persons, then there is double adultery. If it is committed by a married and an unmarried person, there is single adultery. Not only does the married person commit adultery, but also the unmarried person.

Secondly, there is the desertion of one's spouse without adultery being the cause. "For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that He hateth putting away" (Malachi 2:16); "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matthew 5:32); "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. But if the unbelieving

depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases" (1 Corinthians 7:12; 1 Corinthians 7:15). If the one spouse commits adultery, then the other spouse may leave the adulterous one, file for divorce, and remarry. The person that has been divorced due to committing adultery may not remarry, and whoever marries such a person also commits adultery. If a spouse divorces rashly, that is, without fornication being the cause, such a spouse will be the cause of sin if the one who has been divorced commits fornication. The one who is the cause of the divorce may not remarry, even though this was practiced in Israel. In such a case, where the sin remained, there was the stipulation that the one who was deserted be given a bill of divorcement (Matthew 19:7). This is, however, contrary to God's commandment. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). The one who has been divorced, however, is not obligated to remain unmarried, but rather is permitted to remarry. However, to divorce for reasons other than fornication is adultery.

Thirdly, there is incest; that is, if persons who are too closely related enter into a relationship, be it outside of marriage or within marriage (although it is no marriage). The blood relationship is too close if the relationship is closer than cousins, that is, the children of brothers and sisters. Marriage between first cousins is not prohibited anywhere. The Lord has left man free in this, and such persons do not need to be secretly troubled about this in their heart. The degrees of relationship which are forbidden are parents with their children and grandchildren, this being true in all generations. It is also considered to be incest if one marries either two sisters or two brothers; that is, the one after the death of the other. It is incestuous to marry children of one's sister or brother; that is, if an uncle or an aunt marries someone whose uncle or aunt they are; or if a nephew or niece marries an uncle or an aunt in all descending degrees. To determine who are too near of kin, one must refer to Leviticus 18:6-18 and Leviticus 20:11-12.

Fourthly, there is sodomy; that is, when men have intercourse with men and women with women (cf. Genesis 19:5; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26-27). This is also the case when a human being has intercourse with an animal (Leviticus 18:23).

Fifthly, there is fornication; that is, when two single persons engage in intercourse with each other. This is prohibited everywhere (cf. Acts 15:20; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:19). This is aggravated when one has intercourse with various persons and thus is promiscuous, like dogs. This is also true if one uses his home as a brothel, engages prostitutes in the house for that purpose, or uses his home as a trap to allure and entangle all manner of persons. Persons engaging in this are an abomination, as well as those who could prevent this, but fail to do so (Deuteronomy 23:17)!

Sixthly, there is the commission of personal fornication (which Onan was guilty of), also referred to as "evil concupiscence" (Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:5), and uncleanness and lasciviousness (Galatians 5:19).

Seventhly, there is polygamy; that is, to have more than one wife simultaneously. This sin was initially committed by Lamech (Genesis 4:18), and subsequently became common practice among Jews, Gentiles, and Moslems -- both prior to and after the time of Christ. It is, however, contrary to the command and institution of God. "... and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matthew 19:5); "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2). Thus, to have more than one wife is the continual commission of adultery. The fact that it has been

common practice, was practiced by the godly themselves, and was tolerated by God at that time, does not negate the sinfulness of these deeds. Fornication

Eighthly, there is concubinage; that is, when two unmarried persons without a lawful relationship live together as husband and wife. This is a continual act of fornication, confessed by the Samaritan woman (John 4:17-18). The rule is this: "But if they cannot contain, let them marry" (1 Corinthians 7:9).

Ninthly, there is premarital intercourse of engaged persons. This is contrary to what Joseph and Mary did (Matthew 1:18), as well as contrary to 1 Corinthians 14:40 : "Let all things be done decently and in order." It is an act of uncleanness. If the man dies, the woman is then considered to be a whore and the child as the child of a whore. It frequently takes away the blessing from the marriage, having been begun in sin.

Unchaste gestures are committed first of all with the eyes; that is, when by way of observation one stirs up and stimulates his own filthy lusts. The Lord Jesus says concerning this: "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28; cf. Ezekiel 23:14;Ezekiel 23:16). Peter speaks of "eyes full of adultery" (2 Peter 2:14). One also commits fornication with the eyes if, by ogling or casting lewd glances, one seeks to allure others to commit fornication.

Secondly, sin is also committed by making motions with hands, feet, and other members of the body, revealing one's intention in such a way that it is readily understood by others. "Thou hast ... opened thy feet to every one that passed by" (Ezekiel 16:25).

Thirdly, carousing, kissing, and immodest caressing (Ezekiel 23:3;Ezekiel 23:8) belongs to this. "So she caught him, and kissed him" (Proverbs 7:13).

Fourthly, the wearing of inappropriate clothing and the attire of harlots, as well as the making bare of those members which for decency's sake ought to be covered, also belongs to this. This is the manifestation of a heart that is bent on fornication and on alluring others to indulge in it.

Verbal unchastity is committed by recounting stories or fables that relate to fornication, by using indecent language, and by reading or listening to lewd books. This is indicative of an impure heart. "... for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). And such language is able to stimulate yourself and others to commit fornication. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Unchaste lusts and thoughts are those which, upon arising at certain occasions, are retained and reflected upon. This also applies if a specific occasion is not the initial cause, but you stir up your own lusts by creating images in your fantasy, mentally reflect upon past fornication, or fantasize about given situations (of which one knows that they will not come to pass) in consequence of which fornication issues forth. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications" (Matthew 15:19); "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 15:26); "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14); "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness" (Colossians 3:5). The opportunities for fornication are many. These opportunities partly present themselves and partly are sought for.

First of all there is dancing. Even though the dancer, while dancing, has all to do to heed the musical instrument and to watch his step, fornication is nevertheless stimulated by way of observation.

(1) Dancing has always been despised by the saints and held in contempt by civilized heathen.

(2) It neither proceeds from God nor is commanded anywhere; rather, it proceeds from the world and belongs to the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes (1 John 2:16), as well as to the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11).

(3) It cost John the Baptist his life (Matthew 14:6; Matthew 14:10), the daughters of Shiloh to be abducted (Judges 21:1-25), and Dinah to lose her honor (Genesis 34:1-2). I do not believe that a dancer would be willing to die and appear before the judgment seat while dancing.

Secondly, there is the involvement in, or watching of, comedy. If one were to remove from comedy the vain use of God's Name, pagan idolatry, the devil, abduction, rape, the manifestation of love between men and women, and foolish jesting, and would but display a historical event, then comedy would be no comedy. There would not be many who would watch it. However, those matters mentioned (and others of similar nature) provide the entertainment and it is therefore to be found in all comedies. This makes the heart exceptionally vain and fully occupies it, so that one reflects on this for days and nights. One imagines himself to be one of the players, or to be personally involved in a romance. This will ignite the lewdness which is hidden in the heart. One's attendance, therefore, is not for the purpose of approaching unto God, but to find delight in vain pleasure. God's judgment is not withheld from such, but He generally gives them over to themselves and to their vain and lewd heart. Occasionally He will punish some persons with insanity or even with death. We have experienced an example of this, that a person laughed himself to death at a comedy. No one will dare to say that comedies proceed from God, but one must rather acknowledge that they proceed from the world -- a world which a Christian must not love, for he who loves the world does not have the love of God in him (1 John 2:15), and is also deemed to be an enemy of God (James 4:4).

Thirdly, idleness has a great effect upon the heart and will stir it up to commit fornication; David experienced that (2 Samuel 11:1-27). The young widows who idly wander from house to house wax wanton, according to Paul (1 Timothy 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:13). A pagan states: Remove idleness, and you will remove fornication.

Fourthly, there is rioting and drunkenness, to which the apostle adds wantonness. "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness" (Romans 13:13); "Look not thou upon the wine ... thine eyes shall behold strange women" (Proverbs 23:31; Proverbs 23:33).

Fifthly, there is social interaction with men and women who are inclined toward fornication. Being in wrong company will cause you to err. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Proverbs 13:20).

Sixthly, there is the viewing of lewd paintings. The heart will be moved by whatever the eye sees. The fornication of the women in Israel was stimulated and they were enamored by seeing the images of the Chaldean men (Ezekiel 23:13-16).

Seventhly, there are marriages between those who are unequal in years, the one spouse being old and the other young. The young spouse may readily acquire an aversion for the older spouse. If one then desists from the use of one's spouse, one will readily be enticed by unchaste lusts -- if not deeds.

Eighthly, there are domestic quarrels. Quarrels between husband and wife will cause them to be estranged from each other. This then prevents one from fulfilling the obligations which love requires, and thus one's corrupt nature will get the opportunity to manifest itself. The Abominable Nature of this Sin and the Special Judgments Which God Executes upon It

These are the main areas of sin, and hereby you will have to examine yourself as to how innocent or guilty you are. In order to deter everyone from this sin, we shall demonstrate its abominable nature and the special judgments which God brings upon man due to this sin.

First, consider this sin in all its abominableness.

(1) It is the captain of all sin and is listed first among all the works of the flesh. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness," etc. (Galatians 5:19-21). Yes, the man who is addicted to this sin loses his heart. "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart" (Hosea 4:11). Such a person is vulnerable to all sin. "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

(2) It runs counter to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who dwells in believers as in a temple. There He illuminates the heart, comforts, engenders prayer, answers prayers, and leads in the way of holiness. This sin, however, desecrates this temple. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17); "Flee fornication ... he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 6:18-19).

(3) It runs counter to the suffering of Christ, who thereby has redeemed believers and made them His property. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Corinthians 6:20).

(4) It runs counter to the heavenly calling whereby believers have been translated from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ. "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

(5) It is a dreadful act of contempt toward God and a provocation against Him. The presence of a person -- yes, even a child -- will prevent the commission of this sin due to being ashamed before him. Would not God's presence then arouse shame? Would one dare to commit this sin before the eyes and the countenance of a holy God?

Secondly, consider and take note of the special judgments which God sends upon fornicators.

(1) There is a giving over to self and to sin, whereby one will lapse into the commission of the abominable acts of uncleanness -- yes, even sodomy (Romans 1:27). One will be given over to

spiritual adultery and idolatry and to a dying in sin. "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Timothy 5:6).

(2) God brings great wrath upon them according to body and soul. Let Sodom be an example to you, of which Peter says, "The Lord knoweth how ... to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness" (2 Peter 2:9-10). Consider also the example of the fornicating Israelites in the wilderness. "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand" (1 Corinthians 10:8); "... whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

(3) Many will be eternally damned because of this sin. "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind ... shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10); "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, ... hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:5); "But ... whoremongers ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). The Virtues Enjoined

First, there must be in one's heart a hatred and aversion for, and hostility toward all uncleanness of heart and whatever issues forth therefrom. "Hate the evil" (Amos 5:15); "Abhor that which is evil" (Romans 12:9); "... hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 1:23).

Secondly, one must endeavor to have a heart marked by modesty, purity, and shamefacedness. "... that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:9); "A bishop then must be sober. Even so must their wives be ... sober, faithful in all things" (1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 3:11); "He that hath ... a pure heart" (Psalms 24:4); "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8); "... that women adorn themselves ... with shamefacedness and sobriety" (1 Timothy 2:9).

Thirdly, one must be chaste in all his actions -- also those that pertain to the body. "... that I may present you as a chaste virgin" (2 Corinthians 11:2); "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1); "... keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).

Exhortation to Strive for Purity of Heart

Everyone ought to be on guard so that, consistent with the exhortation of the apostle, everyone may possess his vessel in sanctification and honor (1 Thessalonians 4:4).

(1) We must know that we have the enemy within ourselves, that we carry the seed of uncleanness within, which will very readily shoot up if we do not carefully watch against this. Happy is he who has a true heart of a virgin, for when this sin takes hold, it cannot very easily be driven out. Therefore, watch!

(2) Carefully avoid all occasions which would stimulate this sin -- be it via the eye or the ear. One must therefore watch very carefully over these two senses. "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid" (Job 31:1).

(3) If an unclean motion arises in your heart, immediately shake it off as you would shake off fire from your clothes. Divert your thoughts immediately to something else. Here, fleeing is the best option. If, however, you do not reject the initial thought and you allow your thoughts but to reflect

on it for a moment, you are conquered. This sin will flourish rapidly and will at once exercise great power.

(4) Be always engaged in honest activities. Even when you are free from obligations, do not let your flesh be idle. Arouse yourself to be engaged in your task with delight and earnestness, so that it may occupy your heart, and thus there will be neither room nor time for this filthiness.

(5) Be moderate in eating, drinking, and sleeping, for if there is a lack of moderation in these things, the body will be vulnerable for this sin and the lust for and yearning after this sin will arise that much easier.

(6) Avoid such people who are inclined toward this sin -- be it that they are giving license to the flesh or that they are battling this sin. There can very easily be a word or something else which ignites a virgin heart. Furthermore, this sin will take hold all the more readily if one also is battling against this sin himself.

(7) Arm yourself with fear for God's presence and omniscience. Pray continually: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." If it is common for this sin to frequently assault you, have days of fasting for this -- and the Lord will help the person who is engaged in this battle.

(8) Always consider the consequences of this sin. It yields but a brief delight for the flesh and a long and bitter aftertaste for the soul. And if this aftertaste presents itself as a lively reality for you, you will then be able to reject its brief delight that much easier.

058. Chapter 53: The Eighth Commandment

----- CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE ----- The Eighth Commandment The eighth commandment pertains to the possessions of our neighbor. The heaven and the earth are the Lord's. "The world is Mine, and the fulness thereof" (Psalms 50:12); "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men" (Psalms 115:16). It is not true that everyone has an equal right to, and would equally enjoy each portion of, this world. However, just as God apportioned Canaan to Israel by lot, He likewise gives everyone his portion in this world, giving the one a greater portion than the other. That portion he will have -- no more and no less. "Feed me with food convenient for me" (Proverbs 30:8). Man must be satisfied with this portion and expect it from the Lord by the means which have been ordained to that end. God has therefore expressly forbidden the acquisition of our portion, or a desire for increase, through unlawful means by saying, "Thou shalt not steal." To steal is to take the possessions of our neighbor for ourselves. The perpetrator does this knowingly and without the knowledge of or contrary to the will of the owner. The Sins Prohibited The sins prohibited in this commandment can be reduced to the following heads: 1) the object to which these sins relate, 2) the means whereby they are committed, 3) the manner in which they are committed, and 4) the cause from which they proceed. As far as the object is concerned, there are the following types of theft: 1) ecclesiastical theft, 2) the theft of men, 3) the defrauding of the nation, 4) the theft of cattle, 5) the theft of property, 6) armed robbery, and 7) to be an accomplice of thieves.

First, ecclesiastical theft consists in the following:

(1) Taking to one's self goods and privileges -- for the purpose of either increasing one's own wealth, or to give it away to others -- which have been given either for the maintenance of the church or of the poor. "It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy" (Proverbs 20:25); "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation" (Malachi 3:8-9). Neither does the government have the authority to dispose of these goods, nor is anyone permitted to receive such goods, even if they are given by the government.

(2) Simony also belongs to this. The word "simony" is derived from Simon the Sorcerer, who wanted to buy the gifts of the Spirit from the apostles (Acts 8:18-20). This sin is committed if one purchases the ecclesiastical goods from those who have taken upon them the management of these goods. This sin is committed if one either receives or gives money to award a ministerial position to someone; or to receive it from those who claim to have the authority to either approve or disapprove. The latter is actually church robbery. It is a double offense if one uses that which has been usurped through robbery to either sell this position or to purchase the position from such a usurper -- be it that one does so either personally or via friends, and then subsequently gives it back to the perpetrator. Such persons are thieves and murderers who do not enter the sheepfold through the right door (John 10:7-10). This sin is also committed when the elders of the church, who are authorized to elect ministers and elders, do this to gain the favor of men or of friends.

Secondly, there is the theft of human beings. (1) This sin is committed in those countries where slave trade is practiced. This is stated in Exodus 21:16 : "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death" (cf. 1 Timothy 1:10).

(2) They who steal children sin, where they are enamored with their charm, or that they are to be used for beggary, in order to move people to pity -- all this while abusing them and making them miserable.

(3) Included are monastery thieves -- be they male or female -- who lure children who anticipate a good inheritance from their parents, to make a vow to live in their monasteries without the knowledge of their parents. Or else they do so to give to the monasteries or the priests that which they have defrauded from their parents. "But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mark 7:11; Mark 7:13).

(4) To this also belongs the abduction of young females, the engagement of minors with the promise of marriage (without the knowledge of, or contrary to, the will of the parents), eloping, and engaging young people for sexual purposes. In doing so parents are robbed of their best possession, and of those toward whom they exercise the most love. "Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer" (Proverbs 28:24). Experience teaches that God generally sends a curse upon such people. A third type of theft is the defrauding of the nation by either the government or citizens. Government officials are guilty of this if they do the following:

(1) secretly use general tax revenues for themselves;

(2) under cover of a different name, give a gift and charge their tenants in order to share the expense;

(3) solicit contracts for work or ships and cause a certain party to receive the contract if there is a certain amount of money in it for them;

(4) extend the time for commissions in order to collect that many more fees;

(5) inflate the bills for incurred costs, thus enabling their carriage occasionally to be drawn by two horses;

(6) either give away or sell official positions to friends who are not qualified. They do not own these offices and it is to the detriment of the country if these positions are awarded to unqualified persons. Those who purchase those positions are generally dishonest people who, in a dishonest way, try to regain their money from this position;

(7) when draft officials count shadows for soldiers and allow multitudes of sailors to remain at large unless the captains give them bribes.

Consider the following passages in reference to this: "Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards" (Isaiah 1:23); "Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey" (Ezekiel 22:27); "... her rulers (what a shame it is!) with shame do love, Give ye" (Hosea 4:18).

Citizens are guilty of defrauding the nation when their billing for delivered goods is higher than it ought to be, and when they conspire with corrupt government officials to share the profits of that in which they are mutually involved. It occurs when they deal fraudulently, smuggle, or are guilty of illicit dealings in reference to tariffs, excise fees, valuation charges, etc. This is contrary to what we read in the following passages: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21); "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom" (Romans 13:7). If you argue that the government takes too much, and that you thus cannot remain profitable, then you ought to know that we must be subject "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" (1 Peter 2:18).

Fourthly, there is the theft of cattle. The stealing of horses, cows, sheep, and swans belongs to this, as well as the trapping of forbidden game by those who are not authorized to do so. To this belongs also the trapping of rabbits on leased land, the catching of fish in ponds and rivers which have been leased, and fishing with illegal nets and at illegal times. "If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep" (Exodus 22:1).

Fifthly, there is the theft of commodities; that is, when one steals personal property such as silver, gold, jewelry, clothing, grass, corn from the field, fruit out of orchards and gardens, and whatever else it may be. Such theft is aggravated when it occurs by breaking into a house, and even more if the break-in occurs by night (Exodus 22:2-3). The following passages relate to this: "But let none of you suffer as ... a thief" (1 Peter 4:15); "Nor thieves ... shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:10).

Sixthly, there is armed robbery, which takes place on water or on land. Robbery at sea is referred to as pirating. To such robbery belongs the violent vanquishing of merchant ships belonging to citizens of a hostile government. The intent of such robbery is not to do damage and injury to the enemy so that he can do less harm; it is not done in obedience to the government and out of love for the homeland. Rather, it is motivated by a desire to enrich one's self with the business proceeds of other businessmen. Such robbery is called robbery of the privileged. If such robbery occurs on land it is called highway robbery. This is distinguished from general theft in that it is accompanied with the use of violence toward the owner, and is committed covertly. The following passages speak of such robbery. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him" (Leviticus 19:13); "We shall fill our houses with spoil" (Proverbs 1:13); "... nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:10).

Seventhly, it is prohibited to be an accomplice to thieves; that is, to harbor them and provide them with a safe abode in order to share in that which has been stolen. This includes the purchase of commodities of which one knows or suspects that they have been stolen, doing so since one can get them for half price. If there were no receivers (or fences) for stolen goods there would be no thieves; the receiver is as bad as the thief. Consider the following passages: "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him" (Psalms 50:18); "Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul" (Proverbs 29:24). The Means Whereby Theft Is Committed The means whereby theft is committed are the following: First, there is usurpation; that is, the oppression of those who are of low social status by either not paying them, or by having or retaining that which is theirs. This occurs if one files suit against those from whom one has purchased something, or if one keeps

litigation pending against those of lower social status who have no recourse. "Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats" (James 2:6). This is what the ungodly Jezebel did to obtain Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:15). The apostle warns against this. "That no man go beyond ... his brother in any matter" (1 Thessalonians 4:6).

Secondly, there is the deceit of one's neighbor while creating the appearance of right. "That no man ... defraud his brother in any matter" (1 Thessalonians 4:6); "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour" (Leviticus 19:13).

(1) This can occur relative to weight; that is, one uses weights which are too heavy when purchasing and weights which are too light when selling. This also occurs when the scale is faulty or if one manipulates the scale in a deceitful manner.

(2) This can occur relative to measurement; that is, if one over-measures when purchasing, and one undermeasures when selling; or if, when measuring the material, one skillfully cuts it short or stretches it.

(3) This can occur relative to volume; that is, enlarging the volume when purchasing and decreasing it when selling; or if one shakes up the merchandise in such a manner that the measure appears to be full -- this however not being the case. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have" (Leviticus 19:35-36); "Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 20:10); "A false balance is abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 11:1).

(4) One can be deceitful as far as merchandise is concerned; that is, by displaying and selling merchandise of a certain quality and delivering merchandise of poorer quality. One does this by corrupting the merchandise, intermixing it with something else -- for instance, when mixing chaff with the flour and then subsequently selling it as good bread. One does this by making the merchandise moist or by intermixing it with some heavy material which results in the weight being less than it ought to be. One does this by means of deceptive illumination, causing material to look differently. One does so by downplaying merchandise he wishes to purchase in order to cause the salesman to sell it below value; or, if one elevates the value and promotes it as such in order to sell it above value. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth" (Proverbs 20:14); "The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death" (Proverbs 21:6). One does so if he demands too high a price for merchandise; hereby the ignorant are deceived.

Question May one sell merchandise for a lower price than was originally demanded?

Answer: One may demand the highest price which is current at the market, and also receive it without the buyer being deceived. If, however, one wishes to reduce this reasonable profit somewhat -- and thus gain less -- he is permitted to bargain downward to some degree.

(5) One can be deceitful with coins; that is, knowingly spending money which is either too light, of a false alloy, or counterfeit, and giving it out as good money or intermixing it with the good, allowing it to pass into circulation unnoticed.

(6) One can also steal by means of usury. If one purchases the merchandise for a low price and in the meantime the price increases (yes, 50% or more), and if he then sells according to current market price, the profit is not unlawful, even if his gain were to double. Profit is not unlawful if one skillfully improves the merchandise -- even if he can transform something which is worth a nickel into something worth fifty cents. Profit is also lawful if one collects interest for money which has been loaned out. This must be consistent, however, with the current rate and according to the rule of love and righteousness. However, profit is unlawful (which is called usury among us) if one gains interest from his money and merchandise which supersedes the current rate. The more excessive this usury is, the greater is the theft. Merchants who bleed the poor as blood suckers are guilty of this. They extend credit to the poor, but sell them the merchandise far above the common market price, giving them the poorest quality as well.

Question Must one also not charge something for the long absence of one's money as well as for the risk involved (since it happens occasionally that one never sees his money again)?

Answer: You ought to make known to the borrower up front that you intend to charge much more for the merchandise, the extended credit, and the risk involved, so that the poor may know this and make the choice themselves as to whether they wish the interest to be that high. Furthermore, the interest must be charged according to the rule of love and righteousness. It is better at the outset to refer the poor to the deacons than to first bleed them. To the sin of usury also belongs the activity of pawnshop operators who take all manner of securities from the poor, such as essential clothing and tools whereby they must earn a living, and who furthermore charge such excessive interest that within a short time their entire capital is gone. "If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep" (Exodus 22:26-27). The Various Manners in Which Theft is Committed The manners in which theft is committed are of such a diverse nature that all cannot be enumerated. Every rogue acts consistent with the trade he plies.

First, there is the case when lawyers and prosecutors keep legal cases pending to extort the parties involved, and who knowingly defend evil cases.

Secondly, there is the drafting of fraudulent wills, contracts, obligation, and receipts for the sake of making illicit gain. This also pertains to fraudulent billing.

Thirdly, there is the withholding or reduction of wages. "Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth" (James 5:4).

Fourthly, there is purchasing on credit, while knowing all along that one either will not or cannot pay. Bankrupt persons who take out loans everywhere are guilty of this. They are especially guilty if they know that their estate is insolvent and they have the intent to disappear or file for bankruptcy. "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again" (Psalms 37:21).

Fifthly, there is the establishing of a monopoly; that is, the conspiring of some to have the market to themselves, especially if they do this relative to grain and other edible commodities, not selling them below such an excessive price. "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him" (Proverbs 11:26).

Sixthly, there is the undermining of a neighbor's business. This is not to imply that one may not live where he pleases or seek the trade of his choice in lawful ways; rather, this occurs when he seeks to rob the other of his trade by deceit, slander, and libel.

Seventhly, there is the idling away of time by loafing and loitering, just to spend the day doing as little as possible. "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand" (Proverbs 10:4); "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule; but the slothful shall be under tribute" (Proverbs 12:24).

Eighthly, there is laziness: "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster" (Proverbs 18:9); "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard. ... So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" (Proverbs 6:9; Proverbs 6:11). Concerning laziness the following is true:

(1) God hates laziness; every firstling of an ass either had to be redeemed or the neck had to be broken (Exodus 13:13).

(2) A sluggard is abominable to everyone; he is "as vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes" (Proverbs 10:26). (3) A sluggard is a fit instrument for the devil -- an accomplice to the devil (1 Timothy 5:12). (4) A sluggard is a burden to himself, and his way "is as an hedge of thorns" (Proverbs 15:19). (5) A sluggard makes himself poor (Proverbs 6:11). (6) Laziness engenders fornication and theft. Ninthly, there are squanderers, who always want to eat something good, carouse, drink, dress expensively, and thus not only squander their possessions, but subsequently borrow everywhere and at last are unable to pay back. Gambling belongs to this, for if you win, your gain is unjust, and if you lose, you are either robbing yourself or your loved ones. "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished" (Proverbs 13:11); "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty" (Proverbs 23:20-21).

Tenthly, there are healthy beggars, who go either from door to door or to certain benevolent persons -- all because they do not want to work. When they do have some funds, they consume all that they have in an excessive manner, and thus live from the sweat of another. "If any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).

Eleventhly, there is the maintenance of bars for drunkards and gamblers -- bars which make their living from whatever wives and children are deprived.

Twelfthly, there is the secret concealment of goods that have been found, keeping them for one's self, without making any effort to strive that the owner receives them again. "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost things of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself" (Deuteronomy 22:1-3).

Thirteenthly, there is the inappropriate use of rented and borrowed items; that is, to ruin them in such a way that initially it is not visible, but becomes evident soon afterwards.

Fourteenthly, there is cruel behavior toward impotent debtors. "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). For by such cruelty -- even wanting to get something where nothing is to be had -- one may force them to engage in evil practices. The Cause of Theft As far as the cause of theft is concerned, it issues forth from covetousness. (1) This manifests itself in the disposition of the heart which lusts after many possessions and after that which is beautiful, glorious, and delightful to the eyes. One then seeks to take possession through either just or unjust means. "... an heart they have exercised with covetous practices" (2 Peter 2:14).

(2) It manifests itself in a greedy pursuit after profit and in finding delight in making gain -- yes, even if it is in an appropriate manner. This is something which seldom remains true. Covetousness blinds one for seeing what is right. Covetousness deludes wisdom: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

(3) It manifests itself in miserliness, be it that one neither meets his own needs nor provides for his own nourishment, or he does not help another, leaving him destitute in his need. If something needs to be given, it is as little as possible and given with much reluctance, although it appears to be a very great matter in the eyes of the miser, and he will long reflect upon the fact that he has given such and such. To the root and cause of thievery one can also relate slothfulness, squandering, and other sins mentioned in the foregoing. The Virtues Enjoined The virtues commanded in this commandment are the following:

First, we are enjoined to love righteousness. "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice" (Proverbs 21:3); "... and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly" (Micah 6:8).

Secondly, we are enjoined to be diligent. "... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:12). For:

(1) diligence renders all labor effective;

(2) God commands diligence;

(3) the Lord commands His blessing there and through diligence one comes to honor (Proverbs 13:24 (4) diligence makes rich (Proverbs 10:4; Proverbs 13:4);

(5) all is done with ease, and work becomes a delight. Thirdly, we are commanded to be moderate in eating, drinking, and clothing. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).

Fourthly, we are commanded to be generous, and to use our possessions to meet the needs of those who are truly poor -- thus preventing that they will stretch forth their hands to

unrighteousness. "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

Fifthly, we are enjoined to be content. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have" (Hebrews 13:5); "But godliness with contentment is great gain. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:6; 1 Timothy 6:8).

Sixthly, we are enjoined to follow the golden rule. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12). Exhortation to Self-examination

Now turn to yourself and examine yourself in light of the virtues and vices mentioned above. How do you fare? Open your containers and closets, and observe your money, clothing, home decorations, as well as your homes, orchards, and fields -- and then answer this question: How did you acquire all these? If you perceive that you have not acquired them lawfully, restore that which you have obtained in an evil manner, for otherwise you are not permitted to pray (Isaiah 1:16-17; 1 John 3:20).

Evasive Argument #1: I have stolen so much; if I had to return everything I would be a beggar. Answer: It is better to be a beggar than a thief. Evasive Argument #2: I will come to shame.

Answer: There are ways whereby one can make secret restitution so that the owner receives again what is his, and yet does not know from where it originates.

Evasive Argument #3: I am not acquainted with those whom I have shortchanged.

Answer: Then give it to the poor; however, not as an alms, but in order that you may be relieved from your debt. If you maintain that it is beyond your means to make restitution, then go to the Lord and confess your sins. May it grieve you that you cannot make restitution; moreover, seek forgiveness in the blood of Christ. In the future guard against this sin, for:

(1) theft is an atheistic deed; it denies the providence of God; (2) it is idolatrous, for you are putting your trust in possessions, so that you may live from them: "Covetousness ... is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5);

(3) it spoils your own possessions, for God sends forth a curse upon that which is stolen. "I will bring it (the curse) forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief" (Zechariah 5:4). In order to be kept from this sin, arm yourself with the fear of God, who sees everything, and "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5); "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee" (Psalms 55:22); "... be content with such things as ye have" (Hebrews 13:5).

059. Chapter 54: The Ninth Commandment

----- CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR ----- The Ninth Commandment The ninth commandment pertains to the reputation and the good name of our neighbor. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Proverbs 22:1). Having a good name enables one to be of benefit to his neighbor both in society and in the church. Not having a good name, however, incapacitates a person and it even renders him incapable of having pleasant interaction with men. A pagan said, "Even if you would lose everything, take special care of your good name, for once you have lost it, you amount to nothing." Man loves his good name, and the law requiring love also teaches us to love the name of our neighbor, promote it, and abstain from injuring it. The contents of this commandment are as follows: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Exodus 20:16). Our neighbors are not only our bosom friends and neighbors, but all children of Adam. They are all men who could be in need of our help and friendship (or we of theirs), as the Lord Jesus teaches in the parable of the man who fell into the hands of murderers. He was neither helped by a passing priest nor by a Levite, but by a stranger and a Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

Witness is a declaration, and thus an announcement, concerning the good or evil conduct of our neighbor. To bear false witness is to make a declaration contrary to the truth of the matter and contrary to that of which we are aware -- which is even more abominable if it occurs to the detriment of our neighbor. To this also belongs bearing witness with an evil motive, in an evil manner, and with an evil objective. The Sins Prohibited

We organize the sins against this commandment under the following headings: 1) bearing false witness; 2) the twisting of someone's words; 3) backbiting; 4) slander; and 5) the deceitful use of words.

First, we can bear false witness either within the courtroom or outside of it. This occurs in the courtroom when:

(1) A judge, due to inability to see through the matter, being remiss in making a sufficient effort to be thoroughly acquainted with the case, fear of man, wanting to do someone a favor, or in anticipation of a bribe, issues an unrighteous sentence, injures justice, or executes it erroneously. "And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" (2 Chronicles 19:6-7); "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 17:15). This was David's sin when he rashly, on the basis of Ziba's accusation, judged Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 16:4). Job conducted himself differently, for he says of himself: "The cause which I knew not I searched out" (Job 29:16).

(2) The prosecutor brings someone into court about a matter which he either knows not to be right, or is in doubt about, and who, together with a clever lawyer, seeks to guide this case through, as the Jews thought they could do with Tertullus against Paul (Acts 24:1). Against Paul they produced

many and serious accusations which they could not prove (Acts 25:7).

(3) The defendant denies that of which he knows himself to be guilty, seeking to rectify this by plea-bargaining, being richer than his opposing party. Thus, Cain, having been summoned, denied that he knew where his brother was whom he had killed (Genesis 4:9).

(4) Lawyers, solicitors, and notaries know, or are able to know, that certain matters are evil and untrue, but give it a different twist in order to keep them pending for filthy lucre's sake. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20).

(5) Witnesses, not being well-acquainted with a matter, deliberately bear false witness, or cause the case to lean toward the party whom they favor most. They are guilty if they act hypocritically by using ambiguous words, or by either recounting or holding back circumstances, thus obscuring the truth. Such were Jezebel's witnesses against Naboth (1 Kings 21:13). Hear what Solomon says concerning such: "These six things doth the Lord hate: A false witness that speaketh lies" (Proverbs 6:16; Proverbs 6:19); "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape" (Proverbs 19:5). In common conversation, that is, outside the courtroom, false witness is borne in various manners. Secondly, there is the sin of twisting someone's words. This occurs when one indeed recounts someone's words, but by omitting or adding something changes their meaning (cf. Matthew 26:61). One can also recount the very words themselves, but give them an entirely different meaning than the speaker had in mind. This was the device of the devil (Matthew 4:6). Or else one can recount the very same words and matters, but change the circumstances of time, locality, and related matters, recounting it with a changed voice and gestures whereby the hearer will interpret the matter differently than had been expressed by the initial speaker. Observe this in Proverbs 4:24 : "Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee."

Thirdly, there is backbiting. There is no sin which is so common among all manner of individuals as this vicious serpent which disturbs peaceful societal living and injures the honor of our neighbor.

First, this sin is committed by the speaker if he:

(1) States untrue things, that is, lies, in the absence of his neighbor, as Potiphar's wife toward Joseph (Genesis 39:17), Saul's servants toward David (1 Samuel 18:22), and Absalom toward his father (2 Samuel 15:2).

(2) We sin if we recount things of which we are not certain, knowing them from hearsay and not knowing whether they be true or not. Or we sin if we add: "I do not know, but I have been told this, and I can mention the person who told me." This is nevertheless something which does not promote the honor of our neighbor but only serves to create an evil impression of him. "Thou shalt not raise a false report" (Exodus 23:1).

(3) We sin if we have a suspicion that someone has done this or that and we express that suspicion to others. The princes did this concerning David to their king Hanun (2 Samuel 10:3).

(4) We sin if we recount the true faults of our neighbor -- be it that they were hidden or that everyone knows of them. Thereby we show our delight that he has done wrong and we make the

guilty party hateful by renewal -- even if we then claim that we are troubled by it and that we would not say it if it were not so, and therefore are asking you not to repeat it. Even if one then recounts his virtues by adding the word "but," the backbiter is nevertheless not excused. This causes the gossip to be the more readily accepted. "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Proverbs 26:22). This does not apply if we make someone's committed offenses known to the elders of the congregation, for this is motivated by love and according to the command of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 18:16). This is also not applicable if someone is in danger of being deceived by a mischievous person -- be it by servants or in a different situation. Neither is this applicable when we are either asked or not asked about the conduct of such a person, and when we warn against such a person, knowing with certainty that someone is unfaithful. To do so is an act of love, which cannot be exercised in any different way than by identifying the unfaithful person.

(5) We are also guilty of backbiting if we but ask: "Have you heard this about so and so?" This also occurs if we make a great fuss about something without identifying what it is, implying that the issue is significant, while in the meantime remaining silent about it. This furthermore occurs if we indicate with our gestures that we despise such and such a person and harbor an evil suspicion about him. This is also the case if we casually recount something which in and of itself is not evil, but which nevertheless is capable of stirring up some thoughts which engender certain conclusions. In one word, we are guilty of backbiting if we say something about our neighbor which is capable of making him less esteemed and less loved. Regardless of whether this occurs intentionally, with evil motive, out of hatred, moved by envy, or due to thoughtlessness or talkativeness, the sin is committed, for there is a lack of love and a quiet aversion toward the neighbor in the heart.

Secondly, the hearer is guilty of backbiting:

(1) if he inwardly delights that his neighbor is depicted in such a fashion and with relish listens to this;

(2) if, due to curiosity, he gives another person the opportunity to gossip;

(3) if, by smiling, nodding, or by saying, "What are you saying? Is that possible," he stimulates the backbiter to continue in order to either hear more, or because he dares not let the backbiter be the only speaker -- especially if he is a person of some prominence;

(4) if he does not speak but is silent instead and allows the backbiter to proceed rather than opposing him with words and gestures. "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue" (Proverbs 25:23). This is the most common sin among all manner of people, which is nevertheless dreadful and devilish. Therefore, in order that everyone may be deterred from this sin the following matters ought to be noted:

(1) You yourself would not like it if someone would thus gossip about you, and therefore you ought not to do so concerning others. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12). There is with God the judgment of retribution, so that if you gossip about someone else, another person will gossip about you. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged" (Luke 6:37).

(2) You rob your neighbor of that which is most precious. "A good name is better than precious ointment" (Ecclesiastes 7:1).

(3) The supreme Lawgiver expressly forbids it. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (Leviticus 19:16).

(4) It is the peculiar work of the devil, who spoke evil of Job (Job 1:11), and does so of the godly. "For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10). He stirs up to backbiting, for the devil sits upon the tongue of the speaker and in the ear of the hearer.

(5) It is a sin attributed to the most evil of times when man's conduct would be most abominable. "For men shall be ... false accusers" (2 Timothy 3:2-3).

(6) God hates backbiters. "These six things doth the Lord hate: ... a lying tongue ... a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-17; Proverbs 6:19).

(7) God excludes them from heaven, this being evident by way of reverse argument. "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour" (Psalms 15:3); "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape" (Proverbs 19:5); "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son ... I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes" (Psalms 50:20-21). The fourth sin which is forbidden here is slander. The distinction between slander and backbiting is this, that the one occurs in the absence of the neighbor (behind his back), and the other in his presence. Since the latter sin is of a more brazen and evil nature, it is thus all the more abominable.

(1) This sin sometimes occurs at a moment of seething wrath. This is what Shimei did toward David (2 Samuel 16:78). This also occurs when we make a fool out of someone and mockingly accuse him of all sorts of evil -- as the children did toward Elisha (2 Kings 2:23-24). It occurs when we make sarcastic remarks, subtle digs, and snide remarks; that is, subtly attribute some evil to someone as having been committed by him, doing so in such manner that the other person has no recourse. One then considers himself to have handled this well, delights in it, and tells others how he fooled the other person. David refers to that as having a tongue as sharp as a razor (Psalms 52:2), sharpening one's tongue as a serpent (Psalms 140:3), and as a false tongue, which is as "sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper" (Psalms 120:3-4). It also occurs when we make faces, laugh others to scorn, shoot out the lip, and shake the head -- as the Jews did toward Christ (cf. Psalms 22:7; Matthew 27:39). Concerning them Solomon says: "Judgments are prepared for scorers" (Proverbs 19:29). Paul excludes revilers from heaven (1 Corinthians 6:10) and he forbids the godly to have fellowship with them (1 Corinthians 5:11). The fifth sin is lying. To lie is knowingly (or if one could have known) speaking contrary to the truth.

(1) There are lies with harmful intent; that is, to injure a person in regard to either his honor or possessions.

(2) There are lies for the purpose of entertaining others with fabricated stories. "They make the king glad ... with their lies" (Hosea 7:3).

(3) There are lies by which we seek to avoid dishonor, harm, or punishment, relative to ourself or our neighbor.

We can also seek to gain advantage for ourself or others, be it in business transactions or other cases -- as Gehazi did, for which he was stricken with leprosy (2 Kings 5:25). The midwives of Egypt did this. Nevertheless, they were blessed by the Lord, not because they lied, but because they did good toward Israel (Exodus 1:19).

(4) There is a speaking of lies out of custom. There are habitual liars who speak evil, or they lie without reason and without premeditation, due to their heart being estranged from the truth. They want to be perceived as a great person who knows much and who has done great things. In order to be deterred from lying, it ought to be known that:

(1) God frequently forbids lying. "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Ephesians 4:25); "Lie not one to another" (Colossians 3:9).

(2) It is an abomination before God. "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 12:22).

(3) It is the devil's work. "When he (the devil) speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44); "I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets" (1 Kings 22:22).

(4) Liars readily become known and are despised by everyone.

(5) God punishes them temporally and eternally. Ananias and Sapphira were immediately punished with death because of a lie (Acts 5:2-3). We read furthermore: "Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing" (Psalms 5:6); "All liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Sixthly, there is the deceitful use of one's words or countenance. Deceiving for profit was discussed in the eighth commandment. However, here the act of deceiving will be considered as far as being contrary to the truth, and when words and gestures are not consistent with the heart.

(1) This occurs when we act hypocritically. Cain acted hypocritically when he showed friendship to his brother Abel in order to kill him (Genesis 4:8). Simeon and Levi acted hypocritically toward Hamor and Shechem (Genesis 34:14; Genesis 34:26), and Absalom did so toward his brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13:26-29).

(2) This occurs when we praise someone with flattery in order to snare and trap him. The Pharisees did this toward Christ (Matthew 22:15-17). Observe this in Psalms 12:2 : "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." At such a moment they can even express their words in a heartfelt and passionate manner -- as if they meant it. The objective and reasoning within their heart are, however, illdisposed toward that person. To this belongs the excessive praising of someone for the purpose of humiliating him all the more, or to puff up one's neighbor in order that his foolishness might become manifest.

(3) This occurs when one uses equivocal language; that is, language by which one intends to deceive his neighbor by causing him to interpret words differently from what they were secretly intended to mean. This has been discussed when we considered the third commandment. When

engaged in such deceitful behavior, several sins coalesce and it is therefore all the more abominable in the eyes of God and of men.

(1) The Lord forbids this sharply. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour" (Leviticus 19:13).

(2) Flatterers will become manifest and be put to shame. "He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him" (Proverbs 27:14).

(3) Flatterers will not avoid their judgment, for the saints pray against them. "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips" (Psalms 12:3).

(4) God pronounces a woe upon hypocrites, doing so seven times in one chapter (Matthew 23:14-29). "Woe unto you, hypocrites." The Virtues Enjoined

It is not sufficient to abstain from forbidden sins, but also this commandment enjoins the practice of opposite virtues.

First, we are to promote with all our strength the good reputation of our neighbor. We must render him honor and respect and preserve his reputation as much as the truth will allow us to do. If he has faults, they are to be covered rather than recounted. They should not be denied, for then one would lie; rather, we must be silent about them, and those who recount his faults should be rebuked as being guilty of backbiting. In rebuking such backbiters, one should, however, not justify these faults. Jonathan promoted David's honor in such a fashion, speaking good on his behalf (1 Samuel 19:4). "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Secondly, we are to love the truth. If the heart is truthful and loves the truth, it will bring forth truth, and man will be prevented from lying -- be it that this is either to our advantage or disadvantage, or that the person is either friendly or hostile toward us. "... therefore love the truth and peace" (Zechariah 8:19).

Thirdly, we are to speak the truth, promote the truth, and bear witness to the truth at every occasion -- whether this pertains to us or to our neighbor. "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth" (Zechariah 8:16); "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Ephesians 4:25); "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Php 4:8).

Final Arguments for Observing this Commandment

(1) God is a God of truth (Isaiah 65:16), God desires truth within (Psalms 51:6), and God's eyes are upon the truth (Jeremiah 5:3).

(2) Those who love the truth and speak the truth are esteemed by everyone, are able to be an ornament in the church, and be beneficial to others.

(3) Such always have an unfettered and quiet conscience. They are not afraid of being caught in their words due to distortion of words, backbiting, slander, flattery, and hypocrisy. Even if the one whispers against the other, he is not moved by it; though if he is reproached he remains calm, for his conscience does not gnaw. Even if one rises up against him, he will stand firm, and he will be as bold as a young lion (Proverbs 28:1).

(4) God will be with such persons and help them, and their light will shine forth as the noonday. Those who, in faith, speak and act to God's honor and according to His law, are the true members of His church and they are the heirs of salvation -- for it is an evidence of their grace. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour" (Psalms 15:1-3). He who desires to speak and act in such a fashion, and who thus wishes to conduct himself toward his neighbor, ought:

(1) To desist from ambition and lust for money, and renounce all that is of the world -- for such a disposition generally engenders the sins against this commandment.

(2) To be on guard, for he carries within his heart the seed of the sin against this commandment. He ought to be cautious in speaking, always remind himself of the omniscience of God, and unite his heart to the fear of God. "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer" (Proverbs 15:28). David did this: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Psalms 39:1).

(3) Continually to pray to God with David: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord" (Psalms 19:14); "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3).

060. Chapter 55: The Tenth Commandment

----- CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE ----- The Tenth Commandment

David says: "I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Psalms 119:96). All the commandments have broad dimensions, but this is particularly true for the tenth commandment. They are broad 1) as far as the objects are concerned, and the branches which come forth out of the stem, 2) as far as the earnestness and zeal with which the task must be accomplished, and 3) as far as the spiritual manner of observance: in love, godly fear, and obedience. An unconverted person takes no note of this, and believes the external observance to be sufficient. Some -- with the rich young ruler -- allow themselves to believe that they have observed all these things (Matthew 19:20). Many of the converted do not focus so much upon this, until they learn that they see but little, and those who begin to perceive this become desirous for more light, and pray, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psalms 119:18). Many indeed hold the law before them as a mirror in order to discern their deformity in it and to govern their lives accordingly. There is, however, but little knowledge concerning the tenth commandment and it is generally passed over. It is one of those commandments against which we sin most frequently, and therefore it is essential that this commandment also be explained as far as its correct meaning is concerned. He who correctly observes this will be startled concerning himself, not having known that he has been continually sinning.

Man Created with Desire for God The Papists and Lutherans make this one commandment into two -- something which we have previously refuted. Paul refers to it with one word in Romans 7:7 -- covetousness. Covetousness, as far as impurity and unrighteousness are concerned, belongs to the seventh and eighth commandments; however, covetousness is mentioned here without such connotations. Man is not self-sufficient; he cannot satisfy himself with himself. He is but an empty vessel, only capable of receiving something. He must find his fulfillment by matters which are exterior to himself -- both according to soul and body. He must have food, drink, air, and light, will it be well with his body. According to the soul, he must have something spiritual and infinite -- that is God Himself -- in order for his infinite desire to be satisfied. In order to be fulfilled, God has created an innate desire within Roman Catholic Church, false views of man. This desire, considered in and of itself, was a perfect desire. As long as man was in the state of perfection, that desire was directed toward the right objects in a right manner. In regard to the soul, his desire was only directed toward God in order to be continually satisfied in having fellowship with and finding delight in Him -- and as far as the body was concerned, his desire was directed toward that which it needed. It was the food of Christ's soul to do the will of His Father (John 4:34), and according to the body He had a desire for temporal food and drink. He hungered (Matthew 4:2), and He thirsted (John 19:28).

However, after man had sinned, desire remained but it has been distorted and corrupted, both as to the manner in which it functions, as well as relative to its objects. He has no desire after God

and his desires are therefore not directed toward God as being the satisfaction of his soul. His desire is after this world, whereby he seeks to satisfy his spiritual soul, and according to the body he has unlawful desires toward that which is lawful in and of itself. These desires furthermore extend themselves toward forbidden objects. This is the sin forbidden in this commandment.

Refutation of the Notion that Covetousness is No Sin

Natural man and the Papists are of the opinion that covetousness is no sin if a person's desires are not accompanied by either impurity or unrighteousness; if there is no intent to carry out these desires, there being no deliberation as to the means to use to accomplish this -- and thus if his will did not acquiesce in this. There would then only be a desire for a given matter, with the supposition, however, that one desires to attain this by proper means. This would then be no sin.

Proof #1: The tenth commandment itself refutes them for the following reasons:

(1) Even though impure desires toward our neighbor's wife and an unlawful desire for our neighbor's possessions belong to the realm of the seventh and eighth commandments, the law nevertheless explicitly prohibits coveting in this commandment.

(2) Since there remains no other coveting of our neighbor's wife, house, or possessions but a coveting which does not translate into the unlawful pursuit of these things -- and thus a coveting in which the will does not acquiesce, as the object of our desire is presently still our neighbor's possession and may therefore not be ours -- then that very desire is sin.

Proof #2: The apostle states expressly that covetousness is sin. "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7). He knew that covetousness relative to adultery and theft was sinful, for that is evident from nature. He speaks of a covetousness which was concealed from nature, however, and thus also from him, being in the state of nature. He thus speaks of covetousness in an unrestricted sense, unrelated to the acquiescence of the will -- a covetousness which he nevertheless was not permitted to have as it pertained to the wife or possessions of his neighbor. He was therefore not permitted to covet, even if it were but a passionate desire, such as: "If only I had that woman or that house." He declares such a desire to be sin. "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law."

Proof #3: Covetousness by its very nature brings forth sin. First there is only covetousness, but, once this arises, it draws man further away and entices him. He will then proceed with the commission of sin. However, that which gives birth to sin is sin itself, for a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. Observe this in James 1:14-15 : "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." The Sins Prohibited The sins prohibited in this commandment are the following: First, the evil disposition of soul and body is prohibited, for original sin consists in the absence of the image of God and in the possession of the image of the devil. The soul misses true light, love, life, peace, and holiness -- yes, God Himself. Instead, she is in a state of darkness, death, unrest, and pollution. Furthermore, the disposition of the body is evil, as a result of which it has numerous inordinate inclinations and thus stirs up the soul to lust in a variety of manners. This disposition is the fountain of all kinds of sinful motions.

Secondly, dissatisfaction with our current circumstances is forbidden, which manifests itself:

- (1) in a howling emptiness and a greedy yearning for something which is not possessed;
- (2) in a restlessness, fretfulness, and stirring of the heart due to not having that which could satisfy, even though it is not limited to a specific thing -- it just wants to have something;
- (3) in an active lust and desire for something which appears to be able to delight the heart, reasoning as follows:

"If I had the wife or husband which my neighbor has -- if I had that house, that garden, that piece of land, that horse, that cow (even if one does not desire this in an inordinate manner) -- or if I had a different profession, would practice that trade, held that office, had such an amount of money (even if this does not relate to his neighbor), then I would be happy." Such a person is thus as a "troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isaiah 57:20).

Thirdly, disagreeable temper is forbidden. This manifests itself in an aversion for all that is good, and in the quenching of the motions of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).

Fourthly, an untamed heart is forbidden; that is, to be without restraint, to be as a wild animal, and to be as a Belial without a yoke.

Fifthly, one is forbidden to delight in sin; that is, in the sin of others, as well as in reflecting upon his own, previously committed sins.

Sixthly, to entertain vain thoughts is forbidden. This does not pertain to the reflection upon matters which one intends to carry out (for this pertains to other commandments), but rather to those one does not intend to execute but only thinks about and finds delight in doing so. Someone may imagine himself to be in the position of a mayor, businessman, count, prince, or king, and reflect upon what he would then do. Or he imagines himself to be poor, cast out, etc., and how he would then fare. Yes, even if one does not wish to build such castles in the sky and reflect upon such vain things, it can be that such thoughts arise in his heart contrary to his will.

However, to these do not belong those suggestions and interjections of the devil in which his own heart is not involved. The devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He deviously leads man to such opportunities and objects which he knows are suitable to ignite a specific inclination in him. He is like a peddler who asks: "Do you not wish to do this? Do you not have a desire for this? This is beautiful and delightful." As long as one does not listen to this, or inclines himself in any way, but chases such suggestions away as flies from his countenance, it is not his sin, but the devil's. Such temptations are not a man's thoughts, but rather the devil speaking to a man. If, however, inclinations begin to stir within the heart and one begins to listen, then he is guilty, even though the initial cause may have proceeded from the devil. I say, "may have proceeded," for man's heart itself continually generates all manner of vanity and sinful lusts, and it is thus necessary to distinguish whether the initiative came from the devil or from one's self. For as soon as there is the least inclination of the heart, there is sin. It is also difficult to discern this, but he who is very watchful over his own heart and who has made some advancement in spiritual life, will know better whether the initial impulse proceeds from the heart, or whether it comes or is suggested by an external source -- and what it is that will either take hold or not take hold. The interjections, buffetings, and fiery darts of the devil are more easily discerned, since they are entirely contrary to the nature of man. Such is true for blasphemous thoughts toward God. I

call them thoughts -- not that they are thoughts, but those who are assaulted are of the opinion that they are their own thoughts. They become extremely distraught over this and conclude that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. They cannot pray, but think that they will be damned. This even adversely affects their mental faculties and exhausts the body. That such thoughts are not man's own, but are only a hearing of the revilings of Satan is evident for the following reasons:

(1) They arise in a frightful manner, for we are somewhat favorably inclined toward that which proceeds from the heart, giving such thoughts either full reign or being naturally inclined to reflect upon them. The thoughts interjected by Satan, however, are resisted due to the absurdity and abominableness of the matter, since they are contrary to the natural conscience, or they are resisted by the grace, fear, and love of God.

(2) They are recognized by the fact that they come from without, and thought after thought is forcefully impressed, contrary to all opposition. This is similar to a person putting his fingers in his ears in order not to hear what the other person is saying. The other person calls out so loudly, however, and comes so close that he nevertheless hears it. Everyone will then perceive that it is not the sin of the hearer, but of the one who speaks evil. Such is also the case here. Therefore, the one who is assaulted must note this as a trial from God (who gives the devil free reign) as a sorrowful cross, and not as his sin. This consideration will strengthen him and enable him to endure these onslaughts all the better. All he needs to do is flee the temptation and divert himself with some serious physical activity. He must especially not concern himself with it, but rather despise it as an abomination of the devil, who will for this reason be punished. Such a person cannot repel this, but it will strengthen him to give no heed thereto, and it will thus be less injurious. And if he receives some breathing room, he must earnestly pray to the Lord -- yes, during these assaults he must cry with his heart to God. He will have that much more liberty to do so if he takes note that it is not his sin, but rather that he is being tormented with these thoughts. The Virtues Enjoined The virtues which are enjoined in this commandment are the following: First, we must be adorned with the image of God. We must have that pure light and knowledge of God, and there must be holiness and righteousness relative to the will and affections. This blameless spiritual disposition is suitable to engender all manner of spiritual motions and exercises. Furthermore, there must be a blameless and proper disposition of heart and moderation of the body, having nothing but orderly motions.

Secondly, we are to be satisfied with having union and communion with God, as well as with the will of God, if we do not have that which the well-being of soul and body seem to require. "Be content with such things as ye have" (Hebrews 13:5). We must also joyously embrace the will of God in that which we must undertake, and we must accomplish it out of love. To be satisfied while missing what we would desire to have does not preclude our being sensitive about this, nor the use of means to obtain that for which we have a holy desire. It does preclude emotional upheaval and torment, however, and consists in being quiet, calm, and content -- this being the will of our Father and to our advantage.

Thirdly, there must be a hatred against sin. "I hate vain thoughts" (Psalms 119:113), and a heartfelt love for that which is good. "... but Thy law do I love."

Fourthly, in our heart, thoughts, words, and deeds we must hold forth the law of God, as the will of God -- as our only rule of life. "I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes alway, even unto the end" (Psalms 119:30;Psalms 119:111-112).

Behold, here is a mirror in which you may see your sins, and here is a rule according to which you may direct your ways. May the Lord send forth His light and truth, and may they lead us! Amen.

061. Chapter 56: The Glorification of God

----- CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX ----- The Glorification of God

There are no virtues which are not comprehended in the perfect rule of life, the law of God. We have pointed out the most prominent aspects of each commandment in the previous chapters. We shall now consider some of these matters more explicitly, and thus stir up the soul that delights in holiness to practice it.

Virtue: Its Nature and Goal

Virtue is that within man which perfectly harmonizes with the will of God as presented in the law. One may consider virtues in their propensity or in their manifestation. The propensity is the virtuous disposition which God has infused at regeneration and is acquired by way of many exercises. Due to this propensity the virtuous person is active in a holy fashion toward various objects.

He who has one virtue has them all. This is true not only because they are all united -- for one virtue does not exist independently, and in the exercise of one virtue many merge together -- but also because the disposition of the heart is virtuous and capable of being exercised in harmony with the requirement of the object. The holier this disposition is, the holier the ensuing deeds will be. By reason of the exercise of the one virtue, this holy disposition is increased and thus becomes more competent to exercise other virtues. The one virtue (when considered as such) is not superior to another virtue, for they are in perfect harmony with the law under all circumstances. Any conformity to the law less than that is a fault, and therefore sin. However, the objects and circumstances are either greater or less, and in that respect the manifestation of the one virtue is greater than of the other. Furthermore, since man is imperfect, one man has more of this virtuous disposition and its actual manifestation than the other. In regard to the ultimate goal of a virtue, the consideration of the virtue precedes its manifestation. The more that man is illuminated, the more he will focus on loftier matters, setting them before him in order to attain them. A beginning Christian perceives the dreadfulness of eternal condemnation and has confused notions about salvation. This causes him to aim at being delivered from the one and to acquire the other. As such a person is increasingly illuminated, he will focus upon loftier matters and will strive to acquire them. He will do so until he is acquainted with and delights in the highest goal: the glorification of God. Being motivated by this, he uses all means at his disposal to attain to this. A younger Christian, having lesser matters in view, nevertheless ends in the glorification of God, giving thanks for the good that was received. The more mature a Christian becomes, however, the more he will engage himself from the superior to the inferior; that is, love for the glory of God motivates him to do everything which serves to that end. This ultimate goal, the glorification of God, we posit as the primary virtue.

God Glorifies Himself in the Works of Nature and Grace

God first of all glorifies Himself when He reveals His perfections to His creatures -- both in the works of nature as well as in the works of grace.

(1) God glorifies Himself in the works of nature, that is, in creation and preservation. Consider the following passages: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! When I consider Thy heavens ..." (Psalms 8:1); "In wisdom hast thou made them all" (Psalms 104:24); "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20); "Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good ... from heaven" (Acts 14:17).

(2) God glorifies Himself in the work of grace, by manifesting therein His righteousness: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness" (Romans 3:25); His wisdom: "To the intent that now ... might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10); His mercy and grace: "To the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:6); His love: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared" (Titus 3:4). And thus "the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3).

Secondly, God glorifies His Son, the Mediator Jesus Christ: "The God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus" (Acts 3:13), and the Son in turn glorifies the Father: "I have glorified Thee on the earth" (John 17:4).

Thirdly, God glorifies His children in this life when He adorns them with His image and exalts them before the eyes of the world. "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable" (Isaiah 43:4); "And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezekiel 16:14). God glorifies them after death: "For it became Him ... in bringing many sons unto glory" (Hebrews 2:10); "Moreover ... whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Romans 8:30). The Lord has all honor and glory infinitely within Himself -- also when there was no creature to acknowledge this. He is "the God of glory" (Acts 7:2), the "King of glory" (Psalms 24:8), and "the Father of glory" (Ephesians 1:17). From this glory emanates a brilliance which even the angels cannot endure. Therefore they cover their faces and cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). When surrounded by this brilliance, man disappears and cries out, "Woe is me! for I am undone ... for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). The glory of God can neither be decreased nor increased by a creature. His glory remains the same, irrespective of whether man despises or magnifies it. It is pure goodness of God -- who is light, and who covers Himself with light as with a garment and dwells in an unapproachable light -- that He reveals His glory to men in some measure, permitting them to rejoice in this, to glorify, acknowledge, magnify, and praise Him, and to make Him known to others as such. This is felicity and the work of angels. "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14). This is felicity and the work of glorified souls. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power" (Revelation 4:11). This is felicity and the work of believers upon earth who have been formed to the praise of His glorious grace and to show forth His praise (Isaiah 43:21). Every godly person delights in this activity as David did. "I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works" (Psalms 145:5). The Glorification of God To glorify God is to acknowledge Him, praise Him, and to make Him known unto others with love, joy, and reverence, in response to beholding His perfections. The glorification of God flows forth from beholding His perfections. The knowledge of God is in consequence of faith or as

a result of beholding. The apostle distinguishes between these two in 2 Corinthians 5:7.

Faith acknowledges God to be as He has revealed Himself in His Word. In the Word of God the perfections of God are described as they manifest themselves in the works of nature, and particularly as they shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ -- that is, in the great work of redemption. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Faith takes notice of all that the Word expresses about God, and particularly as He made Himself known to Moses. "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6). Faith establishes these as certain truths and acknowledges God to be thus. Such faith causes man to conduct himself toward such a God as He is worthy of and is appropriate for him. Yes, to believe is to glorify God. "He (Abraham) ... was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans 4:20). Even if a believer had nothing beyond faith that God is such a God in Christ and such a God for him, and did not perceive the sensible manifestation of this within himself, he must proceed on that basis, rejoice, and in love and joy acknowledge, magnify, and praise Him as such. This is the error of many gracious souls -- they do neither sufficiently esteem the view of faith, nor accustom themselves to glorify God thereby.

Even though the Lord has reserved this immediate beholding for heaven, He nevertheless grants His children some measure of this according to His promise. "I ... will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21).

Although all believers are not placed with Moses in the cleft of the rock when the Lord proclaimed His Name, are not all taken along to the mountain where Jesus was glorified, and are not all drawn to the third heaven with Paul, the Lord occasionally gives His children a superior view of Himself by faith and a clearer view of His perfections. Faith, and this clear view of God, is the fountain from which the glorification of God proceeds. This view of God begets love to the glory of His Name. He who beholds the perfections of God will immediately be ignited in love -- not only to be personally united with the Beloved One, but to exalt and praise all the attributes of God, and also to make them known to others, so that the Lord may be glorified by many. "Let such as love Thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified" (Psalms 70:4). Out of this knowledge and love issues forth joy, and a delightful acquiescence that God is such a glorious and blessed God. "The humble shall see this, and be glad" (Psalms 69:32); "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (Psalms 97:12).

Such a person having been rendered capable through knowledge, love, and joy, makes the glory of God his ultimate objective. Motivated by love, he does whatever he can to promote that objective, relates everything to that objective, and ends in that from which his activity originated. Many psalms begin and end with hallelujah. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Romans 11:36). This is the command: "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31); "... that God in all things may be glorified" (1 Peter 4:11). The Manner in Which God is Glorified

Having a delight in this objective, and making this their goal in all things, the godly endeavor to glorify God personally and together with others. They personally glorify God with the heart, tongue, and deeds.

First of all, they glorify Him with the heart.

(1) They do so when they observe God in all His works, occupying themselves in the beholding of the perfections of God which manifest themselves in these works. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Psalms 107:43); "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee" (Psalms 139:17-18); "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord" (Psalms 104:34).

(2) They do so when between God and their soul they in adoration lose themselves in the glories of God and acquiescently exclaim, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable" (Psalms 145:3); "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalms 139:6).

(3) They do so when, with holy motions within, they exalt the Lord above everything and praise His Name in solitude. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" (1 Peter 3:15).

Secondly, they glorify Him with the tongue. The heart, being filled with holy meditation, sets everything in motion. Not being able to refrain themselves, they express themselves in solitude as David did: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Psalms 103:1); "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more. My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof" (Psalms 71:14-15). The soul, forgetting herself in the beholding of the perfections of God, breaks forth in jubilation, and the high praises of God will be in her mouth (Psalms 149:6). Such reflections cause the "lips of those that are asleep to speak" (Song of Solomon 7:9), and give "songs in the night" (Job 35:10). "Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me" (Psalms 42:8); "... singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

Thirdly, they glorify Him with deeds. They do so,

(1) when, with the objective to render God honor and glory, they humble themselves before the Lord as a sinner and as one worthy of condemnation, and flee to Him for grace, thus rendering Him honor for His mercy;

(2) when they request all that they desire from the Lord, thus acknowledging Him as the origin and giver of all good things;

(3) when they humbly bow before Him to honor Him in His adorable majesty;

(4) when they, motivated by the fear of God, subdue a stirring sin, thus rendering Him honor for His holiness and stupendous majesty;

(5) when they take refuge to Him for protection and without fear hide in Him, thus glorifying Him in His omnipotence and faithfulness;

(6) when they make themselves available to God for service, saying, "Oh Lord, surely I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant," thus rendering Him honor for His sovereign dominion and His worthiness to be served;

(7) when they, in all manner of crosses, silently subject themselves to Him, thus rendering Him honor for His wisdom and compassion. They do so in all circumstances and exercises, thereby rendering Him honor for those attributes which manifest themselves at such occasions. If you engage in these and other activities, the glorification of God is indeed implied in this -- even though you are then most sensitive to your own salvation. You must, however, strive for loftier objectives and accustom yourself to magnify God in response to lively views of Him, and thus begin and end everything with the glory of God.

We glorify God relative to others with words and deeds. We first of all do so with words if we -- having as our objective to make the glory of God known to others so that they also may glorify that God who is worthy of all honor -- instruct others in the way of salvation, and in various ways lead them to the Lord Jesus, stirring them up to faith and repentance, and by admonishing and rebuking them.

We also glorify God if we speak of Him and His deeds to others in order to show them the glory of God in all His works. "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon His name: make known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him: talk ye of all His wondrous works" (Psalms 105:1-2); "... declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted" (Isaiah 12:4).

Secondly, we do so with deeds and our entire life if we, having as our objective the glorification of God, conduct ourselves in such a fashion in the presence of people that the image of God shines forth. God is invisible and the natural man neither knows nor sees God in either the works of nature or the works of grace. If, however, a child of God who is a partaker of the image of God manifests this image in his conduct, the heart of an unconverted person will frequently be powerfully convicted that there is a God -- and that He is to be honored, feared, loved, and served. It is a means whereby some begin to seek the way of salvation and are converted. A regenerate person, seeing the image of God shine forth in another, is stirred up in the love and fear of God, and some who are in a backslidden state thereby come to repentance and are restored to their former zeal. And even if our conduct does not have this effect, we nevertheless glorify the Lord as far as we ourselves are concerned; that is, if the intent is there to show by our conduct that God is such a God. As a reward, one will carry a sweet peace of conscience homeward. This is the command of the Lord Jesus: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16); "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). The apostle Peter desires that women would thus endeavor to win their husbands: "... that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives" (1 Peter 3:1).

Man's Grievous Failure to Glorify God The manner in which one glorifies God is evident from the foregoing. He who loves God and finds delight in honoring Him and in the glorification of His Name will experience much grief when he observes the conduct of men in this respect.

First, let your eyes scan the entire earth for a moment. Observe how, on the one hand, God does not leave Himself without witness in that He does good -- gives rain and fruitful seasons from heaven, and fills the hearts of men with food and gladness. Observe how God in His works manifests His eternal power and Godhead, His glory and awesome majesty, and His longsuffering and mercy. Over against this, observe the conduct of men. The hearts of all men (with a few

exceptions) are turned away from the Lord. They forget Him and neither acknowledge, thank, nor glorify Him. They act as if God does not exist, is not indeed glorious and worthy of all honor, and as if all that they are and receive does not proceed from Him. They are all as the swine who, with their faces downward, gather the acorns, but who do not look up toward the tree from which they fall. Such is also the case with man. Man eagerly accepts all good things but does not look up to the Lord who gives them -- yes, even abuses them against Him. A lover of God's honor, attentively observing this, finds reason to sorrow and mourn. Ought not the high, exalted, and glorious God be honored for all His benevolence? Oh corrupt, crooked, and perverse generation! In focusing upon man he will grieve over his misery -- that he does not answer to the purpose for which he was created, is void of that felicity, and thus becomes and remains subject to the wrath of God.

Secondly, you who are lovers of God's honor, consider the church for a moment. Is not that a people who should glorify God, who have been formed for that purpose, and who should be the glory of Christ? How sad is the condition of the church in regard to this! A great number -- the exception being the godly who by the extraordinary goodness of God are still present there -- are void of knowledge, void of love, void of the fear of God, void of a desire to approach unto God, void of the appearance of godliness, and void of a striving to render God honor. Men are generally worldly, live according to their lusts, and hate that which is good and those who do good; some are worse in their conduct than other sects -- yes, more than the heathen. For their sake the name of God is blasphemed. Seek solitude and mourn over this; let tears quietly drip from your eyes, call them Ichabod, and complain, "How has the faithful city become a harlot, and how has the crown fallen from her head!"

(1) There are those who openly serve the world and who mock with godliness and the godly. There are drunkards, gamblers, dancers, show-offs, backbiters, liars, rancorous individuals, and men of evil temper -- in one word, all manner of ungodly men. It would be one thing if these people were outside the realm of the church; however, they are to be found within her, and thus they rob the church of her glory and dishonor God and Christ, the Head of the church.

(2) Others attend the public worship services; they join in singing the praises of God, arise or bow down during prayer; both write and say, "Praise and thanks be unto God," speak of God and His Word, and yet manifest by their deeds that it is merely routine, custom, and the work of the mouth and not from the heart. In this they follow hypocritical Israel, of whom we read in Psalms 78:36-37, "Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they stedfast in His covenant." God speaks against such. "Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:13-14).

(3) Others are of the opinion that they perceive, love, and magnify the glory of God in an exceptional manner when they consider creation with amazement and delight, even though they do not get beyond creation. This occurs when they are in ecstasy about the elegant features of the heavens (be it in the evening, at night, or in the morning), when they rejoice in a beautiful forest or meadow, or when they attentively observe the formation of animals and vegetation, and show this to others. Their verbal reference to the Creator when speaking of this -- while they neither observe

Him in that work, rejoice in His attributes which manifest themselves in that work, nor lovingly praise Him -- does not qualify as the glorification of God, but rather as the adoration of the creature. In such a case they do not point others to the Creator, but frequently to themselves as being so wise in searching this out and finding such delight in glorifying God. However, the adoration of the glory of God in the works of nature is something entirely different from this and cannot be explained by the natural man.

(4) Others go beyond this and yet do not glorify God. There are those who make the Word of God the object of their study, search out its mysteries, find delight in acquiring knowledge about a mystery, and are amazed about the wisdom of its structure -- that is, about the fulfillment of the prophecies, the wondrous matters which still must come to pass, yes, even about heavenly matters. Such are of the opinion that they are doing a holy work and are thereby glorifying God. Furthermore, the result of this is that sins which the world commits, and which they also have committed previously, have no effect upon them. They are so earnestly involved in acquiring knowledge of biblical matters, that this earnest endeavor engages all their affections and occupies all their time. Since they now find satisfaction in this knowledge, they have no need of being entertained by other things. Furthermore, external knowledge results in external purification. "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ..." (2 Peter 2:20). All of this does not constitute a glorifying of God, but is a case of not getting any further than the external. 1 Corinthians 13:2 speaks of this: "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Temporal believers, who receive the Word with joy (Luke 8:13), can attain to this. Of such Paul says: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come ..." (Hebrews 6:4-5). Balaam spoke of himself in this manner: "The man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open" (Numbers 24:15-16). Let no one therefore be satisfied with these things, being of the opinion that he glorifies God, lest he be deceived at the end. Instead, we must endeavor in all things to behold God as our God in Christ, be kindled with love toward Him, and praise God by virtue of such a disposition. This is what constitutes glorifying God. The Serious Consequences of Not Glorifying God

Therefore, you who desecrate the Lord's Name and do not glorify the Lord, give heed! The purpose for which you were created and the reason that the Lord has bestowed so many temporal and spiritual blessings upon you is to glorify God. Even though this may not appear to be a sin to you, and you lightly step over it, it is nevertheless a fierce evil and makes you subject to the dreadful wrath of God. Pay careful attention to what I shall briefly say to you, and may it cause you to repent.

First, it is a truth known to all that whatever does not meet the objective of its existence is good for nothing. You have been created to glorify your Creator. All the blessings which God has bestowed upon you obligate you to this. You are, however, ignorant of that purpose; you do not love it, do not strive for it, and do not engage yourself in it. Rather, you dishonor Him and show contempt for Him in all that you do. What is even worse, you furthermore embolden yourself to intermingle with His people, sit with them at the Lord's table, and profess to be one of God's children. With that

reputation, you live an ungodly and worldly life and thus cause the name of the Lord to be blasphemed (Romans 2:24). You thus observe that you do not meet the objective of your existence and ought to be cast away as an unworthy one. Take notice that the following is said to you: "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6). To abide in Christ is to remain united to Him by faith and to bring forth holy fruits by virtue of that union, in which the Father is glorified (John 15:8). This, however, is not true for you, and you will therefore be cast out with contempt and be burned.

Secondly, you have brought yourself into a situation -- this being true as long as you remain this way -- which does not permit you to engage yourself in those activities by which God is glorified by His own. You were not willing to do it, and now you will also not do it; God does not even want you to glorify Him in such a manner. Observe this in Psalms 50:15-16 : "And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth?"

Thirdly, since you do not honor God, but despise Him, God will also despise you and make you contemptible. You envision glory and honor, but God will cover you with shame. "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30). This will come upon you; the Lord says it and He will also do it. Apply to yourself what is written in Malachi 2:9 : "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept My ways." When you die, you will leave a stench behind, you will have the burial of a donkey, and you "shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24). And when you will arise at the resurrection, you "shall awake ... to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). This will be the end for all who did not glorify God in this life.

Fourthly, since you do not glorify God, He will give you over to the commission of all manner of sin -- particularly the dishonoring of your own body by filthy lusts. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, ...wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves" (Romans 1:21; Romans 1:24).

Fifthly, let me bring this to a single conclusion: God will glorify Himself in you by manifesting His righteousness and by punishing you in an extraordinary manner. What a dreadful condition it is to be the object of God's wrath! It will be such that men and angels will see it and with approval will acquiesce therein, saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments" (Revelation 16:7). When Nadab and Abihudid not glorify God, God consumed them with fire from heaven, and it is stated in addition to this, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Leviticus 10:3). Of Pharaoh we read in Romans 9:17, "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My Name might be declared throughout all the earth." If God glorifies Himself by punishing those who do not glorify Him, then He does not wish that we lament for them. Instead He says, "Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord" (Amos 6:10). On the contrary, it is God's will that we would rejoice and glorify the Lord when He executes His righteous vengeance. "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward

for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Psalms 58:10-11). Hear this, despisers of God, and tremble, for your judgments are approaching. Repent and flee from the wrath to come. The Shortcomings of God's Children in Glorifying God

Lovers of God's honor, consider also for a moment the precious daughters of Zion. Rejoice indeed if you perceive in them that secret yearning, weeping, waiting, praying, rejoicing over comforting experiences, thanking for received blessings, and a willingness to live a life pleasing unto God and to fully surrender to the service of God. However, what weak and feeble children they generally are! How little beholding there is of God! How little determination there is to glorify God personally as well as in the presence of others! How readily this objective disappears from our thoughts! How little zeal, earnestness, perseverance, and display there is in this respect! How frequently they are faint-hearted! How much weakness and sinfulness manifests itself in their walk! Oh, if only the godly would walk as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and that one could see that the love of God possesses their hearts, that the fear of God is before their eyes, and that they are adorned with the image of Christ! Then one would be able to observe that they have died to self, their own honor, the love of others, advantages, conveniences, and the fear of man. Then it would be observed that they exist not only for the honor of God, but that God's honor is their objective in all things, and is maintained as the goal of all their deeds. "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" (Lamentations 4:1). Therefore lament and mourn that God is glorified so little, even by His own children, and let this grieve you in your heart.

Exhortation to Glorify God

However, you yourself ought to especially endeavor in the future to glorify God while you are still here. It should not be sufficient for you to hate and flee sin, live a godly life and do godly deeds in which the glorification of God is implied. Rather, elevate your heart to a higher level of godliness, which consists in having the glory of God as your objective in your entire conduct. Focus continually upon this goal so that by continual exercise you may attain to a habitual tendency in this respect. I will endeavor to stir you up to that end, and you must also endeavor to be stirred up by this.

First, let God's requirement and continual exhortations penetrate your heart. Consider attentively these few texts selected out of many. "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20); "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). I do not hold these texts before you to teach and confirm an unknown truth to you, but by means of my pen to deeply impress this matter upon you and to incite you to engage in this with an obedient heart, knowing that this is not a peripheral activity, but that you ought not to do anything else but this. Have you yourself not determined to obey the Lord and have you not frequently asked Him, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" This then is His answer to you: "Glorify Me; let that be your objective in all things. Let that be the principle motivating you to engage yourself, and let that be the goal where you end and in which you rest." Therefore do so at this very moment and begin at once, lest you prove to be an insincere inquirer.

Secondly, on this occasion I will hold before you the example of the Lord Jesus and His saints. Examples are highly effective in motivating others. Do not harden your heart, but become pliable and willing to imitate them. You love the Lord Jesus, do you not? Love strives for conformity. Your Jesus has left you an example in order that you would follow in His footsteps. And is it not your

personal prayer, "Draw me, and I shall run after Thee"? It was, however, Jesus' objective in all that He did to glorify His Father. "... that Thy Son also may glorify Thee ... I have glorified Thee on the earth" (John 17:1; John 17:4). Thus, join yourself to Jesus, learn this from Him, and follow Him in all that you do. Whose heart would not become desirous for the glorification of God when discerning with what measure of love and burning zeal the saints have been engaged in, having exhorted everyone to do likewise? Hold before you the example of David and hear him speak thus: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy Name" (Psalms 103:1); "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord" (Psalms 104:33-34); "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more. My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only" (Psalms 71:14-16). He knew indeed that in and of himself he was not able to attain to such a lofty and glorious work, and therefore he prayed that he would be permitted and enabled to do this. "Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise and with Thy honour all the day" (Psalms 71:8). He could not fully satisfy himself with praising the Lord and he is not content to say but once or twice, "Praise the Lord," but in Psalms 136:1-26 he exclaims twenty-six times, "For His mercy endureth forever." In various psalms he begins and ends with "Hallelujah, praise the Lord." Yes, perceiving the infinity of the glory of the Lord, and that he was too insignificant to magnify this glory commensurate with his desire, he therefore summons the angels, men, and all things to assist him, and ends as follows: "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord" (Psalms 150:6). Therefore join him in this and also cry out, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:13).

Thirdly, consider for a moment from whom your life, breath, and whatever you possess proceed -- the air which you breathe; the sun, moon, and stars which illuminate and delight you; the heavens which cover you; the earth on which you walk; the food and drink you partake of; and the animals which you use. Does all this proceed from you? Are you worthy of them? Is not all this the Lord's? Is it not He who, each day again, grants you His goodness in spite of your unworthiness and sinfulness? Yes, children of God, is it not the Lord who has granted you that precious Savior, who grants you the Holy Spirit, who graces you with spiritual light and life, and who has prepared eternal glory for you? Everything will return from whence it proceeded. Therefore let your heart, while conscious of your insignificance and reflecting upon the inestimable value of the blessings and goodness of the Lord, also bring all this to Him, and with a heart filled with love and adoration cry out, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).

Fourthly, consider the purpose for which God has placed you upon the earth. Is it only to labor and to rest, to eat and to drink, and to return again to nothing after many troubles and activities? Dic, cur hic? Tell me, why are you here? Is it to know, acknowledge, and glorify your Maker? And, children of God, to what end has He regenerated you and placed you in His church? Did He do so without purpose? Is it merely to lead you by that way to heaven? No, but it is that you would glorify Him upon earth. Observe this in the following passages: "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise" (Isaiah 43:21); "... that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified" (Isaiah 61:3); "But ye are a

chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). You would not have been born, you would not live, and you would not receive and have what you enjoy, if this were not the purpose. If this is the purpose, what else is there to do for you but this? God has, to some degree, been pleased to place His interests and honor into your hand, and has appointed you to be the heralds of His Name. Ought you then not to see to it how you preserve this precious gift entrusted to you, and how you answer to God's purpose and engage in this inestimable activity? Well, arise therefore, and engage in it with delight.

Fifthly, God is worthy of it, and it is His due that both you and all that exists glorify Him, even if neither salvation, sweetness, nor advantage were to be gained from this. He is worthy of being glorified even if we had not been created for that purpose; even if it were our choice to do or abstain from something without sinning. He is worthy of being glorified even if we were not obligated to do so in light of many benefits received. If but a small ray of the Lord's glory were to irradiate the soul, one would say, "It suffices me that God is God, and that He alone is worthy of all things. I choose to magnify Him, and desire that this be my only work both in this life and to all eternity." God is worthy to be eternally glorified, even if there were no creature in heaven or upon earth. As soon as a creature exists, however, the Lord obligates this creature to glorify Him for the sole reason that He is God. This reason cannot motivate man unless God reveals Himself to him and causes him to see and experience the power and glory of the Godhead. The faint light of nature and the clarity of Scripture may convince an unconverted person of his duty, and in a natural way he may initiate something. If, however, the light of grace, unveiling the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ, irradiates the believing soul, she will truly engage herself in rendering God honor and glory. She may do so when being ashamed before His holiness, while sinking away before His majesty, revering and trembling before His grandeur, adoring His incomprehensible infinity, being filled with love due to His preciousness, or rejoicing in His goodness, and so forth -- all according to the manner in which the Lord reveals Himself to the soul. Then, if man had a thousand bodies and a thousand souls, he would willingly surrender them to be spent in the glorification of God. He would consider them all too insignificant to be permitted or be able to proclaim the praises of the Lord, and he would consider it a sufficient reward to be consumed in doing so. Then, yes, then one will rejoice that everything is subject to the Lord and that everything stands ready when He but speaks. It is the delight of such a person to think that all angels and the souls of the perfectly righteous in heaven and all the children of God upon earth have their eyes focused upon Him, expecting all salvation from Him, loving Him, rejoicing in Him, reverently bowing before Him, joyfully jubilating the honor of the glory of His majesty, and infinitely exalting Him above all praise. They consider themselves as being unworthy of seeing, thinking, or speaking anything concerning the Lord, it being an inexpressible grace that a creature be permitted to do so. Is not this able to lift up your heart and to exclaim with them, "Lord! Thou art worthy to receive glory and power"? Therefore, ready soul, render the Lord honor, because He is worthy of it. The Spiritual Advantages of Glorifying God

Sixthly, since the Lord wishes to stir us up by that which is to our advantage, we must therefore let ourselves be stirred up by this. Consider therefore the advantage afforded to a soul which glorifies God.

(1) It is a great honor to be a means whereby God is glorified, for it is the greatest, most holy, and most exalted task. Of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel it is said to their honor, "Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His Name" (Psalms 99:6). It is the work of angels, for they cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). They shouted for joy when God formed the earth (Job 38:7), and they sang upon the birthday of Christ: "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14). The saints in heaven are engaged in this and this will be the eternal occupation of the elect (Revelation 4:11).

(2) It affords the soul great joy. The glorification of God is not such a heavy, grievous, melancholy, or detrimental task, so that many incentives need to be used to pressure someone to engage in this -- for it is man's felicity. Felicity is to find delight and joy in the Lord's perfections, to love them, and to magnify the Lord in them. They who are as yet unacquainted with this remain unacquainted with their highest felicity. How David delighted himself in this and how delightful did he hold this out to be! "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High: to show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night, for Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands. O Lord, how great are Thy works! and Thy thoughts are very deep" (Psalms 92:1-2; Psalms 92:4-5); "Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely" (Psalms 147:1).

(3) It is pleasing to God. He is delighted when His children glorify Him, deem it to be their delight, joy, and felicity, and do so as much as they are able. "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalms 22:3); "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs" (Psalms 69:30-31). This is as a burnt offering. "The humble shall see this, and be glad" (vs. 32).

(4) The Lord rewards them abundantly. "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Samuel 2:30). While Paul and Silas sang praises unto God, the doors of the prison were opened and the bands of all the prisoners were loosened (Acts 16:25-26). If someone promotes God's honor, God will also care for his honor. If someone renders glory to God among men, God will also cause him to find honor, love, and favor among men. If someone is for God, God will also be for him. "Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation" (Psalms 91:14-16).

(5) If God's honor is our objective in all things, all our endeavors will be performed in a more pure and holy fashion. The goal stimulates the laborer, dictates the means to him, and makes even heavy labor light. If we love God's honor, we shall deny our own. We shall follow a straight pathway to that goal and will not be concerned about what is either to our advantage or disadvantage. We shall overcome all opposition and step over all obstacles. We shall have rest after the task has been accomplished, for our objective was pure and the means were in harmony with God's precepts. We shall not fear the light, but shall desire to be seen and examined, "that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:21).

(6) It is a means to the conversion of the unconverted and it quickens the godly to magnify God. Behold, there you have the benefits which are comprehended in that holy and glorious work. Therefore, you whose soul indeed delights to do this, considering them blessed who practice this, engage yourself to do so. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee" (Psalms 84:4).

Exhortation to Persevere in Endeavoring to Glorify God

Objection: Some of the godly who read or hear this will look up against this as a matter too high for them. Others will be grieved, perceiving on the one hand the gloriousness and preciousness of this matter, and on the other hand, how far they come short, and how impossible it is to come to such a state. Others will excuse themselves, either to aggravate their misery or to quietly excuse themselves, pacifying their conscience somewhat in not striving for this. They reason as follows: I do not behold the glory of God; I do not perceive any sweetness or efficacy in this. If I make a start, it is but the work of my mind and I do it more rationally than with a loving heart. I am too sinful; sins overwhelm me and hold me captive. I am therefore all too happy that I may flee to Jesus time and again to make use of Him unto justification, and thus resolve afresh to guard against sin. I cannot determine what my spiritual state is and I do not know whether I have been regenerated and am a child of God. I am so entangled in the care of earthly things that I generally cannot perceive any stirrings in my heart. I am so overwhelmed by my cross -- one calamity following another -- that I always remain down so that it is even difficult to observe my devotional time. When I do observe it I perceive myself to be confused, listless, and discouraged. How would I then be capable of such a lofty work -- to initiate everything from a view of and out of love toward the glorification of God, and to end in this?

Answer (1) Your state is at once to be pitied as it is subject to rebuke. See to it that you do not flatter yourself, for it will not excuse you to have neglected this great work. You were created to that end, the Lord has blessed you to that end, and He has begun His work of grace in you to that end.

(2) The Lord has children of various ages and sizes, but they nevertheless have the same Spirit and the same spiritual life. That life also functions identically in all, although not to the same degree. The least of them has some knowledge of the Lord, and not only knows that it is his duty to glorify the Lord, but already has a desire for and an inclination toward this. He already glorifies God by the fact that the world knows him not to be one of them, but that, as they say to their own condemnation, he has become one of those strict ones. They also manifest to some degree that the Spirit of Christ is in them and their good works begin to manifest themselves, even if this is as yet in a very small measure. And even if the little ones are as yet not capable of being motivated to undertake something out of love and with that end in view, they nevertheless end in the glorification of God -- thanking Him if they have received something from the Lord and grieving if they have done anything whereby godliness, the godly, and thus also God are dishonored.

(3) Therefore, follow the inclination lying at the bottom of the heart: to glorify God. Begin by making this more and more your objective. Remain within the sphere of your spiritual strength; that is, let a child be a child, a young man a young man, and a father a father, being satisfied with the measure of grace which you presently have, while having a strong desire and striving to attain to a higher degree of such grace in the future. The obstacles mentioned frequently spring forth from neglect to

glorify God and are removed by diligent endeavor. Therefore do not wait until these difficulties are removed, for then you will never initiate it. Rather, engage in this task as much as you are able, along with all the shortcomings which manifest themselves contrary to your wishes. Do not desist if you fall, but arise again and strive increasingly to break through, and the Lord will help, for "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:29).

(4) Do not cease to pray that you also may be granted the privilege to glorify God, and that you may receive the ability to do so. Look to others who have made more progress than you have; fellowship with them and learn from them. Accustom yourself to have that objective always in view -- however far you may be astray from your objective -- and you will experience that you will increase in this; and as you increase in this, you will increase in all things. May the Lord send forth His light and truth to you, that they may lead you. Amen.

062. Chapter 57: Love Toward God

----- CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN -----

Love Toward God The contents of the law is love, and it is therefore expressed with one word in Romans 13:9-10 : "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Love in essence has no other object than that which is most eminent, most cherishable, most satisfying, and unchangeable -- which is God Himself. This love engenders love toward whatever God wills us to love -- and thus toward our neighbor. Prior to the fall, Adam knew and was united to God in an immediate sense, and he also loved God in an immediate sense. However, after the fall man lives in enmity toward God and does not love Him. When God grants His children the privilege to be permitted and able to love Him again, then such occurs by reason of the mediation of a Mediator who has removed the enmity and who restores the elect again into friendship with God. This friendship is exercised by faith, by which the regenerate person, receiving the merits of Christ as a ransom, finds peace with God, enjoys the love of God toward him, and in having fellowship with God increasingly loves Him. Faith thus stirs up love and makes it active. In this respect "faith ... worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). This is what distinguishes the love of believers from the love which Adam had. All love which is divorced from and functions apart from faith is no true love. Natural men may write and speak of love, but it is only the work of blind men. They may refer to God as "dear Lord" and imagine that they love God, but they deceive themselves -- they do not love God. They may judge that God is to be loved and be rationally motivated to conduct themselves in a manner which resembles this, but their heart is cold and void of love.

Love Toward God Defined

Love is the sweet motion of the heart toward God -- infused into the hearts of believers by the Holy Spirit -- whereby they, by virtue of union with Him and in view of His perfections, delight themselves in God, and in a joyous embrace of His will, fully surrender themselves to His service.

(1) Love is a motion. Love is compared to fire; fire is swift in its motion and love is likewise vehement in its motion. "For love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame" (Song of Solomon 8:6). Love is a sweet motion. The heart is subject to many and various motions; some are grievous and some are joyous. Love refreshes the heart and is a sweet motion. Among men it is sweeter to love than to be loved. "O love, for delights!" (Song of Solomon 7:6).

(2) Love has God as its object. Man has the aptitude to love and is inclined to love. Being ignorant of the worthiness and preciousness of God, however, he chooses something physical to be an object of love. He is remarkably attached to physical things in an inordinate manner, so that he corrupts himself and abuses that glorious principle that is within him. However, when the believer begins to perceive who God is, all that was beautiful and delightful before loses its luster. He

withdraws his love from it -- yes, he cannot love it, for he hates it, as it is opposed to the love of God. Instead, God becomes and remains the object of his love; he rejoices that he may love God, and he cannot be satiated in this love. It grieves him greatly that he does not love God more; God is and remains the most eminent of all objects that He can love. Yes, He is the only object and he does not wish to delight in anything except it be for God's sake. "O love the Lord, all ye His saints" (Psalms 31:23); "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength" (Psalms 18:1). God is the object of love because He is God -- and thus, for His own sake and because He is worthy of it. All that can generate love is to be found in God. "God is love" (1 John 4:19). Our love is set in motion by His love toward us. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Our love is also kindled by the benefits of God. "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications" (Psalms 116:1); "O love the Lord ... for the Lord preserveth the faithful" (Psalms 31:23). These are indeed stimuli, but the basis and actual reason for love is God Himself -- because He is God, is love, is adorable, and is worthy. The purpose of this love is not to acquire something else as a result of this -- for then there would be something superior to God which one loved more.

(3) This love is neither begotten by our own activity or ability, nor can a creature give it to us. A heavenly minded minister may preach with a heart of love about love, but he is not able to kindle love in anyone's heart. Love is not for sale for all the belongings of one's house, but is only a free gift of God. The Holy Spirit kindles this divine spark in the heart of man. "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5); "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" (2 Thessalonians 3:5); "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart ... to love the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 30:6).

(4) The Holy Spirit, kindling love in the hearts of God's children, operates in harmony with man's nature. Man cannot love what he does not know and his love cannot go beyond that which he knows. The Holy Spirit thus also works this love by the medium of knowledge. God gives enlightened eyes of understanding to His children. He reveals Himself to them, they know His perfections, and the love of God is thus kindled in them. "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8); "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37).

(5) God is a consuming fire to man who has sinned. Man cannot approach unto God, and even though God is most adorable, he nevertheless cannot love God. Love strives for union. The perception that one who is adorable and has power over us, were to hate us and take vengeance upon us, would thus cause us to flee. Therefore, a union must first be established. Union between God and the sinner is brought about by the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. He brings them to God (1 Peter 3:18) and in Him they become one with God. "... that they also may be one in us ... I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:21; John 17:23). Man can only love God when he can consider God to be his God, for otherwise the presence of God causes him to fear and flee from Him. Reverence and love go hand in hand, but fear and love cannot coexist. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). From man's side this union with God comes about by faith. By faith the soul approaches unto God. "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Ephesians 3:12). By virtue of this union, one begins to love God. Love will then endeavor to exercise this union more and more and to preserve it -- this being an exercise of friendship as between friends and between a father and children. "He (Abraham) was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23); "I have called

you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15).

(6) To love God is a privilege of the elect. They, as others, were the children of wrath. However, God draws them out of the state of sin, gives them life and a childlike disposition, and thus also a loving heart. Since they are born of God, and since God is love, their nature resembles the nature of their heavenly Father, and they love Him. Their intellect, will, and affections have not only been rendered capable, but they are also active in love toward God. It is not sufficient for them to nourish love within, but they are active in manifesting this with their tongue, eye, and entire body. They are thus known as lovers of God and are therefore also referred to as "those that love." "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Psalms 97:10); "They that love His name shall dwell therein" (Psalms 69:36). The Deeds Whereby Love Toward God is Manifested The love of God manifests itself in many deeds. We shall present them with the objective in mind to declare more clearly the nature of this love, so that an unconverted person, examining himself by means of this, will be convinced that he does not love God, and that gracious persons may be convinced that they love the Lord.

Wherever there is love toward God in the heart, God will first of all be esteemed and exalted exceedingly far above all that exists, this being true not only as far as judgment is concerned, but also with the entire will. Whatever is glorious, adorable, and eminent vanishes before the glory of God, and in esteem for that glory one will say with full acquiescence, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty" (1 Chronicles 29:11).

Secondly, there is joy in love. If the soul is permitted to have an intimate view of God, she cannot mourn, but that view rejoices the heart so that all reason for sorrow disappears. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalms 16:11).

Thirdly, there is reverence in love. If the soul in a loving disposition lifts herself up to the Lord, the glory of the Lord will illuminate her in such a measure that she dares not look unto the Lord with uplifted eyes, but will bow down and be astonished that she is permitted to love the Lord. Being irradiated with divine love, she will sink away in her nothingness. She will conduct herself as David did in the presence of the Lord. "In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple" (Psalms 5:7).

Fourthly, love is active. Love motivates the seeking of communion, and the soul is intent upon this. It searches out all opportunities to draw near, and brings herself into the presence of the Lord, so that the Lord might cast an eye upon her and look upon her, and that she might also see Him. At one time she will turn to the Word, then to prayer, then to attending church, and then to joining the company of the saints -- all this with the objective of finding the Lord. At times she may become lax, listless, and discouraged, but the heart will time and again turn upward, the eye will repeatedly look up, doing so at one time with quiet tears, then with a sigh, then again with a manifestation of her desire. "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth" (Song of Solomon 3:1); "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early" (Isaiah 26:9). There is a strong yearning in the soul. It is true within, "O when wilt Thou come unto me" (Psalms 101:2); "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God" (Psalms 42:2).

Fifthly, where there is love, there is delight in the enjoyment of this love. When the soul is near to God and can delight herself in mutual love, she can do without everything else; she will then be

well-satisfied. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:34); "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord" (Psalms 104:34).

Sixthly, where there is love, there will be grief over absence and being at a distance. A loving soul will readily perceive if she is near or afar off. This will immediately trouble her. "My beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him ... my soul failed when He spake: I sought Him, but I could not find Him" (Song of Solomon 5:4-6). Since He is her light and the strength of her life and the God of her joy and delight, how can it then be otherwise than that she will mourn if the Lord hides Himself, or if she, due to her conduct, has been the cause of estrangement? This is the cause for these sorrowful complaints: "How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me" (Psalms 13:1); "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me" (Lamentations 1:16).

Seventhly, where there is love, there is willing obedience. There will be joy if one may render a service to the loved one, in doing something in which the loved one finds delight. Such is also the case here. If we love God, then we will also find delight in His will. We shall be united with this will and be very desirous that "whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him" (2 Corinthians 5:9). This the Lord Jesus indicates: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words" (John 14:23); "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3).

Eighthly, where there is love, the objects of love and hatred will be identical. The enemies of the one will also be the enemies of the other, and the friends of the one will also be the friends of the other. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee ... I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Psalms 139:21-22); "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts" (Psalms 119:63).

Ninthly, where there is love, one will sacrifice everything for the loved one. Such is also the case here; he who loves God will readily surrender to God all that he has. When honor, possessions, life, etc., stand in opposition to God, His will and honor, a lover of God willingly surrenders everything, rejoicing that he may have something which he may sacrifice to God. Paul testified concerning the believing Hebrews: "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods" (Hebrews 10:34). And he said of himself: "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).

Tenthly, love cannot be satisfied unless there be a most intimate and perfect union. Therefore, since a lover of God cannot find full satisfaction of this love in this life, and knowing that perfect and immediate union with God will only exist in heaven, he longs to die in order to find perfect satisfaction in this love. "... having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ" (Php 1:23).

Indications of the Absence of Love Toward God

Everyone knows by experience that love and its effects are indeed such as we before have stated it to be. Apply the nature and the deeds of love to its most adorable object, namely God, and examine your heart accordingly, and you, as in a clear mirror, will perceive whether or not you love God. You will perceive whether you have but a natural love for God as the Supreme Good -- which

is more a judging that God is worthy of adoration and that man is obligated to love Him, rather than a sweet motion of the heart which manifests itself in the previously mentioned deeds -- or whether you love God in Christ as your God and Father, and although love may yet be small and imperfect, you nevertheless love in truth. If many were to search their hearts and examine themselves in this respect, it would become evident to their conscience that the love of God was not in them. Come, examine yourself -- may it be a means to your conviction and thus to your conversion. Listen therefore attentively to me and may it touch your heart!

First of all, if you miss that mentioned above, you do not love God. Is there to be found in you esteem, joy, reverence, yearning and seeking, a delighting in the enjoyment of these matters, a grieving over their absence? Is there also found in you obedience, hatred toward sin, and love for the godly? Are you willing to sacrifice honor, possessions, life, soul and body for the Lord's sake and do you yearn for felicity? Natural man, must you not answer: "These things are truly not to be found in me"? If one does not love God unless these motions are to be found in him -- of which I am now also convinced -- I therefore do not love God. I have indeed said, "Dear God; dear Lord!" I imagined, without self-examination, that I loved God, but now I perceive that I have deceived myself.

Secondly, he who loves the world does not love God, for God and the world stand in direct opposition to each other. He who loves the one hates the other. This is declared by the mouth of truth: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). The apostle John confirms this: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:16). If you ask what the world is, then I answer: all that is visible, is upon earth, and occupies your heart -- such as, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). If you ask what love to the world is, I answer you: to cleave intently to visible things, nourishment and clothing, money, honor and prestige (each in his own situations and circumstances), the love of man toward you, delicacies, revelry, lasciviousness, etc. and to have all your concerns, desires, thoughts, and endeavors comprehended in them. The eye focuses upon them, the ear listens to them, the mouth speaks of them, the hands touch them, the feet run after them, and everything -- soul and body -- is engaged to attain to them, and, having attained them, to hold on to them. Such a person will be either joyous or sorrowful, this being commensurate with whether everything proceeds according to his wishes. Thus, that which is of the world is all his delight and enjoyment. Although one may judgmentally say, "All this is vanity, and salvation is greater," while the heart is yet in the world, the objective of life is that which is of the world, and all activity is focused upon that which is of the world, such a person is most certainly worldly and a man of this world -- a person whose portion is in this life. You therefore who are convinced of this, be further convinced that you love the world and, consequently, that you do not love God.

Thirdly, you do not love God if you are still entirely permeated with self-love. This is not entirely dead in believers, but it no longer has dominion. It is acknowledged to be what it is, declared to be an enemy, striven against, and mourned over. However, wherever self-love has dominion, there can be no room for the love of God. It is entirely contrary to the nature of this love to love and seek self. "Charity ... seeketh not her own" (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). Paul posits love toward God and pleasures as two contradictory matters. "... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2

Timothy 3:4). One lives in self-love if in his entire conduct he has himself in view; that is, if he only seeks to obtain and keep things for himself. This is also true if hatred, envy, wrath, and vengeance are aroused against those who hinder him in his pursuit of self. This proves that one does not love God. This will be all the more evident if, in religion, one does not proceed beyond that which can coexist with self-love -- renouncing religion fully or partially if it is detrimental to either our honor or possessions.

Now consider these three matters together and draw the following conclusion: He in whom the nature and deeds of love toward God are absent; and he who loves the world and lives in self-love -- he does not love God. Since, however, the nature and the deeds of love toward God are absent in me, and since I do love the world and I am completely wrapped up in self-love, I therefore do not love God. The Wretched Condition of Those Who Do Not Love God

Having convinced you that you do not love God, we shall furthermore show you your miserable condition, in order to thereby lead you to repentance.

First, be assured that you hate God. To hate God will be such dreadful abomination to you that you would not say this of yourself. You will be unwilling to admit this, and will say, "Oh no! I do not hate God." It is nevertheless the truth. Do not flatter yourself now that your unrighteousness, which is hateful, is found out. It is beyond doubt that there are those who hate God. Observe this in the following passages: "... them that hate Me" (Exodus 20:5); "... let them also that hate Him flee before Him" (Psalms 68:1); "... haters of God" (Romans 1:30); "... but now have they ... hated both Me and My Father" (John 15:24).

Objection: Although there are those who hate God, I nevertheless do not hate God -- of this I am very much convinced.

Answer (1) You have been convinced from the previous discussion that you do not love God; from this it is certain that you hate God, for there is no intermediate position here. Relative to people and other things, it can be true in certain cases that not loving does not imply hatred -- namely, when there are people with whom one is not acquainted nor has seen; one does not love them, but also does not hate them. He leaves it at that. However, those with whom we are acquainted, such as our employer, those with whom we continually work side by side, and with whom we continually have dealings -- toward such persons we cannot be neutral. In our heart we shall either perceive interest and inclination, or aversion and disinclination. Inner aversion, even if it does not stir the passions to the highest degree, and disinclination are tantamount to hatred. Aversion and repulsion are equivalent to hatred.

(2) Furthermore, your aversion for all by which God reveals Himself as being holy and righteous, causing your conscience to become restless, indicates all the more that you hate God. The very thing that stimulates one to love or to hate will be loved or hated more and more. However, you hate, have an aversion for, and are repulsed by the light of true godliness since it discovers you to yourself and makes you restless in view of the impending judgment. God testifies of this: "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:20); "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you ... because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19).

(3) Furthermore, since you continually sin against God with pleasure and delight, is that not an unwillingness to have God be Lord over you? Do you not thus reveal your desire to be your own master and to live according to your will rather than His will? You thus despise and reject God. However, despising and rejecting issue forth from hatred and are evidences of hatred -- just as the submissive rendering of honor, recognition, and obedience are evidences of love.

(4) Furthermore, since you love the world and those who are of the world, it is thus infallibly true that you hate the opposite. God and the world are opposites; he who loves the one hates the other. Therefore, from your love to the world you can conclude that you hate God. Behold therefore, you who are convinced that you do not love God, you are in that condition which is so abhorrent to yourself, namely, that you hate God.

Secondly, all you who do not love God, be it known that God also does not love you. God hates you and you are God's enemy. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Hear once how God is disposed toward you. "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psalms 5:5).

Thirdly, God's wrath is upon you and will destroy you. "But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me" (Luke 19:14; Luke 19:27); "All they that hate Me love death" (Proverbs 8:36). What are you -- you who do not love God? You are a wretched man in yourself. You -- who are so abominable -- are hated of God, the Lord Jesus, the holy angels, and the godly. You have nothing else to expect but to be eternally subject to the wrath of God. Poor creature! Have you not lived long enough in such a way? Is it not now time to awake ere it is too late? Therefore, arise and flee the wrath to come.

However, you who are lovers of God and who have read attentively what I have said concerning the nature and deeds of love, examine your heart relative to this. Did not your heart approve of all this and did it not receive a desire for the love of God? Did not your heart become convinced that you truly love God, even though this love is still very small and imperfect? Rejoice therefore in this most precious gift, for it is not due to the goodness of your nature that you have begun to love God; it has been given to you out of grace and been bestowed upon you due to God's love for you. It is an evidence that God has known you from eternity. "But if any man love God, the same is known of Him" (1 Corinthians 8:3).

Believers Stirred Up to Love Toward God

If there is then a small beginning of the love of God in you, stir it up, so that the spark may become a flame. You, who grieve that you love the Lord so little and desire with your whole heart to love Him more, hear and permit your soul to be instructed regarding the love of God.

First, love is the purest of all virtues and no virtue is comparable to it -- yes, a virtue is no virtue if it does not derive its luster from this virtue. We never resemble God so much as in love, for "God is love" (1 John 4:8). He who loves is a partaker of the divine nature. In such a person there is light, purity, warmth, holiness, joy, and all that can be related to salvation. You have already perceived how that your soul was enamored with love when you heard the exposition of the nature and deeds of love, as well as when you observed the passions of the soul which loves God (or heard this recounted by others). Therefore yield to your desire and be enamored with that which is so

lovely.

Secondly, God is most adorable in Himself, and all that is adorable is to be found in God. To adore that which is beautiful, delightful, glorious, and lovely, is not a heavy task. It is naturally attractive to the heart. All this is true concerning God in an infinite manner, and he who beholds God cannot but love. Words are too insignificant, passions too feeble, and everything falls short in showing forth the beauty of the Lord. No one knows what God is but he to whom God has revealed Himself; and the heart of him to whom God reveals Himself will be kindled in love, because He is God -- because He is the Lord who is worthy of all honor and love.

Thirdly, believers, the infinite God who is the eternal Love, loves you! "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3); "For the Father Himself loveth you" (John 16:27); "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us" (Ephesians 2:4). The sun cannot shine upon a mirror or it will reflect, nor upon some polished metal, or it becomes warm and reflects warmth in return. Can a man resist the love of Him who is most lovely and adorable, and who desires to be loved in return, without love being activated? Would not then the love of God toward you -- the God in whom you believe -- having indeed seen and tasted a small ray of that love, set your hearts aflame with that love? "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Fourthly, in addition to this meditate upon all the great benefits which the Lord has bestowed, does bestow, and eternally will bestow upon you; they proceed from love and are evidences of it. The heart of man is so loveless that all the benefits which someone bestows upon him cannot persuade him to love that person. One receives the benefits, but the heart remains cold toward the giver. However, if benefits issue forth from love, and from one who is most adorable within himself and whom we ourselves love, then this will engage the heart. God, the adorable One, who loves you and who is somewhat loved by you, manifests His love to you, along with inestimable benefits as tokens of love. Out of love He gives you His Son as a Surety and Redeemer. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9). He draws us, out of love, to Himself. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). He adopts His own, out of love, as His children. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). He chastises them, out of love, to their advantage. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth ... that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:6; Hebrews 12:10). If they are sorrowful, His love is stirred up to comfort them. "God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" (2 Thessalonians 2:16). Have you not become partakers of these benefits? If you know this to be so, and then perceive that they all proceed from a fatherly love, but your love is not kindled, I know not what will do it.

Fifthly, proceed to consider how delightful this is to God. You are privileged that you may love the Lord -- and if you love Him, the Lord has delight in this and, according to His promise to those that love Him, will reward this love with love in return as well as benefits. What a wondrous goodness this is! This love originates with Him. By His love He enables them to love, and when they love Him, He rewards that love with love in return. "And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father" (John 14:21). The Lord's eye is upon them and He keeps them from all evil. "The Lord preserveth

all them that love Him" (Psalms 145:20). He bestows benefits upon them which exceed all comprehension. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). Yes, even the evil which appears to be to their destruction will be reversed to the advantage of the lovers of God. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28). A lover of God is not only pleasing to God, but he is also loved by the Lord Jesus, the holy angels, and all believers. Everyone will behold such a person with pleasure and delight.

Sixthly, love is holiness and begets holiness -- which believers long for and desire so strongly. Love preserves a believer in communion with God. "And he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). This is not only a sweet, but also a holy and sanctifying disposition. Love teaches what duty is, stirs up to perform the duty, and guides in the execution of duty. Without love the very best deed is deficient (1 Corinthians 13:2). Instead, all must transpire in love. "... that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). The entire law is comprehended in love. (Matthew 22:37). "Now the end of the commandment is charity" (1 Timothy 1:5). Love cannot remain concealed, for it is a holy fire. It is operative externally and is a strong incitement. "For the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). God, love The apostle therefore speaks of the "labour of love" (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Love renders all labor easy, conquers all danger, penetrates through all opposition, and glories in tribulation. "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Romans 5:3-5). He who therefore wishes to be holy, let him become active in love toward God. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Psalms 97:10).

Seventhly, follow the example of the Lord Jesus who loved the Father (John 14:31). Join yourself to the godly, for they are lovers of God and are frequently denominated as such (cf. Song of Solomon 1:3; Psalms 69:36; Isaiah 41:8). Exercise yourself to increase in love. "O love the Lord, all ye His saints" (Psalms 31:23); "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 1:21).

Believers to Abstain from That Which Hinders an Increase in Love

You therefore who delight to walk in the love of God, henceforth abstain from that which until now has hindered you from increasing and from breaking forth in love (Isaiah 54:3). These hindrances are the following:

(1) Ignorance. Little knowledge begets little love. Search the Word of God attentively, and thoughtfully give heed to His work without and within you. Focus upon getting a view of the Lord and labor to keep yourself near to the Lord.

(2) Partial love. Believers still have the old Adam within themselves which continually hankers for that which is of the world; self-love is not yet dead. If one yields somewhat to this love, it will increase all the more, and the more self-love increases, the more love toward God will be diminished. He who therefore wishes to increase in love toward God must resist and cast out the other love. This halting between two opinions prevents growth.

(3) Infrequent communion with God. Love wants to be exercised or else it will become cold. Separate yourself from all that you are permitted to separate yourself from, so that the Lord alone will have your heart. Continually pray, meditate, ask counsel, be dependent, and particularly

observe your devotional time strictly. This will, time and again, restore you, and you will become more adept in acquainting yourself with the Lord.

(4) Unbelief. "Faith worketh by love"; if one does not believe that he is loved by God, he also cannot be stirred up by this love. However, if one believes that God loves him, his heart will in turn be kindled with in love toward God. "We love Him, because He first loved us."

(5) Fearfulness. If, for the sake of God's cause, we are in danger of losing our honor in some measure; if harm, shame, and the loss of life are feared; and if we then shrink back, come up with excuses, and hide ourselves, love will then be very much injured, and it sometimes takes a considerable effort to recover a loving disposition. However, if we then break out of this when it comes to the point, love will receive double strength. Perfect love casts out fear -- not only a fear for God, which causes a fleeing from God, but also the fear of danger.

Counsel for the Increase in Love Toward God However, if you wish to increase in love:

(1) Take your life, honor, possessions, and all that you have, and surrender them to the Lord. Let Him care for them and do not concern yourself about them, so that you can readily part with them if love toward God requires this.

(2) Display the image of God which is in you -- however small or great it may be -- and show the world that you have a different nature, being in covenant with God.

(3) Believe in God's love toward you and rejoice in this.

(4) Pray for the increase of love.

(5) Have continual fellowship with those who love God, and be their companion.

(6) Abstain from willful sins and be zealous to do the will of God. If you fall, do not continue in this sin, but with sorrow humble yourself, as having sinned against love, and arise again -- holding fast to the unchangeable love of God and the immutability of the covenant. While thus acquainting yourself with the Lord, you will go on from strength to strength and become more abundant in love. "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

063. Chapter 58: Love Toward Jesus Christ

----- CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT ----- Love Toward Jesus Christ Jesus Christ: The Object of Love Revealed in the Gospel The law requires love toward God and toward everything which God enjoins us to love. Prior to the fall, love had no other object than God and man (comprehended under the word "neighbor"). The law of nature indeed does not teach anything beyond this. However, God has presented an additional object of love in the gospel -- the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man. The law requires the act of love, and the gospel makes known the object of love. The Lord Jesus is both God and a holy man. One must love Him as God (of whom we have just spoken). We consider Him here, however, as Immanuel -- God and man in one Person -- as Mediator and Savior, and in that capacity He is the object of our love. We have discussed the nature of love and it is thus not necessary to repeat it. We shall therefore stir you up to manifest such love toward the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus has few who love Him in the world. He would have more if He willed to have more, but He deems most not worthy of this. It is a great privilege and grace for the few who have been granted to love Him -- and those who love Him, love Him so much that they will even give their life for Him. They will love Him until their death and to all eternity. The Grievous Sin of Being Acquainted with Jesus and Yet Not Loving Him The heathen, not having the gospel proclaimed to them, do not commit sin in not loving Him. They have not been commanded to do so, as He has not been declared to them. The Jews and Mohammedans know of Jesus; it is therefore their sin that they do not love Him, that they hate Him, and all who, after His Name, are called Christians. The Antichrist, even though he boasts of the name of Christ, sins in that he and his followers do not love Jesus, but persecute Him and His church and become drunk with the blood of the saints. Heretics, who wish to be called "Christian," are also guilty of sin in not loving Him -- hating Him in His truth and in His children, while persecuting every one of them with all their might. These will all endure their judgment and it will be unbearable for them.

However, those who are in the church, of which the Lord Jesus is the Head, ought indeed to love Him; but how few are to be found in her who love Him!

(1) Many have no dealings with Him whatsoever. They hear His name mentioned, hear Him described and recommended in the sermons, make mention of Him themselves, but nevertheless are indifferent as to who and what He is. He is a stranger to them and they have no desire to know Him. They also make no effort in that respect, and if anyone wishes to make Him known to them, they respond, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of His ways." They leave Him for what He is, and since they do not know Him they also do not love Him. For it is impossible to love someone we do not know. There is no sorrow over missing Him, no yearning for Him, no uniting of the heart to Him, and no grief over the fact that they do not love Him.

(2) Many know Jesus according to the letter, but not internally by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, such also have no love for Him. They do desire Him as a servant to protect them from hell and to help them get into heaven -- of which they also have no correct perceptions.

Beyond that they have no use for Him. There is no entering into covenant with Him, no surrendering to Him, no receiving of Him by faith unto justification and sanctification, no heart-union, and no exercising of fellowship with Him. They are neither acquainted with His presence nor with His absence. They are satisfied if they are but good church members, partake of the Lord's Supper, live honestly, and have the illusion that they will be saved. On that basis they proceed -- even though Jesus remains a stranger to them, remaining outside of their heart and thoughts. Since you are acquainted with human love, you will thus perceive that you have no love to Jesus whom you ought to love more vehemently than men. You may say that you love Jesus. But then I ask you, "How is this evident? Is there esteem and reverence for Him? Do you grieve and long for Him? Do you endeavor to live in immediate union with Him? Is there a resemblance between your nature and His? Are you obedient and do you keep His commandments? Is there love for the most eminent among the godly? Is there an aversion toward the unconverted, of whom we have dealt with in the above, and of whom you yourself are convinced that they are such? If you consider your love toward men and apply this to love toward Christ, then you must be convinced that you do not love Jesus -- whatever good thoughts you may have concerning yourself."

(3) Many who are in the church show publicly that they do not love Jesus. They live in a worldly and ungodly fashion. They curse, gamble, dance, drink, eat excessively, commit fornication, secretly commit all manner of unrighteousness, hate the godly and persecute them with their tongue and deeds, doing whatever an enemy of Jesus would do. Such are baptized, stay with the church, and imagine that they will yet be saved. We declare to them, however, that they are enemies of Christ; they do not love Christ, but hate Him. It would have been better for them if they had never heard Christ mentioned, than that they, being adorned by the name "Christian," oppose Christ to such a degree. They do not inflict injury upon Christ -- for He is highly exalted above them -- but upon themselves. The Wretched Condition of Those Who Do Not Love Jesus

All who do not love Jesus, focus for a moment upon your wretched condition. You can first of all be convinced by the Word of God that it is impossible to be saved without faith. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). To be disobedient to the Son is not to believe in Him; [Note: à Brakel makes this statement considering that John 3:36 reads as follows in the Statenvertaling: "Die de Zoon ongehoorzaam is, die zal het leven niet zien," that is, "He that is disobedient to the Son shall not see life."] it is contrasted with believing in the Son. "... but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). You do not believe in the Son, even though you believe that He is who He is, and that He is a Savior for all believers. For you do not love Him and wherever there is no love, there is also no faith -- "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). Faith without works is dead (James 2:26). If you do not wilfully want to deceive yourself, then you must pronounce the sentence of not being saved upon yourself.

Secondly, Jesus does not love you. "I love them that love Me" (Proverbs 8:17). If He only loves those that love Him, then you do not belong to His beloved ones. He has died for those whom He loves (Ephesians 5:25). Not to be loved by Him is not to be redeemed by Him. Those who do not love the Lord Jesus are the objects of His hatred and wrath. Love and hatred stand in opposition to each other. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13). If you do not love Jesus, Love of Christ Jesus also does not love you, and if Jesus does not love you, He hates you. "Thou

lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness" (Psalms 45:7); "The froward mouth, do I hate" (Proverbs 8:13). It was a dreadful experience for the bystanders "when He had looked round about on them with anger" (Mark 3:5). How dreadful it then will be if Jesus, who is not only a Lamb but is also called a Lion (Revelation 5:5), will look upon you in wrath on the Day of Judgment! Consider this attentively, and place yourself among those (for you belong to them) of whom it is written: "And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand" (Revelation 6:16-17). How wretched you then are who do not love Jesus, for Jesus does not love you and you are no partaker of His suffering and death. He hates you and is provoked to wrath against you. Therefore tremble!

Thirdly, you who do not love Jesus are the most cursed creature under the sun. Listen to the following passage, and make application to yourself -- a passage which cannot be read without terror: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema (= accursed) Maranatha" (1 Corinthians 16:22). It is the greatest curse imaginable. Not only will this curse come upon such, but they themselves will be the curse, and therefore "shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24). You will eternally be in that condition if you do not repent in this life. You will experience what is written in Luke 19:27 : "But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me." Oh, that the terror of the Lord would persuade you to believe!

Impediments to an Assurance of a Love for Jesus As wretched as those are who do not love Jesus, so blessed are they who do love Him. He who does not love Jesus readily imagines that he loves Jesus, but he who loves Jesus in truth frequently fears that he does not love Him. Such a person finds two reasons within himself causing him to have such suspicion about himself: He does not feel the sweet motions toward Jesus which, in his opinion, ought always to be inherent in love. Furthermore, if he loved Jesus, he would be more obedient to Him and live a holier life.

Such ought to know first of all, that the probability of love being present is very great if one is so suspicious of his conduct. If this is accompanied with a desire to love Him, and there is grief that he does not love Him; if this does not only proceed from a fear for the judgment which will come upon those who do not love Him, and a desire to be saved (thus desiring love as but a means to acquire something), but these concerns proceed from and are accompanied with the desire to love Jesus -- since one delights in the act itself of loving Him -- then there is not only a probability, but proof that one loves Jesus. It is natural for upright souls to distrust themselves if they do not clearly perceive a matter within themselves. Such is the conduct of God's children. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24).

Secondly, one must note the distinction between the propensity, veracity, and the sensitivity of the passions of love. One can have a true and genuine love which is very strong -- even if he does not have sweet and sensible passions. Does a mother not love her child simply because she is not caressing, embracing, kissing, and delighting herself in viewing the beauty of her child? One knows that her heart has a loving disposition toward her child -- also when she does not think upon it and is engaged in something else. One knows that love will surface time and again upon seeing the child, and that the distress experienced when the child is missing or meets with some

discomfort proceeds from love. Her entire conduct is directed to seek the welfare of the child, even though she is not mindful of her objective. Such is also the case here. Even if you are not always occupied with sensible expressions of the heart and are not always engaged in embracing Jesus and exercising sweet communion with Him, the love of Jesus can indeed be truly in the heart, manifesting itself in deeds. Sweet frames in believers are generally engendered by the receipt of tokens of love from Jesus -- when He kisses the soul with the kisses of His mouth, when His left hand is under her head, and when He embraces her with the right hand. However, this is a rare hour of short duration. Yet steadfast love is anchored in the heart, manifests itself at given occasions, and reveals itself in the objective of our conduct.

Thirdly, deficiency in sanctification is indeed indicative of the imperfection of love, but no proof of its total absence. Love is still small, and besides that, the old Adam is still present; these two strive against each other. Our corrupt nature prevents love from breaking through -- and furthermore, sins do not proceed from love but from our corruption. Love is, however, not strong enough to prevent and overcome these sins; love groans under them and is grieved by them. "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:17). Wherever there is aversion for, hatred for, and opposition to sin; wherever there is a desire and love for godliness, prayer to the Spirit for sanctification, and elements of a desire to please Jesus (motivated by love), there is true sanctification. Believers, from this you now observe that your reasons for concern are unfounded and that they ought not prevent you in the expressions of your love toward Jesus. Concern and fear are impediments in this respect. To further assure you that you love Jesus, consider the following matters.

Marks of Love for Jesus

First, if you correctly understand the nature and deeds of love which have been presented in the previous chapter, you will be convinced that what has been said there is descriptive of true love. Examine now your heart in light of this in the presence of an omniscient God -- being assured that if there is love, you do not have it of yourself but that it is a gift of God's grace to you -- and if you thus compare yourself with matters presented in that chapter, you will have to say, "Truly, I love Jesus!"

Secondly, place all that you love upon earth next to Jesus and observe then toward which side your heart leans. Would you rather be in the presence of those whom you love dearly, or would you rather be with Jesus if you were given and permitted to delight yourself in His love? Do you prefer money, valuables, and that which is beautiful, and delightful -- or do you prefer Jesus? I do not ask for your judgmental observation, but what the issues of your heart are. If you were to make such a comparison, would you not say: "For me it is a thing of great importance. It is Jesus and Jesus only. Everything else, apart from Jesus, would only be grievous to me. To have Jesus, however, while having to do without everything else, would gratify me, and I would wilfully forsake everything for Jesus' sake as long as I might live with Jesus in the enjoyment of love toward Him."

Thirdly, if you had the assurance that you were saved, would you then have everything you desire? Would you then live joyously and peacefully? Do you say: "I would rejoice in this; however, it would not gratify me in this life. I must have Jesus and I must live in the enjoyment of mutual love with Him. If I would have to stay away from Him in this life, I would end my days in sorrow. It is not sufficient for me to receive the benefits of Jesus. Rather, my desire is after His Person and to live

with Jesus in love. "Jesus only is the wish of my heart, and, instead of everything else and while having to do without everything else, Jesus is sufficient for me."

Fourthly, what is the reason for your sorrow? What is the focus of your yearning? When are things well with you? Is it when you earn a profit, are loved by many, and have success in everything according to your wishes? Is your answer: "No, but in the midst of prosperity I become sorrowful if I think that my Jesus has departed. If I hear or see someone who loves Jesus, my heart is overwhelmed, my tears quietly run down my cheeks, I lift my eyes upward toward Jesus, and I sigh, =Where could my faithful, sweet, and beloved Jesus be? Why does He tarry so long?' He is my love, my joy, my life, my rest, my all, and I can no longer live in estrangement from Him. Oh, that He would turn to me, visit me, kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, and ignite my love by His love! How I would then delight myself, and how I would sit under the canopy of His overshadowing love! I would become drunk with love. And if He refreshes me with His presence, the earth is too low and the world too small for me. My soul then wishes to be delivered from this and I must be in heaven. Then I long to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Here soul and body are too weak to endure the influences of love; here Jesus departs again; after light comes darkness; and after warmth, coldness. Therefore, oh blessed eternity! Oh, to be eternally with Jesus!"

Fifthly, tell me, why do you go to church? Why do you turn to your Bible? Why do you so frequently seek for solitude? What do you do there? What do you seek there? Do you answer: "My Jesus is gone; He has departed; I seek Him whom my soul loveth. I mourn over my foolishness that I did not open unto Him when He knocked. There I mourn that I have caused Him to depart due to my sin and that I have grieved His Holy Spirit. There I sigh, weep, and pour out my bitter complaints. There I become discouraged when I think how others live in the enjoyment of love, how sweet Jesus is to them, that I must always stand from afar, and that Jesus hides Himself from me and does not allow Himself be found of me. For that reason I go to hear His Word if per adventure He might be there; for that reason I turn to my Bible if perhaps I might hear His voice there. For that reason I frequent the fellowship of the godly, if peradventure He might be pleased to reveal Himself in love to me there." It is thus Jesus whom you are after.

Sixthly, with whom do you associate in the world -- with worldly people or with the godly? Do you say: "I can readily reply to that. Worldly and natural men have the stench of death, and I thus cannot tolerate to be in their presence. I consider them to be a detriment to me and I am not able to unite my heart with them. They are repulsive to me, and their religious conversation is abominable to me, since I perceive that they neither know Jesus nor are sincere of heart. They become intolerable to me if I perceive that they oppose those who are truly godly. If, however, I find someone who loves the Lord Jesus, such a person is precious in my eyes and my heart is wonderfully united with such a person -- even if I have never before met or heard of this person. Those who love Jesus are glorious to me; my heart yearns for them; I love them, and with my entire heart I am one with them. With them I wish to be esteemed and despised, and with them I wish to live and die. I rejoice when I meet them, and deem myself too insignificant to be in their presence. Yet it is to my comfort, and I deem myself happy if I, as the least, may have fellowship with them and be their servant."

Consider all this together. Even a natural man would maintain that such a disposition is a loving disposition, and that such deeds are true evidences of love. You yourself must be convinced of

this -- particularly if you read what has been said in the previous chapter. If you were to secretly listen to someone and would notice that his heart was thus engaged, would you not consider him to be happy? Would you not say to yourself, "Truly, this person loves Jesus"? Would you not love this person? Would not your affection for Jesus be stirred up? As you turn to yourself, you are indeed convinced that the above-mentioned disposition and motions are to be found in you. Therefore you must come to the following conclusion: "I cannot deny it and I do not want to deny it: I do and must say that I love Jesus, even though a quiet fear stirs somewhat within me."

Neither allow yourself to be robbed of this, nor rob yourself of it -- either by thinking that this is a matter too great for you or that you would deceive yourself, or because you are so sinful. Cast these thoughts away from you as being harmful to you, for they will prevent the sweet exercises of communion and the free communion with Jesus as being your own, and you being His. The livelier your faith is that you love Jesus -- even though there is much that ought not to be there -- the more love you will beget. Life is life and truth is truth. The Blessedness of Those Who Love Jesus

How blessed are you who love Jesus, for God loves you! "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father" (John 14:21); "For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me" (John 16:27). The Lord Jesus loves you: "He that loveth Me ... I will love him" (John 14:21). If you are loved by God and the Lord Jesus, They will accomplish in you all that proceeds from eternal love. Would God then not behold the beloved of His soul, deliver them from all that would harm them, and provide for them in all their necessities? "Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and Thy glory above all the earth; that Thy beloved may be delivered: save with Thy right hand" (Psalms 108:5-6); "For so He giveth His beloved sleep" (Psalms 127:2). [Note: The rendering of the Statenvertaling differs significantly from the KJV. It reads as follows: "Het is alzo, dat Hij het zijnen beminde als in de slaap geeft." Literally translated this reads, "He gives it to His beloved as during their sleep."]

Oh, how great is that good which the Lord will give to His beloved! "I ... will manifest myself to him" (John 14:23); "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23); "That I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance" (Proverbs 8:21). God's heart is inclined toward you, God's eye is upon you, God's hand is for you, and all discomforts come upon you in love (Revelation 3:19) -- all things must work together for you for good (Romans 8:28). All that is subservient to your salvation and can satisfy you is intended for you (1 Corinthians 2:9). Of you it may be said, "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!" (Deuteronomy 33:29). The very zenith of your felicity is love itself and the privilege to love eternally -- without end to remain satisfied with the immediate manifestations of love, and the mutual enjoyment of love with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Exhortations to Increase in Love Toward Jesus

Love is imperfect here, and we are therefore continually in need of exhortations. Therefore you who desire to become more abundant in your love toward the Lord Jesus, consider these matters:

First, consider Jesus in His preciousness. After the bride had described Him from His head to His feet, she concludes, "His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" (Song of Solomon 5:16). According to His divine

nature He is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person. He possesses all divine perfections to an infinite degree. According to His human nature He is perfectly holy. He who delights in holiness must find delight in Him. As Mediator He is crowned with honor and glory, and He is most benevolent, friendly, compassionate, and loving. Grace and love are poured out upon His lips, and He is full of grace, truth, righteousness, and benevolence, so that He is simultaneously majestic and lovely. If there is therefore anything that will beget and stir up love within you, it must be the Lord Jesus -- that is, if He would but reveal Himself to you and you could but behold the King in His beauty.

Secondly, love begets love. Jesus, however, loves you with the greatest love imaginable. Since He is love, He can therefore love those that are not loveable, and delight Himself in blessing His beloved ones. His love toward you is an eternal love, and thus without beginning and without end; it is a most intimate and vehement love. Meditate for a moment upon all in which he manifests His love toward you.

(1) He came into the world for your sake, assumed your nature, and became like unto you in all things, sin excepted. He even took upon Himself the form of a servant. He thus put Himself in your place, became your Surety, took your sins away from you, took them upon Himself as if He had committed them, and bore the punishment due upon your sins. "Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

(2) How He has been despised and what griefs He has borne! Everything was against Him; God was angry toward Him, and poured upon Him His righteous wrath against your sin. Go to the manger and follow Him to the cross. Behold Him there in His utmost distress and anxiety, and imagine that in His deepest sorrow He were to address you as follows: "Look at Me, My elect, My beloved. Love to you brought Me into this condition. My love is so great that I would be willing to suffer a thousand times more before I would allow you to perish." In love He paid your ransom, accomplished eternal redemption for you, reconciled you with God and established peace between Him and you, and led you to Him as a reconciled Father.

(3) You are still bound upon His heart. He continually thinks upon you, prays for you, is your Advocate with the Father, and His eye is upon you to preserve you.

(4) Consider in what a lovely manner He has drawn you to Himself. For your sake He sent the gospel to the locality where you were to be born, and when your time came He called you, allured you, and, while knocking, stood before your heart waiting for you to open to Him. When you were averse to His way and disobedient, He bore you with longsuffering, He regenerated you, illuminated you, gave you a heart that fell in love with Him so that you yourself sought Him and ran after Him.

(5) How frequently He has spoken to your heart! How many kisses of love has He given you! How frequently has He comforted you in your sorrow, delivered you in your perplexities, and encouraged you in your discouragements! With how much longsuffering has He borne with your weaknesses! Time and again He has manifested His goodness to you, as if you had not sinned against Him at all!

(6) He will at last bring you unto Himself into heaven in order that you may be eternally with Him. There He will glorify you; there He will cause you to rejoice; there He will cause you to be perfect in

love. He will thus be with you eternally and you with Him, to eternally satiate you with love. Meditate upon this, and believe this, for if this cannot stir up your heart to love in return, you are indeed void of love. Therefore stir up your love.

Thirdly, there is joy in love, and the heart of man is inclined toward joy. There is no joy in the world for you. That which is most delightful grieves you when Jesus has departed. You will have to acquiesce in a song I once made about the month of May:

How sweet is the time of songs and flowers, in which animal and man rejoice!

Yet it is nothing but sorrow to me as long as I miss the love of Jesus. But if He would but speak to my soul, "Thou art Mine and I am Thine eternally," And cause my sinful life to disappear -- then it is for me the time of songs and flowers!

If the soul may sit in the shadow of the love of Jesus, and if her love sweetly issues forth to her Beloved, she has a heaven full of joy, and only then is she in her element. Then she wishes that this love would never be disturbed -- just as the bride expressed it, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till He please" (Song of Solomon 2:7). Jesus rejoices in the expressions of His love to you. "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isaiah 62:5). Likewise a loving soul also rejoices in the expressions of her love to Jesus, and in the sensible enjoyment of Jesus' love toward her. "The King hath brought me into His chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in Thee ... the upright love Thee" (Song of Solomon 1:4).

Fourthly, consider attentively how Jesus is the object of the love of the Father, the angels, and believers.

(1) The love of the Father goes forth to Jesus; God loves Him. "For the Father loveth the Son" (John 5:20); "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 17:5).

(2) The holy angels love Him, rejoice in beholding Him, worship Him reverently (Hebrews 1:6), and are ready to serve Him (Matthew 4:11) -- as seen at His birth, in His suffering, and at His resurrection. At His coming unto judgment they will accompany Him with joyful willingness and love.

(3) Believers on earth love Him, their hearts go out after Him, and He is the focal point of the passions of their love. "Therefore do the virgins love Thee" (Song of Solomon 1:3). The bride continually has the word Beloved in her mouth. Just consider how each believer mourns when Jesus is absent; how they long for His coming to them; and how delighted they are when they may sweetly enjoy His fellowship. All their asking, crying, and weeping is for Jesus. In Jesus only do they find all their satisfaction. What beautiful expressions we find in the meditations of believers! "It is much better for me to die for Jesus than to rule over the world -- My love is crucified -- If you were to cut my heart in a thousand pieces, on each piece you would find the name Jesus written with golden letters -- Lord Jesus, I love Thee more than my possessions, than my loved ones, and than myself -- Money must perish (with all those who love possessions more than fellowship with Jesus for one day)," etc. Shall the heart of each believer bring forth a flame of love, and shall your heart then also not be set aflame? Come, join yourself to all who love Jesus, and say with them, Jesus, sweet Jesus -- Jesus is the most eminent of all who I can find delight in. Jesus, if Thou dost

desire to have me, I desire to have Thee and desire none other than Thee. To all creatures I say, "No!" If Jesus were to ask you, "Lovest thou Me?" would you then not answer, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee"? Therefore hold fast to this and continually immerse yourself in this love. Let it give you wings to render you fit to run your course with joy. Let the love of Jesus compel you to live a life pleasing to Him, in order to glorify Him here, and patiently wait until He takes you to be eternally with Himself.

Guards Against All That Impedes the Exercise of Love Toward Jesus

Henceforth be diligent in maintaining, increasing, and frequently stirring up this love. To that end you must be on guard for some matters, and despise others.

First of all, be on guard against ignorance. Knowledge begets love, and one must therefore strive to increase in the knowledge of Jesus. Those who have but little knowledge are generally very deficient and unstable in love. If the Lord comes to them in an extraordinary manner, it goes well, but if that ceases, their love immediately becomes more faint. However, those who by the Word have become more acquainted with Jesus in all that pertains to Him, are more able to view Him from nearby and to become enamored with Him. Their love is more steadfast -- also when such sweet encounters are not experienced so sensibly.

Secondly, be on guard against partial love. If the world and all that is in it is still desirable and attractive to the eye and the heart, and if you are still so set upon your own will, honor, and delight, the love for Jesus cannot be very strong. Jesus wants to have the heart for Himself. If the enemy gains entrance, Jesus departs; and if He departs, your love will become weaker. Therefore, do not halt between two opinions. If you wish to love the world and to be loved by her, then love it in its entirety and let go of Jesus. If, however, you wish to love Jesus and be loved by Jesus, then love Him and Him alone and let go of the world. Pay no attention to it any longer.

Thirdly, be on guard against a lack of fellowship. Love wants to be maintained. If we are too far from the fire, we shall become cold. The very closest of friends will become estranged due to lack of fellowship. Such is also the case here. Jesus wants to be sought for and perceive that His friendship is of great value to us. Jesus wants to be waited on and to have time made available for mutual manifestations of love. You must therefore frequently endeavor to speak to Him and to tell Him again what your heart's disposition toward Him is, while in an intimate manner expressing your desire toward Him, and your grief that you cannot love Him more. That stirs up love.

Fourthly, be on guard against unbelief. If we readily doubt our portion in Jesus, if we have no confidence that He loves us, if we are actively contradicting all arguments that He has manifested love toward us, readily acquiescing in arguments to the contrary -- yes, searching them out as if it were a masterpiece to conclude that Jesus does not love me and that I do not love Jesus -- then, you will be incapable of exercising love and receiving love in return. Be on guard therefore neither to quarrel against love, to hold Jesus' love suspect, nor to deny the graces which are evidences of Jesus' love, for that is the direct way to cause Jesus to depart.

Fifthly, be on guard against willful sins. Jesus is holy, delights in holiness but hates ungodliness. He has compassion with daily weaknesses and improprieties, and will not withhold the manifestation of His love for that reason. However, willful sins are committed against love -- and then Jesus will withhold His love and His Spirit will be grieved. And when Jesus withholds His love,

you will also not be able to love Him. Willful sins will render you incapable of exercising love. The conscience will be troubled, you will lose your freedom, and you will not dare to approach in prayer. You have ruined too much and there has come too great a separation. At times it will take much effort before a loving disposition will be restored.

Sixthly, be on guard against fearfulness, that is, to be in some measure ashamed to confess Him. You wish to exercise love in secret, but do not wish this to be known by others. One is ashamed of Him for fear of harm or shame, and thus withdraws himself. If you enter into situations requiring that love toward Jesus, His honor, and His cause be manifested, you then hide and dare not say, "This is my Beloved, yea, this is my friend." Jesus readily perceives this and it displeases Him. It is the cause that Jesus will hide Himself from you and it is evidence that you have but little love -- love which is very much diminished by such conduct.

Exhortation to Stir Up Love Toward Jesus It can be deduced from the foregoing what it is that stirs up love, and what is to be observed to that end.

(1) You must believe that He loves you and acknowledge every true grace to be evidence of His love toward you.

(2) You must continually separate yourself from everything and only find delight and satisfaction in love toward Jesus.

(3) You must surrender your all to Jesus, without holding anything back, and offer yourself and all that you have to Jesus, declaring a willingness to do without it for His sake.

(4) You must declare Jesus' beauty and preciousness to others, to the end that they also would begin to love Jesus -- and that He thus shall be loved by many.

(5) You must joyfully wear His livery, being desirous for everyone to know that you have Jesus as your Lord.

Furthermore, if anyone were to do anything toward Jesus which would be disadvantageous, he will have us with soul and body as his opponent, and we shall defend His honor with all that we have.

(6) With tender carefulness you must be on guard against that which displeases Him and endeavor to please Him, to be conformed to Him, and to resemble Him in His nature.

(7) You must take time to delight yourself in mutual love, and if some estrangement has occurred and darkness has come, you must endeavor to restore familiarity.

(8) You must yearn, and stir up this yearning time and again -- to depart and be with Christ -- doing so by continually reflecting upon what will be above and how sweet it will be to always be with the Lord. Amen.

064. Chapter 59: The Fear of God

----- CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE ----- The Fear of God

Love toward God (which we have discussed), engenders the fear of God -- which we shall now consider. Love and fear are conjoined in Deuteronomy 10:12 : "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him."

The Word Fear Defined

Fear is either expressive of reverence or terror. Fear as terror is generally expressed by the Hebrew words *magor*, and *pachadh*, and by the Greek word *phobos*. Fear as being reverence is denominated in Hebrew as *yirah*, and in Greek as *eulabeia*. However, these words are occasionally also used without this distinction. [Note: The sentence which follows here in the Dutch version is only applicable to the Dutch language and has therefore not been translated. This Dutch sentence reads as follows: Wij noemen vrezen ook vruchten, afkomstig van het Hoogduitsch; op zich zelf wordt het nu zelden gebruikt, maar wel in samenvoeging in het woord godvruchtig, 't welk hetzelfde is als godvreezend.]

Fear issues forth from love -- either for ourselves or for God. Self-love engenders fear when something occurs which could deprive us of something good or whereby some evil could befall us. We fear deprivation, or the evil itself, and whatever or whoever would deprive us of that which is good or whereby evil could be inflicted upon us. God has created self-love in man and wills that we make use of it. The law requires that we love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). It is therefore not sinful to fear deprivation and evil. This fear was inherent in Adam's nature prior to the fall, even though there was no occasion for this fear to arise in him. The Lord Jesus also had such fear (cf. Matthew 26:37; Hebrews 5:7). One may indeed be fearful of death and other discomforts, and thus also of wild animals and evil men. This fear becomes evil, however, if it begets the use of evil means -- either to preserve or acquire that which is good, or to avoid evil. This is true if we fear man more than God and, in neglecting both the fear of God and obedience toward His commandments, we seek to get man on our side in sinful ways. We then give no heed as to whether we displease God; as long as we can please men in order that they will do us no evil, but good. "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Since we must have love for ourselves, and fear issues forth therefrom, we must have more fear for evil which relates to the soul than to the body. Since, the soul's well or woe is dependent upon God, we must be fearful out of love for our own salvation, and must fear God's wrath and judgments. "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Psalms 119:120). An unconverted person must also, by fear for the eternal wrath of God, be persuaded to believe (2 Corinthians 5:11). A converted person must, for fear of spiritual harm, stir himself up to be earnest. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Hebrews 4:1).

Two Kinds of Fear: Slavish and Filial Fear

Relative to this fear, a distinction is made between slavish and filial fear. Slavish fear causes a slave to do the will of his master for fear of being struck. Such slavish fear of God is better than a stubborn and insensitive despising of God and His judgments. It is useful if someone is brought to repentance by this (cf. Matthew 3:7; Amos 4:12). Someone who is presently converted need not be concerned whether or not his conversion is genuine, because he was driven to Christ out of fear for damnation rather than love to God, for we have shown that we must cherish our well-being and fear that which is evil for us -- this compelling us to repentance. Slavish fear is evil, however, if it is nothing more than terror causing us to flee from God. We repeat: Man, out of love for his salvation and out of fear for his damnation, must fear God and thereby be compelled to repentance and obedience. Self-love is, however, not the basis for filial fear. To be fearful of provoking God to anger because He has power to punish; to be obedient so that He would not withdraw His favor from us, but manifest more of it to us -- this is not the nature of filial fear, even though the matter itself is good and characteristic of God's people. The motivation for the filial fear of God is not self-love, but love to God because He is God and with view to His majesty -- even if this were to result neither in good nor evil on our behalf. The Definition and Nature of Filial Fear

Filial fear is a holy inclination of the heart, generated by God in the hearts of His children, whereby they, out of reverence for God, take careful pains not to displease God, and earnestly endeavor to please Him in all things.

It is a motion of the heart. The noble soul is gifted with emotions, and dependent upon what the objects are, is moved to either joy or sorrow, love or hatred, fear or fearlessness. As far as the fear of God is concerned, man is insensitive, hard, and without emotion. "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:18). In regeneration, however, the heart of stone is removed and a heart of flesh is received which is soft and pliable, and is very readily moved upon beholding God, dependent upon the measure in which God reveals Himself to the soul. If God is perceived as being majestic, a motion immediately arises within their soul -- a motion which is becoming to the creature in respect to God.

It is a holy motion. Since an unconverted person is in essence nothing but sin, also all that proceeds from him is distorted. The ability to fear is directed toward an erroneous object and is exercised in a disorderly fashion. Believers, however, having been sanctified in principle, are also sanctified as far as their inner motions are concerned. Their fear has a proper object and consequently functions in a holy manner, that is, in faith and love. They are devout and fear God (Acts 10:2).

God generates this holy motion. By nature man is totally unfit for any good work. He finds no delight in God and has no desire to fear the Lord. He may be terrified of God, but he cannot fear Him rightly. However, God enables His own to fear Him. "... but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jeremiah 32:40). The Holy Spirit is therefore called "the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2). This filial fear is found in the hearts of God's children. The heart is the seat of all motions -- evil as well as good.

God has enclosed this precious gift in the hearts of His children, and all the motions relative to fear proceed from the heart. Their fear neither consists in talk, refraining from evil and doing good, nor

in the appearance of fear, but rather in truth. The heart, intellect, will, and affections are involved here and the heart brings forth various deeds which manifest the fear of God. Only God's children fear the Lord, and therefore those who have this virtue are called God-fearing people. "... the same man was just and devout" (Luke 2:25); "... devout men" (Acts 2:5); "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial" (Acts 8:2). [Note: Wherever the word "devout" is used in the KJV, the Statenvertaling uses either the word "godvrezend" or "godvruchtig." Both words would be translated as "god-fearing."]

Filial fear is engendered by reverence for God. God is the object of this fear. "O fear the Lord, ye His saints" (Psalms 34:9). God is eminent, glorious, and majestic within Himself -- also if there were no creatures. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty" (1 Chronicles 29:11). Hereby God is aweinspiring in and of Himself. With the advent of intelligent creatures which observe the brilliance of His glory, it cannot but be that they have reverence for Him who is both infinite and majestic. A natural man does not know God. Therefore he may be fearful of His judgments, for calamities, and sometimes may acknowledge God to be terrible (although he generally does not progress this far), but he cannot have reverence for Him. That is the privilege and blessedness of believers. A sinful person cannot tolerate God's majesty. He would flee in terror from God, for He is to him a consuming fire. However, in Christ God is a reconciled Father to His children, and therefore they simultaneously love and revere Him. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psalms 2:11).

Reverence requires, first of all, a knowledge of and beholding of God's majesty. "For we ... were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).

Secondly, there must be a delightful acknowledgement and a wholehearted approbation that God is so majestic. "Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations? for to Thee doth it appertain" (Jeremiah 10:7).

Thirdly, there must be a reverent bowing before the Lord and a worshiping of Him. "... in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple" (Psalms 5:7); "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Psalms 95:6).

Fourthly, there must be a covering of the countenance, not daring to behold the brilliance of His glory. Thus the angels covered their faces (Isaiah 6:2), and of Moses it is written, "Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exodus 3:6).

Fifthly, there must be a trembling as a result of not being able to endure the Lord's majesty. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence" (Jeremiah 5:22); "And when He had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling" (Daniel 10:11).

Sixthly, reverence for God engenders in God's children a careful guarding against displeasing God by disobedience and the commission of sins, and a being active to please Him in all things. Solomon frequently presents these manifestations of the fear of God in his proverbs. "Fear the Lord, and depart from evil" (Proverbs 3:7); "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Proverbs 8:13); "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" (Proverbs 16:6). We also read this in Jeremiah 32:40, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." We read furthermore, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7); "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (Proverbs 14:27). This is the nature of the fear

of God.

Exhortation with the Intent to Convict Those Who Do Not Fear God

What does it avail us if we understand the nature of a virtue and do not practice it? No one is acquainted with the beauty of virtue, except the one who practices it. God requires this from all men and enjoins His children to do so. Let the voice of God enter into your hearts. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 6:13); "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). He who loves God and His honor will cry out with David, "Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him" (Psalms 33:8). Even if the world does not fear God, the church and God's children must indeed do so. "Fear Him, all ye the seed of Israel" (Psalms 22:23); "O fear the Lord, ye His saints" (Psalms 34:9). They are therefore denominated as God-fearing persons.

If we now observe the world, it is evident that the fear of God is absent in the heart of man. One must think of the world as Abraham did of Gerar. "And Abraham said. ... Surely the fear of God is not in this place" (Genesis 20:11). If we consider the church, then most members declare that the fear of God is neither before their eyes nor in their hearts. And what about you? Examine yourself. What will you answer upon the question, "Do you fear God?" Is your focus in your walk of life upon the Lord? Does reverence for His majesty arise within when you think about Him, speak of Him, or hear mention made of Him? Do you reverently bow before Him, and do you tremble if you are about to address Him in prayer? If a sinful thought or motion arises within you, does the fear of God motivate you to suppress it? Does the fear of God prevent you from all sinful association with men, fornication, unrighteousness, lies, backbiting, cursing, wrath, and other sins? Does reverence for God motivate and urge you to the practice of religion and to do whatever the Lord has enjoined you to do as being pleasing unto Him? Or do you love the things of this world? Are all your concerns related to the acquisition and preservation of these things? Do you look to people as if they were able to give or withhold them from you? Do you seek to please them even if it displeases God, and are they the measure of your fear? Reflect for a moment upon your former life and give attention to the current disposition governing your deeds. If you are inwardly convinced that, until now, you have not served God in truth, then take your wretched condition -- both current and future -- into consideration, and it possibly could be a means whereby the terror of the Lord would persuade you to believe. Give ear for a moment -- you who neither fear the Lord, nor give heed to Him but who despise the Lord, His Name (Malachi 1:6), and His holy things (Ezekiel 22:8). Give ear, you who arrogantly and proudly oppose the Lord. David says concerning you, "Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from Thy commandments" (Psalms 119:21). The Serious Consequences of Being Void of the Fear of God

(1) Be assured that God will give you a fearful and trembling heart as long as you do not fear Him, so that you will find neither rest nor safety anywhere -- rather, your own heart and conscience will be continually tormented. The wish of David will come upon you. "Put them in fear, O Lord" (Psalms 9:20). Be assured that the curse which the Lord threatens will come upon you. "The Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would

God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear" (Deuteronomy 28:65-67); "I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth" (Leviticus 26:36); "And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isaiah 2:19).

(2) Be assured that if you continue on without fear for the Lord -- even though you may peacefully approach your end -- the terror of the Lord will at last come upon you. When you will be forsaken by everything, the Lord will be a terror to you and strike terror into you. Oh, how many are there who breathe their last breath with consternation and full of terror! Remember Belshazzar, and consider that you will also experience this. "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another" (Daniel 5:6). In that condition he departed from life.

(3) And even if no terror were to come upon you in this life and at death, you will nevertheless be overcome with fear on every side after your death. Then wrath and anger, oppression and consternation will eternally be upon you. Then you will know what it is to fall into the hands of God. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). Give heed to what is expressed in Psalms 76:7 : "Thou, even Thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?" It is in this manner that the prophet presents this terror: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us will dwell with the devouring fire? who among us will dwell with everlasting burnings" (Isaiah 33:14). Oh, that you would quietly reflect upon, and apply all this to yourself -- and that you would believe it! The Fear of God in Believers

We shall now turn to you, believers. You will indeed observe your deficiency in this, but you will also be able to perceive that the Lord has put the principle of His fear within you.

(1) Do you not desire that disposition of the fear of God as we have described it in the foregoing? You do not only acquiesce in this, judging it to be good and becoming, but you grieve that you have so little of it and are desirous for a greater measure of it. This is an indication that you are already a partaker of it, for the servants of God are described as such. "...Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy name" (Nehemiah 1:11).

(2) Do you not perceive heartfelt intentions and initiatives to walk in the fear of the Lord? Can you find any delight in having subdued a sin and in having done some good, unless this has been done in the fear of God? And perceiving your deficiency and impotence toward that which you love, is it not frequently your earnest prayer to God that He would fulfil His promise to you in giving His fear in your heart? Behold, there you have evidence that you have the nature of those that fear God. This was David's prayer: "Unite my heart to fear Thy name" (Psalms 86:11).

(3) Is your desire for the fear of God entirely impotent and your prayer entirely fruitless, or do you perceive the principles of it in your actions? Does not God reveal Himself to you in His majesty? Does not your heart say that the Lord is indeed worthy to be served? Are not reverential motions stirred up within you toward God? Do you not at times bow in reverence before Him? Has it not been your experience that, due to a sense of His majesty, you have cast your eyes downward,

closed your eyes, and covered your face with your hands? Did not a holy trembling come upon you at times, and was it not your delight if these motions became more sensitive -- yes, did it not cause you to rejoice when thinking upon this afterwards, wishing it to recur and that it would always be thus? Would you not have committed many sins, and neglected many good things if the fear of the Lord had not prevented you? Does not the fear of God nip many sins in the bud, and does not this motivate you to perform your duty? If these things are within you, you must be convinced of the truth, even though the measure is yet small. You will observe your disposition in Job: "For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of His highness I could not endure" (Job 31:23). Such was also true for Nehemiah: "... but so did not I, because of the fear of God" (Nehemiah 5:15). Acknowledge therefore this received grace, and it will render you capable to read the following rebuke and exhortation with fruit.

Believers Rebuked The more clearly you will be convinced of the principles of the fear of God within you, the more you must grieve over your deficiency in, as well as your sinning against the fear of God. These manifest themselves in the disposition of the heart, the penetration of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds contrary to the revelation of God's presence, and in the fear of man whereby the fear of God must consequently yield.

First, we are to be severely reprimanded, if, knowing that God is majestic, having experienced how good it is to humbly walk with the Majestic One, and knowing how invigorating it is to walk in the way of uprightness, we nevertheless neglect to thus focus upon the Lord and fear Him continually. This makes us vulnerable to all manner of sin. When the doorkeeper sleeps with the door wide open, every lust can then enter and exit without any impediment -- and even if we are aware of this, there is nevertheless no strength to oppose it and we are overcome before realizing it. If then, with Samson, we wish to offer resistance, we shall have lost our strength.

Secondly, this is followed by a disposition which is yet more evil, namely, when we even proceed to satisfy this lust, doing so not only when our conscience points out its evil and counsels us not to begin; and upon having begun, counseled us to desist from and subdue the lust, to be silent in the midst of an evil discourse, and to refrain from the sin which we are currently committing; but also when our conscience causes us to reflect upon God and His majesty. Indeed, this is especially true (which is most abominable) when God manifests Himself to the soul, sensibly discourages the soul, and, so to speak, shakes the finger and says, "I am here, and I certainly see what you are doing. Cease, or else I shall cause you to feel My displeasure." It is a setting aside of the fear of God, a grieving of the Holy Spirit, and the inflicting of a deadly wound upon the soul when, due to the agitation of sin, we are driven onward and seek to hide ourselves from the presence of God in order to be able to proceed, and then actually prevail in carrying out the sin which is at hand. If God were not infinitely longsuffering and immutable, He would cast away such impertinent souls. The third sin committed against the fear of God is to fear man -- a sin to which the godly are still vulnerable. If we have not yet fully denied ourselves in regard to honor, love, advantage, and pleasure, nor are much inclined to acknowledge the insignificance of man (that is, that man can neither stir nor move, can do neither good nor evil to us), and we have not accustomed ourselves to see the hand of the Lord in all things, thus perceiving that God alone does everything, and that all men are but instruments in His hand, being used either to do good or evil unto us -- this will engender a looking unto man. In time of war we consider the multitude and courage of the soldiers and we stand upon our sword (Ezekiel 33:26). "Who shall come down against us? or who shall

enter into our habitations" (Jeremiah 21:13). If, however, we perceive that the might of the enemy supersedes ours, we are fearful and the heart is moved "as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind" (Isaiah 7:2). We fear man when in sickness, legal cases, business transactions, in the plying of our trade, in pursuing our desire which must be attained to by the instrumentality of men, etc.; we look to men and, in our thoughts end in them -- as if it had to come from them. We vehemently seek to have them on our side, and we are fearful of losing their favor. In our association with men we fear the one for his wisdom (which is no match for ours), the other for his status and imposing personality, the third for his wickedness, and the fourth for his benevolence which we would not like to lose. Now if such a person has no desire for godliness and would become angry if you were to manifest the image of God and perform your duty, and if, out of fear for him, you were to hold back and accommodate him in the commission of sin, behold, then the fear of God is rendered inferior and must yield. There God is on the one side, and man on the other side. There the fear of God is on the one hand and the fear of man on the other hand. If, however, the fear of man motivates us to do something which is contrary to the fear of God, then we reject the fear of God because of the fear of man. This is a dreadful sin, for first of all God has forbidden it. "Fear not them which kill the body" (Matthew 10:28); "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die" (Isaiah 51:12). Secondly, it is the greatest act of contempt toward God if He must yield to man for you. It is idolatry and a sin of the heathen. "Who ... worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). Thirdly, it is a denial of the providence of God -- as if God did not reign; as if the creature could function independently. Fourthly, it affects and troubles you continually. Fifthly, it causes you to fall from one sin into the next, and you ought therefore to be ashamed of your previous fear of man. Be warned and give heed to the exhortation of the Lord: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of" (Isaiah 2:22). Follow David in his noble courage. "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me" (Psalms 118:6).

Incentives for the Fear of God

It is not sufficient to be on guard against the sins which are contrary to the fear of God; rather, it is our great duty to conquer them all by the fear of God. The livelier the fear of God is, the less sin will have any effect. Therefore in the future commit yourself fully to tenderly fear the Lord your God in order that the fear of God may guard you and direct your thoughts, words, and deeds. Oh, if only I could make you more lively in this! Give careful attention to the following incentives; may you be tender and pliable.

First, does not God have all the perfections within Himself which are able to engender reverence? He is majestic, glorious, omnipotent, holy, good, and awe-inspiring; that is His nature. How can anyone therefore be in the presence of God without fear and reverence? Consider what has been expressed in the Word of God: "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders" (Exodus 15:11); "That thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE Lord THY GOD" (Deuteronomy 28:58); "For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: He also is to be feared above all gods" (1 Chronicles 16:25); "O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God" (Nehemiah 1:5). His wrath upon the sinner is dreadful. "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath" (Psalms 90:11). His goodness begets reverence in order that He may thus be feared in love. "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Psalms 130:4). Is it not proper, becoming,

and requisite that you, having been created by God and having received grace from God, fear this majestic God and tremble before Him?

Secondly, the root of the matter is indeed in you. You desire it and you cannot hear the fear of God mentioned, or your heart is inclined to it and your desires are stirred up. Why would you subdue this desire? All that has a principle of life is desirous for growth and perfection -- which is thus also true for you in this respect. It is indeed natural if a servant fears his master and a child his father. You have chosen the Lord to be your Lord, and has not He given you the Spirit of the adoption of children and set you among the children? Have you not entered into covenant with Him that He would be a God unto you and that you would be the recipient of His favor? This must stir you up to fear your Lord and your Father. "If then I be a Father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is My fear" (Malachi 1:6). Acknowledge this relationship and it will beget filial fear in you.

Thirdly, the fear of God is the fountain of all the holiness which delights you. Sinful lusts will lose their potency, corruptions which surface will readily be subdued, you will be stopped in the middle of sinning, and you will find yourself inclined toward the practice of all manner of virtues. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10); "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom" (Proverbs 15:33); "The fear of the Lord is clean" (Psalms 19:9); "The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: " (Proverbs 19:23); "... perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Fourthly, the Lord has pleasure in those that fear Him. It ought to be a very precious matter to us that God is pleased with us. It ought to be our great desire and earnest endeavor to be pleasing to the Lord. God is, however, pleased with the fear of God, for therein the acknowledgement and the glorification of His perfections coalesce. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him" (Psalms 147:11). How lovely it is when man delights himself in God and when God finds pleasure in man!

Blessings Promised to Those Who Fear God

Fifthly, although love for our own well-being is not the basis for the fear of God, we nevertheless may and must be stirred up by it. It is noteworthy that so many blessings are expressed and so many benefits are promised to the godly. Consider the temporal benefits.

(1) There is satisfaction: "Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure" (Proverbs 15:16).

(2) There is sufficient daily supply: "There is no want to them that fear Him" (Psalms 34:9); "Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine" (Psalms 33:18-19); "He hath given meat unto them that fear Him" (Psalms 111:5).

(3) There is sacred protection: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him" (Psalms 34:7).

(4) There is abundance: "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life" (Proverbs 22:4).

(5) There is all salvation: "Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him" (Psalms 85:9).

Consider the promises relative to the soul.

(1) There is the revelation of heavenly mysteries: "What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant" (Psalms 25:12;Psalms 25:14).

(2) There is divine compassion: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him" (Psalms 103:13;Psalms 103:17).

(3) There is the answering of prayers: "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psalms 145:19).

(4) Let me thus bring it all to a conclusion: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord" (Psalms 112:1); "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God" (Ecclesiastes 8:12); "Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee!" (Psalms 31:19). If it pleases the Lord to stir you up by so many benefits and promises, it ought to please you to be stirred up by them. Being desirous for the promises, you must seek their fulfillment in the way whereby the Lord wishes to do so, for the fear of the Lord is so desirable in and of itself. Be therefore resolved to do so and make it your great endeavor; you will learn from being thus engaged. And since we are too corrupt, turn therefore to the Lord, praying, "Unite my heart to fear Thy name" (Psalms 86:11). Make yourself familiar with the Word of God; it is a means whereby you may fear the Lord. "He shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God" (Deuteronomy 17:19). May the Lord bless these words. "Fear God, and give glory to Him" (Revelation 14:7). Amen.

1 The sentence which follows here in the Dutch version is only applicable to the Dutch language and has therefore not been translated. This Dutch sentence reads as follows: Wij noemen vrezen ook vruchten, afkomstig van het Hoogduitsch; op zich zelf wordt het nu zelden gebruikt, maar wel in samenvoeging in het woord godvruchtig, 't welk hetzelfde is als godvreezend.

2 Wherever the word "devout" is used in the KJV, the Statenvertaling uses either the word "godvreezend" or "godvruchtig." Both words would be translated as "god-fearing."

065. Chapter 60: Obedience Toward God

----- CHAPTER SIXTY ----- Obedience Toward God The word obedience is a derivative from a word which means "to hear" -- which is also true in the Greek and Hebrew languages. "To hear" frequently means "to obey," "to listen to a voice," "to be pleased with a command and to execute it."

Obedience is the willing subjection of God's child to God, as Lord and Father in Christ, in order to comply with His commands. The Object and Subjects of Obedience The object is God. All that obligates us to obedience and all that can incite us thereto is to be found in God. He is the First, and the One who alone is majestic, glorious, and holy. He is the Creator from whom man originates and through whom he exists in his motions. He is the One who is worthy to be obeyed and the only lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Every man is obligated toward obedience by virtue of the nature of God and of his own position relative to Him. That obligation is upon everyone and is acknowledged and subscribed to by everyone -- even by the heathen. God requires it from His people in Scripture. This is not so because God has need to be served by man's hands, but because He is worthy, human nature mandates it, and it constitutes the well-being and felicity of man. It is a manifestation of God's goodness that He wills something in reference to man, issues him a command, and wishes man to do something toward Him. On the other hand, if God reveals Himself to man and causes him to behold His perfections, man cannot but subject himself to God with delight. Man needs no other reason nor any other incentive for obedience except that God is God. God is to be viewed here both as Lord and as Father in Christ. As Lord, as possessor, and as the most eminent One, He was the object of Adam's obedience prior to the fall. After the fall, however, God is to be viewed not only as Lord to His people -- that is, Jehovah who is, who was, and who shall be -- but also as their Father in Christ, so that both reverence unto God as Lord and love to Him as Father coalesce. "Obey the voice of the Lord your God" (Jeremiah 26:13). The subjects are the children of God. Christ is involved in every aspect of the covenant of grace; hence everything must transpire by faith in Christ. God does not want to be served by His enemies -- even if it were in a manner becoming to Him. In order to serve God there must first be reconciliation, which alone is accomplished through Christ and applied by faith. That faith is active in serving God as a reconciled Father in filial love. The law is not a burden to God's children but a delight; it is not a condition of the covenant of works, but a loving rule to prevent error. The partakers of the covenant are here not to be viewed as slaves who, for fear of being beaten, are compelled to work, but as children whose delight it is to obey their Father. The unconverted do not know God in that relationship, and even if they do something which God commands, they do not do so in the manner enjoined and with the required objective. Furthermore, they have no desire to obey God; they are neither willing, nor do they engage themselves to do so. God reveals Himself to His children, however, as the One who is worthy to be obeyed. He grants them faith to come to Him through Christ, as children to their father. He gives them both filial love toward as well as fear for Him, so that they only are the suitable subjects to render obedience to the Lord. This obedience is therefore referred to as the obedience of faith

(Romans 1:15), and believers are called obedient children (1 Peter 1:14). The Nature, Goal, and Manner of Obedience The nature of obedience consists in subjection to God. Man, by his very nature, has been placed in subjection to God. Adam acknowledged this subjection with delight and joyfully subjected himself to the Lord. However, after the fall man's nature is rebellious toward God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). However, the man who has been born again and has received a new nature, does not only know and acknowledge the fact that he is naturally subject to God, but he willingly subjects himself to God, renders himself available to Him for service, and says with David, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant" (Psalms 116:16). He surrenders himself with his entire heart. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Romans 6:17). This subjection consists:

(1) In an actual knowledge of, and being exercised with, the majesty and other perfections of God which are worthy of the rendering of obedience. The obedient person reflects upon them and continues to focus upon them with his thoughts. He thus acknowledges that God is truly worthy to be obeyed by all creatures.

(2) In delight and joy that God is worthy of all service and obedience. He cannot get enough of observing, acquiescing in, or rejoicing in this.

(3) In acknowledging the relationship in which all men are toward God as Creator and creature respectively, who in every respect -- without exception -- are dependent upon God. As far as the believer himself is concerned, he not only acknowledges the obligation which devolves upon him as creature, but he also views himself as being in a Father/child relationship in Christ. He thus lovingly perceives how becoming it is to obey this majestic Lord and benevolent Father, so that his affections are ardently inclined toward obedience.

(4) In an actual subjection, surrender, and offering of oneself to the service of the Lord. This is not an activity which subsides, but this act is repeated time and again, and is renewed on every occasion. He thus acquires a propensity and a submissive disposition, from which all actions proceed time and again -- and thus "his deeds ... are wrought in God" (John 3:21). The goal of submission is the carrying out of the Lord's command. This sovereign Lord and Father in Christ also exercises chastisements toward His children which are distasteful to nature and are unpleasant when they are being inflicted. A child of God must not respond rebelliously to this; he must neither be sorrowful, murmur, stubbornly resist and harden himself against this, nor avoid the cross, and go astray by sinning. Rather, also in this respect he must have a pliable, submissive, and obedient heart, saying, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Micah 7:9). We shall discuss this under the subject of patience; here our focus is upon submission in doing His will. The Lord is also King, the Lord is lawgiver, and the Lord makes His will known to His children. He teaches them His precepts, all of which are included in the ten commandments. It is His will that they walk according to this rule, without either deleting or adding something. These commandments contain all matters which are either to be performed or abstained from, the manner in which all these are to be adhered to, and the goal which is both the motive and the objective for the performance of or the abstinence from everything. There is no room here for human institutions or personal opinions. The obedient person commits Himself to

the performance of these commandments. It is not sufficient for him to have an internal love and desire for this, but he also wants to perform them as commandments of the Lord, and because they are His commandments. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes alway. O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes! ... Teach me Thy statutes, etc" (Psalms 119:11;Psalms 119:111-112;Psalms 119:5;Psalms 119:26). The manner of obedience consists in willingness; obedience is a willing subjection. It neither grieves the obedient person nor is it a grievous burden to him that he is subject to God even in a natural sense. He would never desire not to be subject to God -- yes, even if he were free and it were his choice whether to be subject and obedient to God, he would out of love subject Himself and fully surrender himself to God in order to be obedient to the Lord in all things. He therefore willingly embraces his subjection and is determined to obey the Lord on a completely volitional basis. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isaiah 1:19). This willing disposition consists in

(1) A ready willingness of the heart. "My heart is fixed, [Note: The Statenvertaling reads as follows: "Mijn hart is bereid," that is, "My heart is ready."] O God, my heart is fixed"¹⁵ (Psalms 57:7); "So, as much as in me is, I am ready" (Romans 1:15).

(2) An offering of oneself for this work. "Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the Lord" (2 Chronicles 17:16); "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

(3) An asking for counsel if something needs to be done. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do" (Acts 9:6).

(4) A listening for an answer: "that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2); "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (Psalms 85:8).

(5) The desire and the intent to do whatever is according to the Lord's wishes and is pleasing to Him. "Wherefore we labour, that we may be accepted of Him" (2 Corinthians 5:9).

(6) Immediately engaging in the duty which one knows that God presently commands. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments" (Psalms 119:60).

(7) Finding delight in and loving this duty. "Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight" (Psalms 119:35); "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments" (Psalms 112:1).

(8) Doing the work joyously. "I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. Thy statutes have been my songs ... for they are the rejoicing of my heart" (Psalms 119:14;Psalms 119:54;Psalms 119:111).

(9) The zeal and ardor with which the duty is performed. "Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire" (Psalms 104:4); "(Be) fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11).

(10) The fearless performance of the duty; that is, fearing neither the loss of honor, goods, relatives, nor life. "And many of the brethren ... speak the word without fear" (Php 1:14); "For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).

(11) Being courageous and bold in the performance of the duty. "For the Lord of hosts ... hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded" (Zechariah 10:3; Zechariah 10:5).

(12) The steadfastness, determination, and commitment with which the work is performed. "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). A Convicting Question: are We Obedient Toward God?

We have thus held before you the nature of obedience. The truth is as a clear mirror to you, revealing whether you are obedient unto God. It is not necessary to prove to you that this is your duty. Man's nature teaches this sufficiently, the heathen will convince you, and God requires it in Scripture. "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me" (Exodus 19:5); "Only rebel not ye against the Lord" (Numbers 14:9); "Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the Lord thy God, and do His commandments and His statutes, which I command thee this day" (Deuteronomy 27:10). Conclude this to be so and set yourself to it, saying, "I am under obligation and must be obedient to God." Then ask yourself, "Am I already obedient?" You will be able to answer yourself by reason of what has been said about the nature of obedience. An unconverted person is not obedient to God. He is also not capable of this for he does not know God, does not come unto God by faith, and his conduct is not motivated by obedience. Therefore, examine yourself attentively. Do you submit yourself to the Lord? Are you acquainted with the Lord's majesty and His worthiness to be obeyed? Do you know of conscious transactions with Christ as Surety and Mediator, thus to be reconciled with God by His suffering and death, and as a child to serve Him as a Father in filial love? Do you render yourself available to the Lord's service in all things -- doing so with a heartfelt willingness? And how do you fare relative to the performance of your duty? Is there consistency, tender carefulness, and zeal? Does all this manifest itself? If you wish to deal uprightly with yourself, you will perceive whether there is true obedience to be found with you. A Reprimand for the Disobedient

Give ear, all you who are disobedient; I will declare the word of the Lord to you. In order to do this more effectively, it is needful for me to first show who the disobedient are, since there is great diversity among them.

First, all of you who do not manifest the nature of obedience as delineated above, all your deeds, however good you may esteem them to be, are but apples of Sodom and grapes of Gomorrah. They are but splendid sins which have an appearance of being good -- however, not in truth.

Secondly, there are those who do not even want to hear the voice of the Lord. "Therefore they say unto God (if not in words, then with the heart and in deeds), Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him" (Job 21:14-15).

Thirdly, there are those who, while hearing, are not willing to be obedient. "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them" (Ezekiel 33:31).

Fourthly, there are those who have intentions and make promises; however, it comes no further than this and nothing comes of it. "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest" (Matthew

8:19); "He answered and said, I go, sir: and went not" (Matthew 21:30).

Fifthly, there are those who do something, but only as far as it is consistent with their interests -- no more than that. "When he (Herod) heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly" (Mark 6:20). Saul said, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord" (1 Samuel 15:13), but in the meantime he had destroyed that which was despicable and had kept the best for himself, the pretense being that he was going to sacrifice it to the Lord.

Sixthly, there are those who only comply in an external sense and make much ado about this. Such compliance, however, is void of internal obedience and faith in Christ. They intend to get to heaven by reason of that activity, and are as the Pharisees who cleanse the external, but allow the internal to remain unclean (Matthew 23:27). They are like graves which appear beautiful from the outside, but within are filled with stench and dead bones (Matthew 23:27).

Seventhly, there are those who reject obedience, are recalcitrant, rebel, and indulge in sin -- be it in secret or in open manifestation of ungodliness. "Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us" (Psalms 2:3); "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you" (Deuteronomy 9:24); "For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon Him, even on His neck, upon the thick bosses of His bucklers" (Job 15:25-26).

Eighthly, there are those who are obedient to the devil, the world, and their own lusts. Whatever the devil wills, they do willingly. "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:26). Whatever the world dictates, they desire likewise. If the world dictates that one adhere to such and such a fashion, they comply immediately. If the world dictates that one use vain language, dance, gamble, and fornicate together with her, they willingly participate. If they are able to gain someone's favor, no sin is too gross. They fear nothing, except that the world were not to acknowledge them as belonging to her, were to despise them, and perceive them as one of those strict ones. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). They yield, with delight and with all their heart, to whatever lust arises, and they are thus the servants of sin (Romans 6:17). "(They) do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness" (Romans 2:8).

I address the Word of the Lord to you and declare to you your abominable condition as well as the dreadful judgments which will come upon you. May it be a means to your conversion.

First, it is a most abominable condition, for it is a departing from God, a separating yourself from God, and an ignoring of God. Shall a creature, a worm of the dust, and one who is dependent in all things depart from God, the living God, the Fountain of Life, his Maker -- that God who is majestic, all-glorious, and most worthy of obedience? Shall he divorce himself from God and reject Him? Yes, disobedience is recalcitrance, rebellion, opposition to God, striving with God, and whatever else one can denominate as evil. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Samuel 15:23). It is not a being disobedient to parents, a rebelling against authorities, and a transient sinful deed, but it is a disobedient disposition of the heart -- a heart which is averse, resistant, and recalcitrant. If you could observe this disobedience in its true nature, you would be frightened of yourself. Scripture calls such a heart an evil heart, and such persons are regarded as abominable and unto every good work reprobate. "Take heed, brethren,

lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12); "... being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). Oh, that this would sink into your heart!

Secondly, consider furthermore that you are in a condition in which you cannot perform any religious duties. Whatever you do, even your prayer, is an abomination before God. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Proverbs 28:9); "Ah sinful nation ... they have forsaken the Lord. ... When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts ... your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you" (Isaiah 1:4; Isaiah 1:12; Isaiah 1:14-15). Prayer is the refuge of the destitute; however, your prayer is an abomination. Woe unto you, Oh wretched man!

Thirdly, since you are disobedient toward God, depart from, and are rebellious against Him, God has also departed from you and is therefore also your enemy. You thus belong to the devil. "If ye forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2 Chronicles 15:2); "With the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward" (Psalms 18:26); "... the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). Yes, by reason of this disobedience you are, so to speak, trapped in a prison. You cannot escape it, you are given over to it, and you cannot but be disobedient. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief" (Romans 11:32). You even stumble over Him in whom alone there is salvation, namely Christ. "... unto them which be disobedient, ... a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" (1 Peter 2:7-8).

Fourthly, furthermore, take to heart the judgments of God which will come upon you. If you could but perceive what they were, your hair would stand up straight in terror. This God whom you disobey is stronger than you are. As great as His goodness is to the obedient, so great is His hatred and anger against the disobedient. Where will you flee when He will avenge Himself upon you? "The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm" (Nahum 1:2-3); "Thy children have forsaken Me, and sworn by them that are no gods: Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this" (Jeremiah 5:7; Jeremiah 5:9). Do not imagine to possess either grace or salvation as long as your heart remains in the state of disobedience, for there is neither grace nor salvation for you. Nothing but wrath, curse, and condemnation is reserved for you. Hear and tremble about the declarations which are made toward you. "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth ... indignation and wrath" (Romans 2:8). "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:6); "Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant" (Jeremiah 11:3). For the disobedient, nothing remains but eternal destruction. That will be their end, as it was the end of the disobedient first world (1 Peter 3:20). Know therefore and consider that it is an evil and bitter thing for you to have forsaken the Lord your God -- and if the becoming nature of obedience and the majestic glory of God cannot move you to obedience, then permit the fear for God's wrath and judgments to do so. A Reprimand for God's Children

I will now turn to God's children to whom the Lord has given an obedient heart. They have the old nature still within them, however, and thus also a principle of disobedience. This frequently

exhibits itself strongly and manifests itself in many deeds through negligence; that is, neither giving heed to God as Lord nor to God's command given to them. The Word goes past them and is forgotten; they transgress without noticing it. There can be carelessness, as if they were not surrounded by enemies, and before knowing it, they are caught in a snare. If obedience would have more of an effect, they would neither be so careless nor proceed so thoughtlessly. There can be a resistance toward obedience. At times disobedience manifests itself in a more powerful and sinful manner. The desire to commit a sin can at times be so strong that the sin breaks through, even when the obedient heart manifests itself, and, while not striving much against it due to weakness, it nevertheless groans under it. It can even go so far that for a long time a believer goes about with a disturbed heart, and cannot come to a lively, earnest, and perfect intention and determination to fully and permanently abstain from that sin. Sometimes it even goes further, so that the will, for a time, seems to dominate. It is as if he is not willing to come to such a resolution. Upon engaging in prayer the sin can become so lively that the conscience says, "Now you ought to make a complete resolution before the Lord." The will is silent, and one can even come so far that it is as if he is not willing to pray for strength against this sin and for a complete determination and intention to abstain from it. This is due to the lust being so strong and spiritual life being in a stupor. If he progresses to the point that the entire will has been won over and that he comes to full resolution, praying with the entire heart for strength, then he will yet be unstable, since sin has retained too much of its strength. Not long thereafter he will again fall into the same sin. This is a very dismal condition, and it reveals that our old nature yet remains inclined toward disobedience. Believers ought to acknowledge, mourn over, and confess their disobedience, and, time and again, restore themselves by faith in Christ. On the other hand, however, they ought to be on guard against unbelief and the rejection of their state, as if they, as others, were entirely concluded under disobedience. They can perceive from that mentioned above that it is in truth with them and that they have an obedient heart. This is manifested by the many motions and deeds of obedience which it brings forth -- by the fact that there is a hatred for and displeasure toward the disobedience of the flesh, and that the regenerated man within strives against, groans under, and prays against it.

Engage in all earnest therefore in this battle, for you know:

(1) That the devil, the world, and the flesh are masters which are too despicable than that you, who are of divine origin, are partakers of the divine nature, and are gifted with a princely spirit, should subject yourself in obedience to those foul, despicable, and hateful monstrosities.

(2) That they are hard and cruel taskmasters who never say, "It is enough." They always demand more. Whether you are weary or no longer find delight in it, you have to yield again when the opportunity is there. They will give you no time to calm down, to think about God and His sweet service, and to be obedient to the Lord in any matter. Rather, they want your entire heart, all the members of your body, and all your time -- and even then they are not satisfied.

(3) How detrimental it is for you to be obedient to them! This yields nothing but a restless heart, an anxious conscience, bondage, terror, and fear. It makes life too fearful for you and death too dreadful. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed" (Romans 6:21); "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Ephesians 5:11). An Exhortation to Obedience

Find delight in obeying the Lord. In order to stimulate you to do so, consider thus the preciousness of obedience from every perspective.

First, look unto the Lord. By virtue of being God, He is indeed worthy of all obedience. You acknowledge this with delight, and you have frequently wished with your whole heart that all that exists in both heaven and earth would be subjected to the Lord in obedience. It has indeed grieved you when you observed that God was not obeyed by men. Shall you then not render obedience to this great God, saying, "Behold, here I am. What wilt Thou have me to do?" Furthermore, "Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee, and established thee" (Deuteronomy 32:6). When you did not exist, He created you and made you to be a man. He has given you food and clothing until now, and by His oversight has preserved your breath. He has granted you His own Son, drawn you with lovingkindness, placed you among His children, and chosen you to be His heir. Shall not all this obligate you to obey Him as Lord and as Father, and cause you to say, "Surely, I am Thy servant, surely I am Thy servant"?

Secondly, obedience is a very sweet work. The Lord does not impose a hard service upon His children, nor does He cause them to serve Him with hardness. "His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3); "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30); "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:22); "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them" (Psalms 84:5). They are smooth and delightful ways. "Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalms 119:165); "It is joy to the just to do judgment" (Proverbs 21:15). Your own heart chooses this way, and you yourself find delight in it. What Paul says of himself, you say likewise: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22). Therefore lift up your heart in the ways of the Lord, embrace the will of God, and incline it toward obedience, for "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Proverbs 3:23); "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble" (Proverbs 3:23).

Thirdly, the Lord is extraordinarily pleased with an obedient heart, and with the deeds proceeding from such a heart. Even if they are imperfect, in Christ He will overlook the deficiency. David was a man after the Lord's heart by reason of having such an obedient heart. He stumbled many times -- yes, even fell deeply -- and yet the Lord says concerning him, "Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5). No work -- however holy it may be in and of itself -- can please God if it does not proceed from an obedient heart; God demands the heart. Yes, even we demand the heart of those who serve us; only then do we delight in their service. If there is an obedient heart, God will then be pleased with our work. "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). God delights in sacrifice, for it is written concerning Noah's sacrifice, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour" (Genesis 8:21). If, however, we place sacrifice and obedience side by side, then God is more pleased with obedience. A righteous child delights to please his father, and thus it is also with you: delight yourself in rendering to the Lord a service pleasing to Him. You will do so in the way of obedience. Shall the Lord fulfill your desire (Psalms 145:19), and should you then not fulfil His desire?

Fourthly, it is, furthermore, not in vain to serve the Lord. Let that be the opinion of the ungodly who obey God in an external sense to obtain temporal blessings. If they do not obtain them, then with

sorrow they leave the service of the Lord. Upright ones, you know, however, that the Lord is a good and benevolent God who richly rewards His faithful servants. "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain" (Isaiah 45:19); "Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on Mine altar for nought" (Malachi 1:10). God promises all manner of temporal blessings to the obedient: "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isaiah 1:19). Yes, obedience has the promise of salvation in Christ. "And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). Even though the benefits are not the basis for obedience, we must nevertheless be stimulated by them. Moses "had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Hebrews 11:26).

Fifthly, the examples of others are suitable to stir us up; therefore take note of the examples of the obedient. The Lord Jesus is the most perfect example of obedience. He has left us an example, so that we would walk in His footsteps. He, the servant of the Lord, "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Php 2:8). The holy angels are obedient servants of the Lord. "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word" (Psalms 103:20). The saints upon earth are examples for us; obedience was their delight and activity. Noah was obedient to the Lord in all things. Even though the entire world mocked him when building the ark, he heeded the Lord's command. Abraham -- the father of the faithful, whose footsteps we must follow -- how obedient he was! He did all that God said and went wherever God sent Him. He obeyed blindly and left everything, went out not knowing whither he went, and did not spare his son. Moses is generally denominated as the servant of God. "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house" (Numbers 12:7). The measure of David's obedience toward the Lord is abundantly conveyed by the history of his life recorded in the books of Samuel and in his Psalms -- particularly Psalms 119:1-176. If mention is made of a godly person elsewhere in the Word, you will at once observe his obedience. Focus upon the godly, be desirous to walk in obedience as they did, and together with them you will glorify God in your life and be glorified of God -- both here and in eternity. May the Lord incline your heart toward His precepts, so that you may serve Him with a willing soul. I conclude with David's exhortation to his son Solomon, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (1 Chronicles 28:9).

066. Chapter 61: Hope in God

----- CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE -----

Hope in God

God gives His children great and glorious promises, but He does not always fulfil them immediately. He postpones at times the fulfillment and occasionally allows many difficulties to come between in order to test their faith. Nevertheless, to be able to proceed courageously, hope is needed, and this we shall now discuss. Hope is expressed in Hebrew by the words: tikvah, tocheleth, sebber, all of which mean "expectation," and are translated by the word "hope." There is also kislah, kesel because the foolish world hopes without foundation, and ridicules the expectation of the godly. Furthermore, there is bittachōn, which is expressive of trust without fear. In Greek the word is elpis which signifies: to build upon faith, to be free of anxiety, to anticipate with certainty. Occasionally it signifies the matter hoped for; here it signifies the motion of the heart.

Hope is a propensity infused by God into the hearts of believers by means of the Word, whereby they patiently, actively, and with assurance anticipate future promised benefits.

Hope is a propensity. Propensities are generally distinguished as being either acquired or infused. Acquired propensities complement either the intellect, the will, or actions, thus enabling one to engage in artistic activity. These skills are acquired by way of much exercise. The infused propensities are faith, hope, love, etc. Man, due to his blindness, evil disposition, and impotence, cannot acquire these by his own activity; rather, they are infused into the soul by God. Having been infused, they, by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, are improved by way of many exercises. God does not infuse them repeatedly with every act, implying that man would time and again be destitute. Rather, when God makes the soul spiritually alive, He gives her a virtuous disposition and the competence to be spiritually active. By reason of this competence the regenerated man, by the coinciding operation of the Holy Spirit who must continually influence him, brings forth various virtues. Such is also true for hope, for it is not a transitory act, but rather a propensity -- a disposition of spiritual competence from which deeds proceed. The Nature of Hope The nature of hope consists in a sure expectation. Hope is not the equivalent of possession; whatever one possesses, one cannot hope for. "Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for" (Romans 8:25). Hope expects and anticipates that which has not been observed as yet, is not yet present, but which is yet to come. "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:25). The apostle therefore conjoins expecting and hoping -- the latter explaining the former. "According to my earnest expectation and my hope ..." (Php 1:20).

Hope is a sure expectation. It is not a wish such as, "I wish I had this and that" -- as Baalam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (Numbers 23:10). Such is the hope of the unconverted. They are neither partakers of the promise nor of the matter, and yet they say, "I hope to be saved." Thus, their hope is but a wish which shall come to naught. "When a

wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth" (Proverbs 11:7). It also does not consist in doubting and vacillating between hope and fear, issuing forth from whether it is probable that the desired matter be attained. This vacillation does not constitute hope; instead, there is certainty in hope. I repeat, there is certainty in hope, but not in the ones who exercise hope, for everything is imperfect in believers. As far as hope in man is concerned, there can be no complete certainty, since man can be or become untruthful, changeable, and impotent. This cannot be applicable, however, to hope in God, since He is true, immutable, and omnipotent. If He promises something absolutely, has no condition contingent upon man, there can be no doubt in hope. However, when it comes to faith, those who exercise hope are weak in all respects. Therefore, there is also weakness in hope, as is to be observed in the disciples who travelled to Emmaus. "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done" (Luke 24:21). This does not, however, remove the certainty in hope, and a believer is obligated to strive for the full assurance of hope. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast" (Hebrews 6:19); "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22); "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). Hope is thus a sure expectation. The object of hope consists in the promised or future benefits. God Himself is the supreme good and the complete felicity of man. In the covenant, God promises Himself to believers and God is thus the object of hope. God is, however, also the Promiser and Giver of all salvation to His children, and He is thus once more the object of hope. Those who exercise hope look to Him, expect from Him, and rest in Him as the One who is good, true, immutable, and omnipotent. "Hope thou in God" (Psalms 42:5); "And have hope toward God" (Acts 24:15). He is therefore called "the hope of Israel" (Jeremiah 14:8). "For Thou art my hope, O Lord God" (Psalms 71:5). Hope expects benefits from God. These benefits are either temporal, spiritual, or eternal in nature. Hope is also exercised relative to temporal benefits, for God has also promised temporal benefits -- this referring in a general sense to all that they stand in need of to serve Him according to His purpose in this life. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5); "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). A believer may and must take hold of this promise, let go of all fear, and expect its fulfillment with certainty.

Question Man comes into many situations in which his temporal welfare is contingent upon the outcome of such situations. This engenders a desire that he may succeed according to his objective, as well as a fear for an evil outcome. How must he conduct himself as far as hope is concerned?

Answer: Both the desire and the fear are natural; he must not suppress them, but rather sanctify them. He must hope in God's general promise of help and care, securely and quietly rely upon this, and expect its fulfillment with certainty. If he intends to involve himself in a matter which is pleasing to God, and he deals with it in a manner enjoined by God, he will thus have freedom to ask God for a good result and make his desire known to God by prayer and supplication. In the use of the means there will be a lively sense of dependence upon God and an encouragement regarding the outcome, leaning toward that which is desired. This is particularly true if God gives him a special measure of freedom in believing and earnestness in prayer -- and if, while trusting in and enjoying the nearness of God, he may use the means in the strength of God. This also occurs

if God manifests Himself in an extraordinary manner and gives him a strong confidence that the matter will have such a desired outcome. I repeat, this is so when God does this, rather than he himself; that is, by being encouraged by either the probable outcome, or by the grace enabling him to pray and to be dependent upon God. It is then that the matter could miscarry. Since, however, we do not have specific promises for specific temporal circumstances, we can also not expect to have a certain expectation that, apart from an extraordinary revelation of God, this specific matter will have the outcome aimed for and desired. We can, however, be sure of this: Regardless of what the outcome may be, it will be blessed and be to our best advantage. If it turns out according to our desire, it will be a blessing. If it turns out differently, it will be much more advantageous and blessed than if our objective had been achieved. For, relative to God's children, all things must work together for good (Romans 8:28). We must see to it that we are not bent on having our way -- as if we could not be blessed unless we would receive precisely that matter. We must be active to deny our own desire, to acquiesce in the wisdom and goodness of God, and to be satisfied with and delight in the general promises of God: He careth for thee; He will make it well; He will not forsake you. If God acts according to our wishes, this will cause joyous gratitude; if not, we must be satisfied with the will of God, learn to esteem that which is of the world as being of no value, and learn to live out of the hand of God. Be therefore on guard against unbelief and fretfulness. This is how we are to conduct ourselves in poverty, persecution, and other prosperities or adversities. The exercise of hope also pertains to spiritual benefits. Sometimes a believer experiences spiritual desertion, darkness, and strife, or is in bondage to a corrupt inclination. At other times he has a strong desire for the assurance of his salvation, for extraordinary comfort, or for sanctification (be it in a general sense or relative to a specific virtue). Here he must conduct himself in like manner as with temporal circumstances (which have just been dealt with). Also here general promises are applicable. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Psalms 92:13); "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Php 1:6); "If ye shall ask any thing in My Name, I will do it" (John 14:14). In response to this general promise the believer must also entertain a general hope and assuredly expect its fulfillment. Since, however, the Lord has promised neither the time, measure, nor manner of fulfillment, a believer cannot entertain a specific and certain expectation about this. The general promise is sufficient for him to heighten his desire, to stir him up to prayer, to strive sufficiently (doing so with the hope and certain expectation that the Lord will hear and give), and that the Lord will preserve his faith, sanctify him, and guide him with His counsel. He must deny himself as to the measure of its fulfillment. The Objects of Hope

Hope has as one of its objects eternal felicity. Hope is a "hope of salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:8); "The hope which is laid up for you in heaven" (Colossians 1:5); "... hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2); and the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2). All that is of this world is transitory and to be esteemed of little value, but that which is eternal is everything. If eternity weighs down upon the heart, and man considers himself as having to depart from here either into glory or eternally to be in a place of horror, he will shake and tremble. He cannot be at peace unless he is assured of his eternal felicity. God promises this to believers and they must hold this before them as the goal to be attained, and therefore strive and reach out for it. Since God promises salvation, they must hope for, anticipate, and expect it with assurance. That will engender comfort and a zeal for godliness.

Hope focuses upon promised benefits. Where there is no promise there can also be no hope; and if there are promises, there can likewise be no hope unless these promises have been made unto us. Only believers are heirs of the promise and therefore they alone are able to hope. When Scripture therefore speaks of hope, it simultaneously speaks of promises, and is thus called "the hope of the promise" (Acts 26:6); "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). The heathen are therefore said to be without hope, due to being "strangers from the covenants of promise" (Ephesians 2:12).

Hope focuses upon future benefits. Faith and hope both ascertain the reality of a matter. Faith focuses upon future benefits as much as hope does. They differ, however, in that faith represents these future benefits as if they are a present reality. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Hope, however, postpones the matter and considers it as yet having to come to pass. "Not as though I had already attained ... but I follow after ... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Php 3:12; Php 3:14). The person who exercises hope says, "It is true; I do not have it as yet, but I shall have it." He does not say, "Maybe," nor, "There is a good probability," but rather, "It is certain and infallibly true. It cannot miscarry; it is definite; I shall have it. I commit myself to this with such certainty as if I already had it. I adjust my conduct accordingly, for I am counting on it and I proceed in reliance upon this." So much about the object of hope. To the object of hope we join the subjects of hope -- who are the children of God. An unconverted person has no basis for hope, since there is no promise for him whatsoever. Furthermore, being dead, he can also not bring forth the deeds of life. To have hope is the privilege of God's children only. In regeneration they have received life and thus also the ability to exercise hope. "... which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope" (1 Peter 1:3). The promises are made to them only, and therefore they alone have a basis for hope. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: ... to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:17-18). Hope is therefore called "the hope of the righteous" (Proverbs 10:28; Galatians 5:5). They only hope, and they only are exhorted to hope. "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. Let Israel hope in the Lord" (Psalms 130:5; Psalms 130:7). It is grievous that they who may and are able to hope do not more frequently engage therein. The Cause and Means of the Exercise of Hope The cause of the exercise of hope is God alone. God promises the matters: "And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25). God gives the matter which is hoped for and has been promised: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). God infuses into them the ability to hope and in actuality causes them to hope. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13); "God, even our Father, which ... hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" (2 Thessalonians 2:16). The means is the Word. In the Word, God presents the matter in its beauty and preciousness. In the Word, He presents the Mediator by whom the promised matters have been merited, and by the Word God works faith in the Savior -- and by faith hope is wrought in us.

All blessings contained in the promises are founded upon and confirmed in Christ, who, by His blood, has removed the partition between God and man, and who, by His merits, has merited

salvation for the elect. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20). A believer, hoping upon the promise, focuses his eye upon the Lord Jesus in order to attain the fulfillment through Him. The Lord Jesus is therefore called "our hope," "... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). And He is designated to be the object of our hope. "Remembering ... your ... patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:3); "...Jesus Christ, which is our hope" (1 Timothy 1:1). No one becomes a partaker of Christ -- and thus also not of the benefits of the covenant -- except by faith. Faith, being exercised toward Christ by receiving Him and claiming Him as one's own, views the promised benefits as being his own. Thus, hope proceeds from faith, expecting the receipt of the benefits as being one's own, and that these benefits will be most certainly given to him at the appropriate time. In that respect faith is the foundation of hope. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1); "... with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope" (Romans 15:13).

Since the Word of God reveals Christ, is the means unto faith, and presents all the glorious benefits which are promised, the Word is the means unto hope. Hope is therefore called "the hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:23). Observe this also in Psalms 119:49; Psalms 119:81 : "Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope. ... I hope in Thy word."

Patience: The Adjunct and Result of Hope

Hope has as its adjunct patience. There is much time, much cross-bearing, and much strife between promise and possession. Then hope comes and shows the glory of the benefits and the certainty of becoming a partaker of them. This is followed by patience, which supports hope so that it does not succumb due to tribulations, the latter being the way in which God leads to the possession of the promised matter. Since there is no other way, and since we must either let go of the benefits and forego them, or along with the end must simultaneously choose the way, hope becomes thereby a patient expectation. The believer commits himself to bearing it, wishes to bear it, and bears it willingly and with a quiet heart, for the glory and certainty of the benefits infinitely make up for this. The Lord Jesus has thus gone before, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Therefore we also must "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). The apostle therefore says in Romans 8:25, "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," and he also speaks of a "patience of hope" (1 Thessalonians 1:3). The result of hope is holy industry. Hope neither causes us to be inactive nor will it tolerate occupation with other things; instead, it engenders holy industry to attain the end in the right way. The end in view causes us to be active and to take the means in hand. God, who has promised to give the end, leads His children to this end by means of holy industry. He causes them to forsake the world, focus upon heaven, and lay aside all burdens and the sins which so easily beset them. They thus courageously overcome all the obstacles that stand in the way and hinder them. He causes them to walk in the way of His commandments and to seek glory, honor, and immortality by persevering in well-doing. This is conveyed by the following exhortations: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate" (Luke 13:24); "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). A Call to Serious Self-Examination

Having considered the nature of hope, you must now turn to yourself and observe whether this hope is to be found in you. You need no other mirror to be made acquainted with yourself than the truth itself. You will agree with me that the person for whom all hope of ever being saved is cut off is most wretched indeed.

Evasive Argument: I am not in that condition as yet; I still have a good hope of being saved.

Answer: It is indeed true that an unconverted person -- yes, even the most ungodly person -- is not yet cut off from the hope of being saved. This is not so because he can expect any salvation as long as he remains this way, but because he lives under the gospel ministry and does not know whether or not God will yet convert him at a given time. This is, however, not the matter which is currently under discussion. The question is: What do you say concerning yourself? Do you have reason to expect salvation, and do you exercise this hope in actuality? You, unconverted one, may perhaps say, "I know that I have a hope upon eternal life." I will ask a further question: "Is your hope a good hope? Is there a basis for your hope, and do you hope in truth? Is not your hope but an illusion? Is it more than the wish of a Balaam?" There is a hope which deceives and makes ashamed. Is it not then a matter of the utmost importance for you to search out carefully if your hope is also a true hope upon which salvation ensues, or whether it is nothing but deceit?

Evasive Argument: I am most satisfied with my hope; leave me alone. I will not allow my hope to be taken away. Answer: Good gold can endure examination and good work does not shun the light. If you do not want others to know what your condition is, endeavor nevertheless to ascertain it for yourself. To that end read what I have to say in quietness and solitude. If your hope is good, then I do not wish to take it away from you. If, however, it is a deceitful hope, it is time for you to awake while there is yet time. Answer for yourself the following questions:

First of all, are faith in Christ, reconciliation with God (and the sense of this), the despising of the world (and all that pertains to it), the denial of your own lusts, the love of God, a sanctified life, and felicity after this life your portion and are they precious to you? Are you acquainted with them, do you recognize yourself in them, do you long for them, is it your objective, and do you reach forth unto them in order that you might attain them? Upon finding promises in the Word of God, you will find qualifications conjoined to them, indicating to whom the promises are made. Do you have these qualifications, so that you may perceive that these promises are made to you? Do you approach God with them as the One who is true and omnipotent, and do you rest with them in the promising God? Do you expect the receipt of these benefits, are you intent upon them, and do you strive for them with all that is in you? Are you opposed to all that hinders you and do you overcome these obstacles? Do you endure everything to that end, reach forth to it, seek to apprehend it, and does it sanctify you? How does your heart respond? If you are inwardly convinced that these things are not to be found in you, you do not have this hope, and your insistence that you nevertheless have this hope is nothing but deceit. Your hope will truly be deceived if you die in this condition.

Secondly, answer once again: Are not your anticipation, your expectation, your hope, and your rest related to men? Do you not expect it from that gentleman or that friend who will help you, expecting it now to go well? Do you not -- in your heart -- end in them, their presence, their favor, and their power? Do you not put your trust in money and belongings, and endeavor to find rest in the pursuance of them? Are you not encouraged when you have them and does this not remove

your fear? Are you relying upon your skills, your deftness, and your strength? If you cannot find help or rest anywhere, do you then not fix your hope upon a change of season, reasoning that you cannot help this, but that it has to be this way, and that therefore you will exercise patience? If your heart responds affirmatively and acquiesces that this is an accurate representation of your condition, then be assured that you are without hope in God and upon salvation, for these are contradictory to each other and cannot go hand in hand.

Thirdly, answer once more: You have a hope of being saved. But do you have a basis for this hope, or is it only because you would like to be in heaven when you can no longer bear it here, since it is better there than to be in hell? Is it because your own spirit testifies that you will indeed be saved and does that put you at ease? Or is it because you are baptized, faithfully attend church, partake of the Lord's Supper, pray to God, give alms, and lead a life beyond reproach? If your heart responds that such is the case, I say to you that you have no basis for your hope and that no promises are made to such persons. Your hope is vain.

You, therefore, having been convinced by a threefold variety of questions that you do not have a true hope, consider how wretched you are, for there is not a single promise to be found for you in the Bible -- there is not one whereby you can comfort yourself. Rather, all the threatenings and curses recorded in the Word of God are applicable to you. They will become a reality for you if you do not repent. Hear for a moment what the Lord says concerning your hope. "The hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web" (Job 8:13-14). It is indeed woven together, but it is the weakest structure there is. When removed by either the wind or a mop, it lies there -- fully undone. "But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost" (Job 11:20). What will it avail you that you have deceived yourself with an imaginary hope if you find yourself to be excluded? Therefore, awake and repent! The Godly Rebuked and Exhorted The godly are also to be rebuked for the feebleness with which they exercise hope. For they have reason to hope, and the principle of hope is already within them -- something they ought to be convinced of in answering the three questions presented above. Yes, it is a great error that they are more engaged in striving against their hope than to stir it up -- as if they had only then accomplished something when saying, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord" (Lamentations 3:18). All promises have been made to you. Why do you not acknowledge this to be so, being judgmentally convinced that it is true within -- the Word of God being the judge here? How is it possible that the heirs of the promises have so little dealings with them, and so rarely strive for possession of, hope in, and longingly and joyfully expect the fulfillment of the promises?

There are matters which prevent them from doing so.

- (1) The promised matters are frequently obscure, so that they cannot perceive the glory and beauty of them. This impedes the longing for them. This is generally caused when the contemplation and a continual focus upon these matters are neglected.
- (2) There is the commission of sins, in consequence of which they doubt their spiritual state and are fearful of not being a partaker of Christ and all His benefits.
- (3) They are overwhelmed by the grievousness and the long duration of the cross. This causes their soul to be cast down (Psalms 42:6).

(4) Historical faith is under attack, or it is too weak to ascertain matters with certainty and infallibility as to their clarity and veracity. By all these the godly are thus prevented from being exercised in hope. I maintain, however, that these ought not to hinder them. They ought to labor with the little grace they have, and submit to their judgment as having been convinced of it. For to neglect the exercise of hope will confuse them more and more, rob them of their strength, and cause them to sink down in listlessness and discouragement -- yes, to sink away in despondency. They dishonor God in His goodness, truth, faithfulness, and omnipotence, and give the devil the opportunity to toss them back and forth. And rest assured that you will not prevail effortlessly here. One overcomes by way of striving, and the more a person exercises hope, the more earnest he shall be in his endeavor. Therefore do not yield to hopelessness -- even if your heart is not sensibly desirous for spiritual benefits, does not find any sweetness in the exercise of hope, and your unbelieving heart vehemently opposes this. Proceed then with your judgmental perception that you are a partaker of the promises. You will then perceive that hope will be quickened within you.

Therefore, lethargic soul, lift up your heart, for felicity is not to be found here below. "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come" (Isaiah 45:24). Consider the help of the Lord to be a certainty in all temporal and spiritual matters. Establish your salvation as being certain and immovably steadfast because He who has promised is faithful. Speak as follows: "I shall be helped. The Lord shall most certainly lead me by His counsel and take me into glory." Rejoice in your blessedness and in that great salvation that has been promised you. Count on it and embark upon the way which leads to it. Endure all things and do not succumb to anything -- it will yet all work together for good. Anticipate felicity, fully hope in it, and overcome all obstacles with a steadfast and brave heart. Everything will have to surrender to you, and the outcome will not fail. You will gain the upper hand, inherit the crown of life, and receive the end of faith, for:

First, the benefits which are the object of your hope are so precious and attractive that it will kindle the desires of all who reflect upon them attentively. To be cared for by God in this life and thus to be without care as to the outcome of a given matter is glorious and most desirable. Then we are dependent upon God in our activity and know that the outcome (whatever it may be) will be for the best, yes, anticipate grace, light, comfort, and sanctification in this life, and blessed fellowship with God hereafter. God has promised these matters to you, however, and you will be partakers of them. Are not these matters worthy to be desired by you, to be expected in hope, to be striven for, and should not your conduct be governed accordingly?

Secondly, the promises pertaining to these matters are certain. God will neither change, nor will any creature rob you of them, for they rest upon:

(1) God's truth, faithfulness, and omnipotence. "... for He is faithful that promised" (Hebrews 10:23); "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isaiah 26:3); "... neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 54:10).

(2) Christ as upon a certain and immovable foundation. "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:6). Could that which Christ has merited miscarry?

(3) The Word of which the Lord Jesus says, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17); "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

(4) The eternal and immutable testament confirmed in the death of the Testator (Hebrews 9:15-17). "And I appoint unto you a kingdom" (Luke 22:29).

(5) Eternal love. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). Those whom He has foreknown, predestinated, called, and justified, He will also glorify (Romans 8:29-30).

(6) The oath of God. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that ... we might have a strong consolation" (Hebrews 6:17-18).

(7) The given earnest which is worth infinitely more than the promised matter itself. "... in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

(8) Fellowship with Christ. Since He is the head and already is in heaven, the members will most certainly follow. "And hath ... made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). Therefore the apostle says, "For we are saved by hope" (Romans 8:24). Who will refuse to depend upon such a certain assurance?

Thirdly, hope is a strong consolation in cross-bearing, and in all the tribulations of this life; in all things it causes the focus to be upon the promised benefits. "So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). The person who exercises hope will adduce the following proof: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Hope perceives the profit of tribulations and the glory which will follow it. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Fourthly, hope will cause the believer to battle courageously, for it ascertains the certainty of the victory. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air" (1 Corinthians 9:26); "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God ... therefore we are always confident" (2 Corinthians 5:5-6).

Fifthly, hope rejoices the heart; man cannot live without happiness. However, in the world the godly endure many tribulations, and if they had nothing but tribulation they would succumb. All that man strives for is related to happiness, for a joyful heart begets strength for soul and body. Hope, however, causes the believer to "glory in tribulations" (Romans 5:3), and there is thus a "rejoicing in hope" (Romans 12:12).

Sixthly, hope sanctifies the soul. The imagination and the wish leave the work undone, but a sure hope stimulates activity. Since the matters hoped for are spiritual and holy, they thus also sanctify the person exercising hope. This is all the more so since the way in which God leads His children to glory is the way of holiness. This is to be observed in 1 John 3:3: "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Hope in and of itself is precious, and it is furthermore precious since it engenders courage, joy, and holiness.

Seventhly, in addition to all -- this being the most eminent virtue -- hope glorifies God and the Lord Jesus. It acknowledges God's sovereignty in either accepting or bypassing a sinful person; God's free grace to grant such a one salvation in spite of his sins; His truth, immutability, and faithfulness; the fact that He keeps His word and will most certainly fulfil His promises; His omnipotence in preserving them unto salvation in spite of all their enemies, as well as in granting it to them; and the love of God and of the Lord Jesus to give Himself as a Surety and in meriting salvation for His own by virtue of His satisfaction.

Therefore, all who desire to glorify God, be active to exercise hope continually. Be continually engaged in seeking for all manner of promises in the Word of God, appropriating them to yourself, and relying upon them. Do not cease to pray that the Lord may cause you to hope. Stir up others, and let the exhortation of others to hope steadfastly, find entrance into your hearts. While you are thus engaged, you will experience that your hope will not make you ashamed, but that you, upon patiently anticipating their fulfillment, will most certainly become a partaker of these blessings at the appointed time.

067. Chapter 62: Spiritual Strength or Courage

----- CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO ----- Spiritual Strength or Courage Not only does much time elapse between the promise and the possession of the matter which hope assuredly anticipates, but also much opposition from enemies is to be expected. Therefore, the person who exercises hope needs to be valiant in order to endure all things and overcome all obstacles. We thus add to hope spiritual strength or courage.

Spiritual strength is an undaunted steadfastness of heart, given by God to His children, whereby they, while entertaining a lively hope of acquiring the promised benefits, overcome fear for all danger and opposition, unyieldingly engage in warfare, and courageously persevere in obedience toward God. The following is a true proverb: *Ardua quae pulchra*, or, eminent matters are difficult to be obtained. This is true in both natural and spiritual matters. Those spiritual matters to be acquired are most eminent. He who is not acquainted with them, however, will neither trouble himself about them, nor risk any danger for them; but he who is acquainted with them will risk everything for them and will fortify his heart with hope. This fortitude, even though the world designates it as being stubborn and strong-willed, is nevertheless an eminent virtue. It is an ornament for the Christian which is pleasing to God, dreadful to the world, and personally beneficial. It is a virtue which God requires and to which believers are frequently exhorted, namely, "Be strong." The seat of spiritual strength is to be found in the soul, intellect, will, and affections of the believer. All of these are fully engaged relative to the objects at hand. It is not a physical activity (even though this is also essential in the execution of this strength), but rather an activity of the soul. It is not merely an activity of the intellect, observing this virtue in its beauty, but all faculties are active. It is not an activity which is occasionally engaged in, but rather it is a propensity, a habitual disposition and competence, which initially is infused by God, but which is exercised by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and by much exercise improves and becomes stronger. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid" (Psalms 112:7-8). The heart of the unconverted is not the subject of this strength, for they are unto all good work reprobate (Titus 1:16). They have no promise, no faith, no hope, nor internal spiritual life. What spiritual strength and courage could they then have? Only the regenerate are the courageous ones and they have what we have just mentioned -- something which the unconverted do not have. All "the righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1). To those who are called to be saints the apostle says, "Quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Both object and goal are identical here. Spiritual strength relates to the good that is to be acquired and the evil that is to be overcome. God promises many benefits to His own according to body and soul, doing so, however, upon the condition that they will be acquired via the means commanded and ordained by God. The spiritually valiant person is acquainted with them, loves them, believes the promises, and anticipates them in hope. With this perspective he initiates his endeavor, follows after it, and seeks to apprehend it. In this work much resistance is encountered: loss of honor, possessions, and even life. One will encounter shame, contempt, ridicule, hatred, opposition from every perspective, poverty, illness, and all manner of adversity. All of that has the potential to

engender fear, and through fear to cause either full or partial cessation of the endeavor. Spiritual courage will not yield, however, but will persevere all the more vehemently. It cannot be moved by anything; it does not even count life dear (Acts 20:24). While thus engaged, the soul may suffer from spiritual desertion and strife. Faith may be assaulted, and hope both shaken and tossed to and fro, so that the inner turmoil is frequently overwhelming. The courageous person, however, proceeds as if blind, does not succumb, keeps courage, and battles as a courageous hero, defending himself and inflicting injury to the enemies. However, an additional evil arises -- an evil which has a more far-reaching effect than the previous evil: the old Adam. It flatters, entices, and causes the person to go astray. Here he stumbles, there he falls, then he receives a grievous wound and then again a deadly wound in his soul. That which is good is neglected, the evil is committed, and this is able to make a spiritual soldier unbelieving concerning his state, and cause him to feel hopeless and become discouraged. However, spiritual strength looks beyond that as well. If the believer cannot remain upright with his burden, he will crawl with it, and if he succumbs to it, he will rise again and renew the battle with new courage. If he cannot see his way through, he believes in and relies upon the Lord Jesus, commends the outcome to Him, and is determined to persevere, regardless of what the cost may be. If the enemy is too strong and he is overcome, he will nevertheless do his best and not surrender -- he who is put to the worst in the battle is also fighting. Thus, both good and evil are the objects of the activity of spiritual strength.

The Essence of Spiritual Strength The integral essence of spiritual strength consists in a valiant steadfastness of heart. This in turn consists, first of all, in there being a lively hope. The benefits hoped for are so desirable that they can endure all that is uncomfortable. Hope in the faithfulness and truthfulness of the promising God makes acquisition such a steadfast and unquestionable fact, that the stronger the believer is in this respect, the stronger his courage will be.

Secondly, it consists in victory over fear. Nature shrinks back from suffering and seeks to avoid it. The courageous person conquers fear, however, for he sees that there is no other way to obtain the desired benefits, while at the same time he realizes that everything which is in opposition has no power to conquer him and prevent him from reaching his objective, omnipotent help being on his side. Thus, fear disappears. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid" (Psalms 27:1); "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psalms 23:4).

Thirdly, it consists in perseverance in the performance of one's duty. This consists in a courageous entering upon the way which leads to the possession of the benefits hoped for, while awaiting all that may be encountered. Thus, such a person proceeds, in dependence upon God and Christ and relying upon His help.

These three matters constitute valiant steadfastness of heart, or spiritual courage. Observe this disposition in the following passages: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life ... nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35; Romans 8:37-39); "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). **The Origin of Spiritual Strength** The origin of this strength is God. "He shall strengthen your heart" (Psalms 31:24); "He giveth power to the

faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:29). This necessitates a closer examination to ascertain how God is operative in this respect, and how He causes man to be active by various means -- they being secondary causes.

First, God grants a clear vision of the glory of the end to be attained, that is, of the benefits to be acquired. He presents the acquisition of them as being a certain and immovable fact. The more clearly the intellect perceives the end in view and the more powerfully the heart is assured of its certainty, the greater spiritual strength will be and the more fervent its manifestation will be. Observe this in the Lord Jesus, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Observe this also in Moses, who esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:26). Secondly, God assures the soul of His help and support, and impresses upon the heart His promise relative to this. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10). A believer receives these promises by faith and strengthens himself by means of them. As someone who in a storm finds himself too weak to remain standing takes hold of a post or a tree and remains standing due to its immobility, the courageous person likewise takes hold of the strength of the Lord, and thus remains strong and unyielding. "Let him take hold of My strength" (Isaiah 27:5). This is what David did. "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (1 Samuel 30:6).

Thirdly, the Lord shows the limitations, insignificance, and impotence of all that opposes. He shows that the honor of man, their love, the goods of this world, and all that appears beautiful and glorious in it, are in reality nothing, and that he can miss all this and nevertheless be joyful (Habakkuk 3:17-18). The Lord shows that He is his portion -- his all-sufficient portion (Lamentations 3:24), and that all that is beautiful in this world when compared to this portion is but dung (Php 3:8). He shows that all the hatred, evil, and persecution of men is nothing more than a bag of air, since they can neither move nor stir apart from the will of God -- and that poverty, adversity, etc., are but a light tribulation which will very readily pass by (2 Corinthians 4:17). Hereby souls are fortified to such an extent that they even take "pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake," for when they are weak, they are strong. They thus glory in their tribulations in order that the power of Christ may rest upon them (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Fourthly, the Lord shows them the goodness and righteousness of the matter which they are undertaking -- showing them that He has commanded them to do so and that it is not their cause but His. This makes them courageous in the battle. They deem it to be to their honor that they, for Jesus' sake, may battle against the enemies and that they are wounded in this battle. This enabled the apostles -- in an astonishing manner -- to speak with freedom before the great council (Acts 4:13), and having been scourged, to depart "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

Fifthly, the Lord shows them the ungodliness and the unrighteousness of those who oppress them. As they acknowledge the Lord to be a righteous Judge, they thus observe that He hates their persecutors, their cause, and their objectives. He Himself will therefore strive against them and reward them according to their iniquities. This engenders courage, and while triumphantly exulting

over them, they say, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them" (Psalms 118:6;Psalms 118:10). This encouraged David in the battle against Goliath, in that he had defied the Lord (1 Samuel 17:45).

Sixthly, the Lord shows them the help which He has previously afforded them -- both according to body and soul. It is as if He says, "When you considered everything lost; when you had already pronounced the sentence of demise and death upon yourself; when unrighteous things had the upper hand over you, your faith succumbed, your hope was almost at an end, your spiritual life was in a stupor, and when you indeed thought, 'It is done and it will never be right with me again,' have not I then frequently delivered you?" This experience renders much strength. "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:37); "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:10).

Seventhly, the Lord comforts the soul engaged in warfare by inwardly assuring her of His grace. It is as if He says to her, "My grace is sufficient for thee. If I am your God, if I forgive you all your sins, love you, preserve you by My power, and shall eternally glorify you, is all then not well? Therefore, I do this and shall do it. I shall neither leave you nor forsake you. Be therefore courageous and I shall be with you. The evil which you fear either cannot or will not be able to bring upon you what you fear. Or else, I shall give you sufficient strength to bear it and I shall cause it to turn out for your best. =When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Isaiah 43:2) -- I shall be with thee. Be therefore of good courage and fight valiantly." When the soul is comforted in such a manner, it is as if she receives wings to mount as an eagle, to run and not be weary, and to walk and not faint.

Eighthly, despair at times also generates strength -- which is most amazing. If, due to fear, you do nothing but shrink back; if you have given in to everything; if you are in the lowest condition and have despondently succumbed to the cross; if in all things you go along with the world; if during persecutions you have hidden yourself, been hypocritical, and have denied the truth; if in every respect you have followed your lusts and appear to have been conquered by them, behold, then that life which is still concealed within begins to manifest itself and you will receive strength from your weakness. You will wax "valiant in fight," and turn "to flight the armies of the aliens" (Hebrews 11:34). Just as fire breaks forth all the more vehemently due to being compressed by surrounding cold or something else, so it also occurs with the believer. The conscience is aroused, faith becomes active, and fear disappears, for he has nothing to lose -- it cannot be worse. He will thus come forward again and manifest who he is. He will become stronger than he has ever been before. The weak person will say, "I am strong" (Joel 3:10). This we occasionally observe in those who have denied the truth, namely, that they recant and endure the fire with much more courage than someone who has remained steadfast. The Effects of Spiritual Courage The effect of spiritual courage is a courageous prevailing in the battle and perseverance in obedience toward God. That competence or propensity which never translates into deeds is useless. God has given His children grace for that very purpose -- not that it would remain dormant and concealed within them, but in order that they would labor with it. Particularly, this courageous valor cannot remain hidden if the opportunity is there -- and there always are opportunities. The enemies are always engaged in

battle against grace in the believer for the purpose of eradicating it, or to prevent it from being exercised. Believers are always surrounded by the Lord's injunctions to either do or refrain from something. There is thus always opportunity for the exercise of spiritual courage.

First, the believer perseveres in the battle. A Christian must continually be in armor, for he is in the church militant. The enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh are continually active and continually make assault upon his life. He must therefore continually be active in resisting them. The command is: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate" (Luke 13:24); "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3); "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:12).

(1) In a battle something desirable is at stake, which in this case is spiritual life here and felicity hereafter. The enemies rise up against this, wish to rob the believer of this, and prevent him from manifesting this life.

(2) The believer knows the enemy -- he knows who he is and what his objective is. Believers are indeed acquainted with the devil, the world, and their own flesh, and the enemies are in turn acquainted with them.

(3) There is enmity in the heart. Thus, there is here not only a total contradiction of natures, which cannot but seek to expel each other, but these also stand in each other's way and mutually rob each other of joy. Therefore they cannot tolerate each other's presence.

(4) There is subtlety in trying to gain the advantage. Enemies are cunning in taking advantage of every opportunity, and thus a Christian, even though he is as harmless as a dove, is also as wise as a serpent.

(5) There is the use of violence. Enemies have great power which they exercise to the utmost with no regard for either body or soul. The believer in himself has but little strength, but by the omnipotent help of God he resists them in everything and does not yield in anything.

(6) There is the ultimate outcome of the battle. During the battle first the one and then the other will have the upper hand, but believers will at last be more than conquerors.

Since the Christian has such enemies, he is in need of strength and courage -- both of which he uses. Having overcome fear, he, attacks them with spiritual weapons and courageously breaks through their battle arrays and tramples them under foot.

Secondly, a courageous person is not satisfied with repelling and expelling his enemies; rather, at the same time he also perseveres courageously in order to effect obedience toward God. He lifts up his heart in the ways of the Lord as Jehoshaphat did (2 Chronicles 17:6). Secretly, as a matter between God and himself, he does what the Lord wills him to do, and externally manifests himself to be a Christian by his deeds. He does what needs to be done and says what needs to be said. He is not disturbed by the barking of those dogs and lets them know this. He courageously proceeds and causes them to yield, saying with David, "Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God" (Psalms 119:115). Such is the nature of spiritual courage.

The Unconverted: Void of Spiritual Valor and Courage

Having thus presented the nature of spiritual valor and courage, this will be a satisfactory mirror to show the unconverted that they do not possess it at all, and to convince the godly of their deficiency in this respect.

First, the unconverted have neither part in nor desire for the spiritual and eternal benefits of the covenant of grace. They are without promises, without hope, and are not exercised concerning the acquiring of them. They therefore also have no enemies which try to rob them of these. In this respect there is nothing but peace with the devil, the world, and the flesh. If they have troubles, these are related to either the acquisition or preservation of earthly things. If it pertains to a refraining from sin, there will be a battle between the conscience and the will. If they are troubled about their salvation, it relates to God's pronouncement of the sentence of condemnation in their heart if they fail to repent, and sometimes it already is the beginning of condemnation itself. Whatever it may be, there is no valor proceeding from having received strength from the Lord Jesus.

Secondly, when they are or will be engaged in some external religion, all they do is but of a lukewarm and feeble nature. It is only a soothing of the conscience or to acquire something of an external nature. If they can attain this without the external practice of religion, even the most insignificant issue is capable of drawing them away from the practice of religion. Even all that they do in this respect is, when considered in and of itself, a burden and weariness to them, and their proceeding is no more than at the pace of a donkey and a turtle.

Thirdly, there are those who have somewhat more light and also some inclination to repent, live godly, and confess the truth of the gospel. Something remote occurs, however, which could yield them some harm and shame; or it is the time of persecution and there is the prospect of imprisonment, the stake, the gallows, the sword, or being sent to the galleys. Fear will then come upon them and prevent them from proceeding any further, which causes them to dissemble, saying, "Stop, enough of this!" Where is there evidence of the courage here which conquers fear out of love for God and toward spiritual benefits?

Fourthly, some fear damnation and wish to be in heaven subsequent to their death. They also perceive what the way to heaven is, but they do not see how they can traverse this way, and thus yield to desperation and despondency. That halts all their activity, and they have nothing left but an anxious and terrified heart. Or they will drive this despondency away by yielding to their sinful lusts, and thus the conscience is numbed. Or else they may commit suicide, and thus jump into the very hell which they feared.

Fifthly, there are those whose disposition resembles spiritual courage to some degree. Nothing is further from the truth, however. They join themselves to the godly, finding delight in being loved and esteemed by them. They speak in a haughty manner, rebuke others, engage in disputes, persevere, and neither fear harm nor shame. They are, however, neither motivated by love for spiritual benefits, by an assured hope, in dependence upon and reception of Christ's strength, nor by obedience toward God. It is nothing more than a foolish passion which does not fear danger -- either due to not being acquainted with the danger or due to imagining that it neither exists nor will come to pass. It may be the pursuit of their own glory, as if they were saying, "See my zeal for the Lord." Or they have a brazen and bold disposition, this being the principle which motivates them. They are engaged without having the proper objective in view, without being united to Christ and

being active in His strength, and without Christian prudence governing such valor. This is therefore not spiritual courage, but a sinful foolishness, feignedness, and brazenness.

All whom we have discovered as to who you are, be it known that you have neither spiritual life, faith, hope, nor spiritual valor. How will you be saved if, first of all, the violent take heaven by force (Matthew 11:12), if no one will be crowned except they who have fought a lawful fight, and if only they who run obtain the prize (1 Corinthians 9:24)? What is to become of you who are lazy, fearful, hotheaded, foolish, reckless, brazen, and bold? Secondly, impress it upon your heart what God says of such as you are, "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30). That which is written in Revelation shall come upon you: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:16); "But the fearful ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Revelation 21:8). The Godly Rebuked for Their Deficient Strength

Now I shall address myself unto you, the godly. I would rather comfort you; however, I cannot endure sin and I must therefore address a word of rebuke unto you so that you may become well. You have observed the nature of spiritual valor and this will already have shown you your deficiency in this respect. We shall present this a bit further to you so that you may abhor its unseemliness and sinfulness, and that you lift yourself up out of your deficiencies.

First, many spend but little time in reflecting upon the benefits -- which, so to speak have been put on display for the purpose of obtaining them by way of valiantly striving for them. We ought to live in reflection upon eternal glory until it far excels all that is desirable, delightful, joyous, and lovely; so that it would excite our desires to acquire them as our only salvation. How delightful it ought to be to us, in this life, to walk with God in love, fear, and obedience, and thus to behold the invisible things with a heart that is elevated above all that is visible! We are very neglectful in this respect, however, and thus, the desire to attain this becomes weaker and the natural desire for that which is visible becomes greater. The result will then be that the goal in view will not strongly motivate to activity. Since the heart focuses upon various matters, it will be less intent upon that one thing it ought to focus on, and we shall then not be able to find satisfaction with the spiritual unless this be complemented with temporal matters. This is the fountain of all restlessness and weakness in the activity.

Secondly, we shall then neither be aware of the enemies, nor that the devil goes about us as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We shall not be aware that the world will alternately seek to steal the heart and draw it to itself, either by way of endearment or by way of disfavor -- and thus bring us into snares which cannot be disentangled. We shall not be aware that our corrupt nature is continually engaged in obstructing us in doing that which is good as well as in enticing us to sin. This will render us more careless as far as preserving what we possess and in acquiring that which the regenerated nature would delight to have. We do not fear where we ought to fear, and thus the hands will hang down and the knees will be feeble.

Thirdly, when we increasingly lose sight of our objective and focus on earthly things instead, fear will grip our heart. We fear where we ought not to fear. The prospect of injury, shame, the backbiting of many by the deceitful saying of all manner of evil, poverty, persecution, death, and whatever else is contrary to nature, have great power in us to stir up fear in spite of all exhortations to the contrary. "And fear not them which kill the body" (Matthew 10:28); "Fear not, little flock"

(Luke 12:32); "Why are ye fearful" (Matthew 8:26); "Be careful for nothing" (Php 4:6). In spite of such truths, we tremble and shudder for the present, and mostly for the future. This fear robs us of courage, hinders us in our duty, and draws us away to that which is not becoming. Where the spiritually courageous person overcomes fear, we who ought to be courageous will be overcome by fear. We allow ourselves to be abused by the enemy, and the heroes perish in the battle. Where is this bold steadfastness?

Fourthly, we are weak in all spiritual activity; that is, in prayer, striving against the enemies (particularly our besetting corruptions), in the exercise of virtue -- all of which our circumstances continually demand. We shall engage in some activity, for spiritual life is existent. Everything is performed in such a lethargic fashion, however, and it is such a heavy task. It proceeds so intermittently, and the initial zeal and fervency have grown so very cold. We do not manfully persevere in obedience toward God. A temporal cross will make us immediately discouraged, and if matters do not proceed according to our wishes, we immediately become weak in faith in regard to our spiritual state. We shall doubt the love of God, His hearing of prayers, and His providence. Everything comes into a state of disarray and we proceed as if half asleep or as if near collapse. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10).

Although God will not bring upon His children those judgments which will come upon the unconverted due to their unprofitableness, lukewarmness, and fearfulness, they nevertheless need to be deterred from such sins, "for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:6). Furthermore, the lack of courage yields them nothing but unrest and spiritual anxiety. It entangles them more and more in all manner of sin, and the enemies become more powerful, holding them captive for a longer period of time. One will not overcome this by yielding to a lack of earnestness. "(Be) not slothful in business; (be) fervent in spirit" (Romans 12:11); "Be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

Exhortation to be Courageous

Therefore, all you who fear the Lord, who find yourself under the yoke of your enemies, who have little strength to offer resistance, and who moreover use that little strength ineffectively, give ear and permit your heart to be of a willing disposition to be aroused as I engage myself to stir you up to be courageous in the battle.

First, hear the voice of the Lord and permit His address to you to lift up your hearts. As Lazarus arose from the dead upon hearing the voice of Christ, may you thus also be quickened from your lukewarm indolence to a noble courage. This is the Word of God to you: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them" (Deuteronomy 31:6); "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13); "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not" (Isaiah 35:4); "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Hebrews 12:12).

Secondly, should not you be courageous in the battle? There is no other way to heaven except by way of courageous warfare. This is the way ordained by God: "And I will put enmity" (Genesis 3:15). You have chosen this way when you entered into the kingdom of Christ and placed yourself under His banner. Or on the other hand: you must either sever yourself from the covenant, as a villain walk away from this ensign, and relinquish God, heaven, and everything else; or you must

courageously engage in battle in order thus to conquer the devil and his cohorts, the world and all that is in it, as well as sin and all its lusts. The crown of glory must be worth so much to you; so precious must spiritual life and fellowship with God be to you, and such pleasure must you find in the will of God, that you will be willing to battle valiantly all the days of your life. Do not let this weigh heavily upon your heart, thinking, "Must I be in arms and engage in warfare my entire life? Must there be such an exertion of strength my entire lifetime? That is indeed a distasteful way and there is no way whereby I will persevere." Yes, heaven must be that precious to you; or else you must relinquish it. Be it known, however, that to battle courageously is not such a heavy task as you allow yourself to believe. To always battle and succumb, or always to be equally matched in force, causing the outcome of the battle to be in doubt, is indeed a heavy task. It is a joyous task, however, to conquer as you are fighting, to proceed while conquering one city after another, and to humiliate the enemy battle after battle. Such will be the case if you but conduct yourself courageously, commensurate with your strength -- be it that you battle as a child, a young man, or a man. You are so fearful of the battle because you do not proceed courageously; instead, due to your laxity, carelessness and lack of seriousness, you give the enemy the opportunity to get the advantage over you. This makes them more courageous and you become weaker. Therefore, lift yourself up in the ways of the Lord and courageously engage yourself. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Thirdly, reflection upon your spiritual state is suitable to stir you up to be courageous. The Lord has chosen you unto salvation, has drawn you out of the power of your enemies, and called you as He called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and Israel out of Egypt. He has placed you among His children in the kingdom of His Son. You have been born of God, and are thus God's offspring, children of the King (Psalms 45:9; Psalms 45:13), and kings (Revelation 5:10). You have a free and princely spirit (Psalms 51:12) and the heart of a lion (Proverbs 28:1). The Lord has made you to be as "His goodly horse in the battle" (Zechariah 10:5). And He says concerning you in verse 5: "And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle" (Zechariah 10:5). These are they who proceed through thick and thin so that the earth trembles at every step, "because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded" (Zechariah 10:5); that is, a foot-soldier shall cut down the rider of the horse. Would you then allow yourself to be conquered by the devil, a despicable citizen of the world, or a vile corruption? A king is too noble to allow himself to be captured by an insignificant soldier. You ought therefore also to be courageous in a manner commensurate with your spiritual state and not yield to the despicable enemy. Do not forget your nobility, lest you bring shame upon your ancestry.

Fourthly, attentively take note of both the nature and the strength of the enemies, and this will make you all the more valiant. They are so evil that they will neither tolerate the least manifestation of good, nor the least motion of spiritual life. The more you yield to them, the more they demand from you and the more they gain in strength. They will neither cease nor become tired until they would have dragged soul and body into hell. They directly oppose the majestic and holy God as well as your beloved Lord Jesus. Can you witness and endure this in good conscience? Furthermore, they are despicable, vile, abhorrent, and abominable. Who can think about them without being indignant? And would you allow yourself to be overpowered by them? They have already been conquered by the Lord Jesus, for He has bruised the head of the devil (Genesis

3:15; Hebrews 2:14), conquered the world (John 16:33), and robbed sin of its dominion (Romans 6:2; Romans 6:14). They thus can neither harm you nor are they able to pull one hair out of your head. It would be too great an act of cowardice to fear the squirming of an enemy which is half dead. Therefore, do not allow yourself to be conquered by such an evil, despicable, and impotent enemy; rather, battle valiantly and trample upon them as dirt under your feet. Conduct yourself as the armor-bearer of Jonathan, who followed him and, coming behind him, killed the enemies. Follow the Lord Jesus likewise, for He goes before you and slays the enemies before you. You may then push them toward Him. Therefore, be courageous in the battle and the victory over such enemies will be sure.

Fifthly, take notice that everyone's eye is upon you, and give heed as to how you conduct yourself in this battle. You have entered the arena together with the enemy, and the spectators are standing roundabout to witness the battle. On the one side stands your King, together with the holy angels and believers. Their heart is one with you, and they are desirous that you would be the victor. Christ's cause is yours and your cause is His and theirs. They will rejoice and glory if you are victorious. On the other side are the devils and the world. They gnash their teeth and would love to see harm done to the cause of Christ by your being conquered. Will you therefore be weak in the battle? Will you allow yourself to be conquered in the presence of everyone? Will you cause this indignity to come upon Christ, who is a witness of this battle, has invited everyone to observe your courage, and inspires you to be courageous? Will angels (if this were possible) as well as the godly be covered with shame and be grieved because of you? Will you permit the enemy to triumph as conquerors? How would you dare to come to your King and lift up your countenance to Him? No, no -- so it ought not to be. You must be courageous as a hero so that Christ would boast of you as the Lord boasted of Job's steadfastness (Job 1:1-22; Job 2:1-13).

Sixthly, recognize what your own strength is, and look to your helpers and brothers-in-arms. It is true that you have no strength by nature, and that, having been born again, you have but little strength (Revelation 3:8). Having received Christ's strength, however, it is yours and thus you may do all things through Christ which strengthens you (Php 4:13). Therefore, make use of it; run with Him through a troop, and with Him leap over the wall, in order to take hold of your enemies in their strength (Psalms 18:29) -- for He girds you with strength and teaches your hands to war (vss. 32, 34). Therefore, jubilate: "The Lord taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me" (Psalms 118:7).

Seventhly, reflect upon those who have engaged in battle before you and consider how blessed the outcome has been for them.

They are now crowned as conquerors -- as is to be observed in the register of the heroes of faith, Hebrews 11:1-40. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. ... Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord" (James 5:10-11). Consider Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Consider other believers who live with you -- how each of them battles according to his strength. Should all of that not arouse your courage? He who therefore may behold such a King, may be in such a magnificent army, and is surrounded by so many valiant heroes who have each decided to give their life for the Lord Jesus and to battle unto death

-- should he not battle courageously?

God's Promises for Courageous Warriors

Eighthly, take seriously to heart the promises which God has promised to courageous warriors. God will sustain you while you are engaged in battle. "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart" (Psalms 27:14).

(1) The Lord then causes believers to have a clearer view of the promised benefits in their preciousness, and to have a more lively hope toward them.

(2) He shows them the limitations and weakness of the opposition, so that believers can look beyond them and already consider themselves to be conquerors.

(3) He shows them the help He has previously given them.

(4) He comforts and encourages them.

(5) He removes fear of the opposition.

(6) He infuses strength and girds them with strength, so that even a weak believer says, "I am a mighty one." The Lord promises the crown of glory. Consider the promises found in Revelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22 "Him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life ... shall not be hurt of the second death ... will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone ... will I give power over the nations ... I will give him the morning star ... the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels ... will I make a pillar in the temple of My God ... and I will write upon him the name of My God ... will I grant to sit with Me in My throne" (Revelation 2:7; Revelation 2:11; Revelation 2:17; Revelation 2:26; Revelation 2:28; Revelation 3:5; Revelation 3:12; Revelation 3:21). He who desires all these glorious things must and will obtain them by battling courageously. Therefore, engage yourself courageously!

Final Directions for This Warfare

Endeavor to conduct yourself well, however, and to engage in this task properly. "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Timothy 2:5).

First, arm yourself therefore from head to toe. Paul teaches us what these weapons are. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:13-18).

Secondly, in this warfare be on your guard against:

(1) Carelessness. Do not imagine that you already have overcome when you have a good intention. Such intentions easily lose their vigor. Do not imagine that the enemy has already disappeared, for he lies in wait for you. Therefore, "Be sober, be vigilant" (1 Peter 5:8).

(2) Despondency. When the enemies are too strong for you, the warfare too heavy, and God is distant, do not give up courage, for that is as much as casting away your weapons and holding forth to the enemy (from whom no grace is to be expected anyhow) your defenseless hands. Therefore in reliance upon the strength and infallible promises of God, "Be strong and of a good courage" (Joshua 1:6).

(3) Pride and boasting in your own strength. Remember Peter who said, "Yet will I never be offended" (Matthew 26:35); "Yet will I not deny Thee" (Matthew 26:35). Then the defeat is imminent. Therefore, "Be not highminded, but fear" (Romans 11:20).

Thirdly, in this warfare:

(1) Exercise caution, and do not go beyond the boundaries of your calling. Do not engage in things which are beyond your reach and beyond your competence. Do not hastily and with impulsive passion engage yourself. Do not imagine by yourself that you have enough wisdom, but always first seek the counsel of the Lord -- however insignificant the matter or circumstance may be. A maid was strong enough to cast Peter down. In special cases seek the counsel of the godly. "He that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Proverbs 12:15); "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" (Ephesians 5:15).

(2) Flee from those opportunities from which you are permitted to flee, and especially those by which you have frequently been entrapped. He already makes good progress who, in order to avoid sin, avoids the opportunities for sin, and does not engage in a specific endeavor unless called to do so.

(3) Be especially opposed to the sin which you are most inclined to commit, toward which your nature is most inclined, and which is related to your calling. Carefully guard against the initial manifestations, for then it is easiest to resist it. Smother the children in the cradle, catch the little foxes, and remove the dead fly which can cause the most eminent substance to stink.

(4) Always take refuge to Christ, for He is a sun and a shield (Psalms 84:11). As you permit your heart to wander away from Him, the arrow of the enemy will immediately hit you. Emulate David in this respect: "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto Thee to hide me" (Psalms 143:9).

(5) Be continually engaged in prayer, for all your strength must come from the Lord -- and God, when He is to do something, wants to be inquired of. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41).

068. Chapter 63: The Profession of Christ and His Truth

----- CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE ----- The Profession of Christ and His Truth

Spiritual valor manifests itself at specific occasions. It reveals itself, in word and deed, in the manifestation of the grace which is within us, our faith in Christ, our love toward Him, and our hope in Him. The enemies cannot tolerate this light, and they therefore resist it and assault those who cause this light to shine forth. The valiant person does not yield to them, however; he presents himself publicly with that much more freedom by way of a steadfast confession. The word "confession" (or profession) means: to make known, to reveal, to admit, to declare publicly, to promise, and to thank. All of this applies, for a confession is a revelation of the disposition of our heart toward certain matters. Sometimes it is used in reference to the confession of sin -- which one admits to have committed -- either against God: "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord" (Psalms 32:5; Matthew 3:6); or to each other: "Confess your faults one to another" (James 5:16).

However, we are here discussing a profession as it pertains to making a declaration 1) about God: "Every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:11); 2) about Christ: "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Php 2:11); 3) concerning true holiness and godliness: "... professing godliness" (1 Timothy 2:10); and 4) concerning true doctrine (Titus 1:9).

Profession of the truth is the unwavering witness, in word and deed, of the truth of God as it is revealed, acknowledged, and believed -- a truth which leads man unto salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. This profession is to the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbor.

It is a witness. God neither wants His truth, nor the grace which He has bestowed upon someone, to remain hidden; rather He wills that light would shine forth out of darkness. Furthermore, He wills that those in whose hearts the light has shined and who are light in the Lord would let their light shine before men (Matthew 5:16). Such are called witnesses for Christ. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8); "...Antipas was My faithful martyr (Revelation 2:13); "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe" (John 1:7). The act of witnessing pertains to the revealed truth of God, or generally speaking to all that God communicates in His Word -- and in particular the way whereby God leads the elect unto salvation. Occasionally, without any further modification, this is referred to as truth. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32); "... even as thou walkest in the truth" (3 John 1:3). At times there is modification: "The way of truth" (2 Peter 2:2), "the word of truth" (James 1:18), "the truth of the gospel" (Galatians 2:5), "the truth of Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:10). Believers rely upon this truth, and to this truth they bear witness, while rejecting all errors.

Christ is the marrow of this truth. The truth reveals Christ as to who He is in His Person; who He is in His divine and human natures and in His offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; and who He is in His states of humiliation (that is, His suffering and death and its efficacy unto reconciliation and the meriting of salvation for the elect) and exaltation: His resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right

hand of God, and coming to judgment. This Jesus is the object of confession. "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men ..." (Matthew 10:32); "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus ..." (Romans 10:9). The Lord Jesus is the eternal way of salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12); "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). He is therefore called "the captain of their salvation" (Hebrews 2:10). A professor of the truth bears witness to Him as He is revealed in His Word, and declares that all men who are outside of Him perish and that all who believe in Him are led unto salvation by Him. In order for someone to bear witness to this truth, he must both be acquainted with and believe it. Thus this profession is the witness of a truth which is both acknowledged and believed. To profess something with which we are not acquainted is nothing but foolishness.

Such is the practice of the papists: "I believe what the church believes." To profess that which we do not believe is nothing but hypocrisy. Scripture therefore speaks of "knowledge of the truth" (Romans 2:20), "the acknowledgment of the mystery of God" (Colossians 2:2), "the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10), "the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18), and "knowledge of salvation" (Luke 1:77). He must not only know the truth but he must also believe it. Knowledge and faith are therefore conjoined. "And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69); "... add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge" (2 Peter 1:5). Profession of the truth does not only require that we bear witness to the truth that Christ is the only way of salvation, but it is also a declaration of our faith in Him and of our hope upon Him. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets" (Acts 26:27). This profession is therefore called "the profession of our faith" (Hebrews 10:23). The apostle confirms this: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Profession of the Truth is in Word and Deed This profession occurs in word and deed. It occurs with words if we declare the truth of God to others by speaking of it for the purpose of instructing those who are not acquainted with it, to build up and strengthen those who have but little knowledge, and to the conviction of those who oppose the truth and persecute us because of the truth. Observe this in the following passages: "... with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10); "Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Php 2:11).

We profess the truth with deeds if we:

(1) Publicly join ourselves to the true church and persevere in fellowship with her, that is, with the people of God and Christ who own the cause of Christ by bearing witness to it and who affirm the following: "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise" (Isaiah 43:21); "But ye are a ... peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

(2) Display the image of the Lord Jesus in a holy walk and if Christ is formed in us (Galatians 4:19), and we bear the image of the heavenly Adam (1 Corinthians 15:49). The luster of holiness conveys to everyone that we associate with Jesus. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Hereby the counsel knew that Peter and John had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13), and persecutors identified true Christians as follows: he does not lie, he does not gamble, etc. and he is thus a Christian. Upon this they were arrested.

(3) Endure all suffering for the sake of the truth of Christ. God has put enmity between Christ and His own on the one hand, and the serpent and his seed on the other hand. All unconverted men who live according to the flesh always persecute those who live according to the Spirit -- this being due to opposite natures, objectives, and manner of conduct. As soon as someone becomes a partaker of the nature of Christ, places himself under His ensign, and stands up for Him, everything at once opposes him. Someone will not be persecuted for the hope of salvation itself, unless it would be by those who deny the resurrection of the dead. Rather, the issue is the way by which one seeks to obtain salvation. The name of Christ is so hated by the Jews and the Mohammedans that they will persecute someone unto death for this. Among those who bear the name of Christian one will not readily be persecuted for having a general hope of salvation in Christ. If, however, someone knows Christ in truth, and confesses Him to be such as He is and to be the Savior that He is, all false Christians will come against this. Such is the case with Socinians (who also wish to bear the name of Christian), and with Arminians -- as was shown to be true in the beginning of the previous century and would still prove to be so if they had the power. This is also the case with all the unconverted within as well as outside of the church. This is particularly true for the Antichrist, who is drunk -- and still drinks himself drunk -- with the blood of those saints whom he can grasp in his clutches. When a true Christian manifests himself as he is, he will become the focus of everyone's opposition. All who are thus inclined, according to their power, will persecute him with heart and deeds, and will not rest until he is out of the way. If someone conducts himself faithfully under such circumstances, he professes Christ, and whoever is killed because of this witness is a martyr. The latter is the Greek word *martyr* which means to be a witness. The Qualities of an Unwavering Witness of the Truth This profession is an unwavering witness. In this definition we make mention of one characteristic, but it implies several others.

First, this profession must occur out of love to the Lord Jesus and His revealed truth. Someone can die for his testimony of the Lord Jesus merely for the sake of being honored, without having delight in the truth. He also can only be motivated merely by the pressure of his conscience since he knows it to be the truth. Or he can also do this with the imagination that he shall be saved. This enables Papists to allow themselves to be killed by Mohammedans and the heathen. This enables all manner of heretics to die for their sentiments. Suffering itself does not make a person a martyr; rather, it is the cause for which one suffers, as well as the love which one has for this cause. If one dies for the truth, then his death is indeed a testimony; however, the one who suffers will not benefit from his suffering if it does not issue forth from love. "And though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). It is love which caused the bride to say, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend" (Song of Solomon 5:16), and Paul, "For the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Secondly, it must occur voluntarily. Human nature fears suffering; however, such fear does not contradict voluntary willingness. When death and the profession of Christ stand in opposition to each other, the faithful professor of the truth will choose his profession and death above life and denial. Neither does he do so reluctantly and scarcely, but with his whole heart. Even though suffering and death make him fearful, and he cannot cast this fear away, he nevertheless conquers this fear, so that he neither yields to this abiding fear nor consequently recants. He chooses to confess Jesus all the same -- come what may. He inwardly desires this and freely offers himself to the Lord, saying, "Here I am." "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy

power" (Psalms 110:3).

Observe how sorrow and willingness are conjoined in the disciples (Luke 22:45). To them the Lord Jesus said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

Thirdly, there must be boldness. Fear indeed remains, and this in itself is not sinful. Boldness conquers fear, however, and perseveres. It renders a man willing to put everything on the line -- even life itself -- due to having such high esteem for Jesus, His truth, and His cause, and to seeing in it so much glory for Jesus and ourselves, and so much benefit for others. Boldness will cause us to own His cause and to despise derision and grief. One will then not show himself to be of a servile disposition; that is, he will neither be filled with shame, tremble, be captured against his will, be forced to give a testimony, nor to present himself as being miserable in order to obtain mercy from the enemies -- thus prompting them to deal gently with him. The enemies have no compassion, for the mercies of the wicked are cruel. They will do what the Lord has decreed concerning them -- no more and no less. In such a display of humility there is some semblance of succumbing and the enemies will become all the more courageous, thinking, "We already have him under control, and we shall be able to push him a little further." Instead -- both by words and countenance -- we must present ourselves as courageous champions who have now entered the arena to oppose our enemy. Such was the case with Peter and John: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled" (Acts 4:13). With such boldness Stephen stood before the council, so that all who belonged to the council, steadfastly beholding him, beheld his countenance as being the face of an angel (Acts 6:15). When our life is at stake, we must be as bold as we would be in time of freedom.

Fourthly, there must be caution. This is a beautiful word and many continually have it in their mouth when they do not want to engage themselves. This is as much as being remiss in duty. To yield relative to the cause of Christ is then considered to be peace-loving and wise. Those who boldly own His cause are, in the opinion of such, viewed as unwise, headstrong, and imprudent. They will deem it to be his own fault if such a person gets into an uncomfortable situation and causes others to suffer likewise. Be on your guard against such devilish cautiousness, abhor it, and arm yourself against those who practice such caution -- they betray the church, prevent the confession of Jesus, and are a hindrance to other professors of the truth. Rather, caution must govern us in our engagement. We must not step beyond the boundaries of our calling and condition, run where we have no business being, or cast pearls before the swine. The latter are those whom we have found to become more wicked and stubborn when trying to bring them to repentance by means of the gospel. We must carefully watch against speaking too much or too little while engaged in defending the cause of Christ -- as well for pride, a pedantic attitude, and the seeking of our own honor. We must see the evil from afar and avoid it, unless other circumstances dictate to us that we anticipate it. When the Lord Jesus sent forth His disciples to preach the gospel, He gave them the following instruction: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

Fifthly, there must be uprightness. All hypocrisy and ambiguity must be far removed from such a profession. That was the sin of Peter, and his first effort to disguise himself is considered as much a denial of Christ as the second and third denial (Matthew 26:34; Matthew 26:70). Rather, in our profession of the truth we must fully own and state the truth of the gospel -- stating clearly,

explicitly, and without pretense what is to be found in our heart. We shall have more peace in our heart if we have said too much in seeking to express our faith in evangelical truths succinctly, than if, due to a quiet fear, we have said too little. "In doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity" (Titus 2:7).

Sixthly, there must be an unwavering commitment. It is not sufficient to have great courage before there is a need for it, and to triumph prior to the battle and the victory -- as many have done who have shamefully succumbed and were guilty of denial when it came to the point. It is not sufficient to begin, to persevere for some time, and yet to yield in the end. Rather, we must remain steadfast until the end. You should know from the very outset that, in times of persecution, the antichrist will so conceal his intent and will give in to you in so many ways, that it appears that we are entirely free to remain with the truth and religion -- yes, as if popery is now so reformed as to be almost of one faith with the true Reformed Church. It is but a minor point which is to be overlooked and then you will be free from death and everything else -- indeed, even be amply rewarded. One will be asked to affirm, for example, that he embraces and believes all the truths which are in the Romish church. For popery does indeed believe many truths of the Reformed church, and one must only forsake the errors of Calvin or of those who are in the Reformed church. What does Calvin matter? He was but a man. Furthermore, the Reformed themselves admit that he has erred here or there, and there are many quarrels within the Reformed church, for what the one says the other denies. Thus, without doing any violence to your conscience, you can declare and affirm that you embrace the truth of the Romish church and reject the errors of Calvin, as well as those that are to be found in the Reformed church. Thus, life or death is contingent upon this, and it is but a small point of contention. Be it known, however, that everything hinges on this point of contention (as insignificant as one may make it), for if this point were so insignificant, and if they are so nearly in agreement, why would they then kill anyone for such an insignificant point of contention? It is therefore not so insignificant. It is a departing from, renouncing, and forsaking of the true church and of Christ, the Head of that church, as well as of the truth of which the Reformed church is the pillar and ground. It is a transferring into the assembly and army of the antichrist, who persecutes the true church, sheds the blood of the saints, and opposes Christ. On the basis of that argument one can also become Jewish or Islamic, for some truths are yet to be found with them. It is true that our faith is not based upon Calvin, for he was but a man. We do not wish to defend that in which he has erred. It is also true that the Reformed church is not perfect, and we do not wish to defend the errors of given individuals. If the errors are grievous, then their proponents are expelled. However, to make such a declaration relative to the profession of truth is but a snare to entrap the upright. We must therefore be steadfast in all things and, with Moses, neither leaving one hoof behind nor disengage the least link in the chain. This is the steadfastness which the Lord Jesus requires: "But he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22). The Purpose of Profession of the Truth The purpose of this profession is the glorification of our God and the salvation of our neighbor. It is not suffering but the cause which makes the martyr -- and not the cause alone, but it is the objective which makes a good martyr. This profession must proceed from love and be made for a holy purpose. The purpose is, first of all, to glorify God; that is, to make known the perfections of God -- His goodness, righteousness, truth, etc., which come to the foreground in the salvation of man -- through Christ in word and deed, and by giving expression to this by way of a holy life. For, says the Lord Jesus, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). This occurs when we patiently endure everything which befalls us for the

sake of the truth, for when someone suffers for the sake of the truth, the truth will become manifest and be searched and known all the more. "This spake He, (that is, Christ of Peter) signifying by what death he should glorify God" (John 21:19). It is grace to have this as the objective in speaking, conduct, and suffering, and that in turn begets a martyr who is pleasing in the sight of God, angels, and men.

Secondly, it is to the salvation of our neighbor. A Christian does not only desire to be saved himself, but he has love for his neighbor, also greatly desiring to bring his neighbor to the knowledge of the truth, and to repentance and salvation. He perceives that the confession of the Lord Jesus is a fruitful means to that end. He therefore owns His cause in time of peace as well as in time of persecution, and he is glad when he has opportunity for this. He knows that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, and that by means of speaking and experiencing the truth others are won. This is his objective according to the apostle's instruction: "... but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29). He shows furthermore that suffering for the sake of the truth also has that fruit. "Inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace" (Php 1:7). To love that goal and to have this as the objective in his profession of truth is a glorious and holy endeavor.

God Requires Profession of the Truth

We have thus held before you the nature of professing the truth. This, however, is the duty of everyone who wishes to be saved; salvation or damnation is contingent upon it. Impress the following upon your heart: "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33). Consider furthermore what is written in Romans 10:9-10 : "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Some seek to pacify themselves in a time of persecution by deluding themselves, "Merely to have but true faith in the heart is sufficient unto salvation. Even if our mouth is silent and even if we externally join the church of the antichrist, this is but an external ceremony which neither benefits nor detracts. He is foolish who thereby endangers his belongings and his life -- belongings and life which are surely worth participation in a mass." This argumentation is refuted by the apostle, however, when he says, "and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Wherever true faith dwells in the heart, there the mouth will not be silent. "I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Corinthians 4:13). Add to this: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God (that is, to be the Savior He is and is declared to be in the Word of God), God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15). Make as many excuses as you wish, you will but deceive yourself to your eternal damnation, for salvation and damnation are contingent upon this confession. When the church prospers, a multitude of all manner of men will join her; however, they are not all fit to confess Jesus.

(1) Such is true for the ignorant, who do not know God's way unto salvation. They cannot give an account of their faith, for what would they say? They are inexperienced in the Word, the truth is hidden from them, and they have not known the way of peace.

(2) Such is true for those who do not believe in Christ. They may have some book knowledge of Christ, but they know of no transaction with Him to receive Him, cause Him to dwell in the heart by faith, be in Him, and grow in Him.

(3) Such is true for those who have no love for God, for the truth, or for the upbuilding of the church -- those to whom salvation is not glorious and desirous, and who perceive more glory, sweetness, and advantage in earthly things, this life, and the temporary enjoyment of sin.

(4) Such is true for those who daily and in very deed live for that which is visible; that is, in all world conformity and in the indulgence in all the lusts of the eyes and of the flesh as well as the pride of life, while in the meantime satisfying themselves with an external religion of form and custom. All such are not professing the name of the Lord, but are already denying the Lord Jesus in time of peace. To you Titus 1:16 is applicable: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." When persecutions come for the Word's sake, they will drop as ripe plums. The honor of the world, money, and convenience will be worth much more to them than Jesus and all His fullness. They will not be willing to endure either injury or shame for the love of Jesus. Yes, they themselves will become persecutors -- if not the most bitter ones -- of the true confessors of Christ. Many already persecute the truly godly. Know that the Lord Jesus has already -- so to speak, with His finger -- identified you during His sojourn upon earth. "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matthew 13:20-21); "They ... which ... in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13). And what will be your end? It will be what Paul writes: "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Php 3:19). Christ, in the day of judgment, will deny you before His Father, before the angels, and before men. "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23).

Believers Exhorted to Confess Jesus Boldly

Now I will turn to you, true believers, to stir you up to confess the Lord Jesus boldly. Prepare yourself for the trial of your faith, and strengthen yourself to be steadfast in your confession, for we shall also have our turn. God has always dealt with His church in this manner. God traverses from nation to nation in bringing persecution upon the church. Presently the church in France is having her turn, and it will perhaps soon be our turn, for the church has rarely been so long at peace, as she has been in The Netherlands. The church of The Netherlands is not only entirely corrupt in a moral sense, but also in the manifestation of all manner of new doctrine. Wherever ignorance prevails, errors will surface. It is a certain sign that The Netherlands will be visited by way of either external or internal persecution -- persecuted by men who will not tolerate sound doctrine and who hate holiness of life. The godly will be tried so that the truth of life and doctrine of the few faithful may shine forth according to Paul's prophecy: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Therefore, be prepared, so that when persecution comes, you may be ready and steadfast to confess Jesus and thus receive the crown of martyrs. In order to stir you up in this respect, I shall add a letter here which I have previously written to some persecuted and oppressed brethren. A LETTER OF EXHORTATION to Be Steadfast in the Confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Truth in Time of Persecution and Martyrdom My

beloved brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have been deemed worthy by Him to be His witnesses, to suffer for His cause, and to oppose the antichrist! Grace and peace be multiplied to you from the God of all grace and all comfort! As your suffering and steadfastness have come to my knowledge, I think of the words of the apostle: "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also (evil entreated) [Note: These words are added in italics in the Statenvertaling.] in the body" (Hebrews 13:3). I must also think of the declaration of the Lord Jesus to be made at the time of the general and final judgment: "I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matthew 25:36). Since I cannot physically pay you a visit, I will therefore endeavor to visit you with my pen, praying that the omnipotent and good God may bless my address to you to the strengthening and comfort of your soul. Be courageous, you champions of the Lord, and do not succumb in the battle. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13). Do not give heed to either internal or external persecution. When spiritual light has driven away the clouds of the soul, the heart is strengthened by grace, and internal assaults are rebuffed and have lost their potency, you will then be able to be publicly manifest as a "goodly horse in the battle" (Zechariah 10:3). Our heart is inclined to be tossed to and fro by internal assaults; and even if we persevere, these will cause us to lose courage and joy when enduring suffering. Among the most prominent of these assaults are:

(1) No one knows of my suffering, for it transpires in secret. If I were permitted to suffer publicly upon the scaffold, the Lord Jesus would yet be glorified by me, the gospel would yet be confirmed, believers would be strengthened, and others would be convicted; however, my suffering is now useless and fruitless.

(2) I do not suffer so much for the truth as for my sins. God punishes me for my previously committed misdeeds, and therefore I can only expect distress in my suffering rather than comfort.

(3) I suffer from a bad reputation and crimes are laid to my charge. The best they can do with me is laugh about me, calling me a martyr -- not of the Lord Jesus, but of Calvin.

(4) I do not suffer in consequence of love for Jesus and His truth, but only due to the compunction of my conscience, which cannot believe what one knows to be a lie, nor deny what one knows to be the truth. Or, I suffer and do not recant because I am fearful of being condemned after my death if I were to be guilty of denial.

(5) My suffering is of such long duration, and there is not the least hope of ever being delivered; this makes me discouraged and sorrowful.

(6) It is but an insignificant matter and is merely form and custom. I maintain faith in the heart, even though I join myself externally to them and conform to them; it is all compulsory.

(7) Other godly souls fare so well. Why am I in such misery?

(8) I am always full of fear -- either for death, prolonged and severe suffering, the wickedness of men, or man's craftiness. It is for this reason that I am drawn into suffering and compelled to suffer, rather than that I endure it willingly and courageously. This suffering is too severe for me and I can no longer endure it. I am furthermore concerned about my loved ones who have denied the faith, and above all about my children who have been put into monasteries and who drink in idolatry from their youth.

I shall first endeavor to remove these concerns, and then I shall stir up your souls to be steadfast, courageous, and patient.

First, it is the practice of the enemies to cause believers to die a thousand deaths in secret, for they know by experience that public executions produce more believers than that are put to death. On the other hand, believers wish to suffer in public, being of the opinion (due to their misconception) that they will then glorify Jesus more. You ought to know, however, that the Lord Jesus and the holy angels observe secret suffering as much as public suffering, and God brings your secret suffering to the knowledge of the church and your suffering is spoken of throughout the entire world. Public suffering is frequently intermingled with the seeking of self. The soul will then not be without strife as to whether she is steadfast to gain her own honor, to be free from the shame of recantation, and for other reasons. This will confuse the soul and deprive her of such purity, comfort, and courage in suffering as are experienced in secret suffering. Therefore do not select the manner of suffering -- neither a greater nor lesser degree. The sovereign Lord, who, in His unsearchable wisdom and unfathomable love, imposes upon every faithful martyr whatever befalls him, is pleased to go such a way with you. This way is neither the result of the cunningness and wickedness of the enemies, nor a consequence of our choice, carefulness, or carelessness; rather, it is according to the Lord's decree. It is in this manner that He wills to be glorified by you and to bring you to glory. Those who are suited for suffering of long duration are frequently not suited for public suffering. Fear for a violent death has caused many to recant and deprived them of all composed thoughts relative to faith, hope, and love -- which they at times may have in more abundance when suffering in solitude and for a lengthy period of time. Secret suffering will not always remain hidden. It will all become manifest in the day of judgment and all men will acknowledge you as a faithful martyr. Therefore be silent before God and say with blind submission, "Thy will be done and do with me as it pleases Thee; only give me strength to bear it."

Secondly, there is a spiritual assault by which the soul can be greatly vexed; namely, that one is not suffering for the cause of Christ, but that this is a judgment of God upon prior committed sins and for previously denying Him. Even though such an assault will rob us of courage in our suffering, it does happen to be very beneficial, for this causes the soul to examine herself and thereby is led to Christ. Everything is turned upside down, our previous sins and sinful life come to mind in a lively sense. We begin to doubt whether we have ever possessed grace, are converted, and if everything has not merely ensued from an enlightened understanding. We shall be terrified by death, and be fearful of being damned. See to it that you do not avoid these thoughts; rather, reflect upon them and permit your concerns to have a more intense effect. This is followed by unsettling strife, and this godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. We shall begin anew as if we had never rightly done so. We shall long for Jesus in order to be a partaker of His blood, and to have Him as a ransom for the forgiveness of our sins. We shall pray, weep, and wait, as well as yearn for Christ to have Him as our Surety. We shall choose Him, receive Him, and by faith bring Him into the heart, surrendering ourselves to Him without any reservation and recantation.

Then there are additional concerns -- such as: am I elect? Is it not too late? Is not the time of grace past? It becomes dark, Jesus hides Himself, the Lord seems to cast the soul away, and it appears as if there is no grace to all eternity. This is followed by an inclination to deny Christ since we feel to be no partaker of Him anyway. See to it that you also do not avoid this battle, for when the battle

will be most vehement, grace will break through. We shall then come to Jesus with more composure, perceiving that He offers Himself in the gospel. We shall enter into the covenant of grace, rely upon Jesus with more confidence, give our soul into His hand, and without fear entrust it to Him. We shall thus become conscious that our sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ's blood and that salvation has been merited. From this issues forth peace of conscience, spiritual joy, ardent love for Jesus, and a courageous willingness to suffer and die for His name. Behold, such is the lovely disposition which the soul acquires from the temptation that we are suffering for our sins rather than the truth. We then perceive the contrary, namely, that God has been satisfied, that sins have been forgiven, that God has imposed this suffering upon us, that He calls us to confess His name and glorify Him, and that in this way He will place the glorious crown of martyrs upon us. That which is eternal then becomes glorious and that which is of the world despicable, and this joy makes all that is bitter to be sweet. From our weakness and our earlier denial we shall derive strength, and we shall increase in strength. We thus make improvement by no longer trusting in self, but by standing in the power of God, and, with joyous courage, endure everything to which the Lord calls us by His grace and of which He deems us worthy.

Thirdly, there is the temptation of suffering from an evil reputation of being disobedient to the government, of having committed a given evil, of being stubborn, and being but a martyr for the sake of Calvin and his errors. You must skillfully resist this temptation for you know very well that they do not have an evil deed as a basis for torturing you, but they rather do so to cause you to deny the truth. They have but fabricated this evil reputation. You know indeed that Calvin is not the issue; you do not esteem him more highly than other faithful ministers. You do not rely upon his word but only upon the Word of God. God, angels, and believers also know this -- yes, it is even known to the enemies, and they take occasion to harden their heart and render yours weak by way of this evil reputation. Thus, the Jews dealt with the Lord Jesus and said, "For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy" (John 10:33); "This man calleth for Elias...let us see whether Elias will come to save Him" (Matthew 27:47; Matthew 27:49). It is therefore no wonder that the enemies, having the same nature, do the same things. The Lord will reveal the reason for your suffering in the day of judgment, and your glory in heaven will not be diminished, but be increased. Be therefore faithful.

Fourthly, it is even a greater trial to be assaulted with the following thoughts: "I am not suffering for the truth but only because my conscience compels me to do so. It is not love for Christ that motivates me, but rather fear of being damned if I recant. My faith, relative to my spiritual condition, is weak. I doubt whether I already have been regenerated, whether Christ is my Savior, and whether I shall be saved -- even if I am suffering and dying for the truth. The unconverted can also suffer and die due to being compelled by their conscience and being convinced of the truth." It is indeed true that salvation or damnation is contingent upon whether we confess or deny the truth. Impress the following texts vividly upon your heart: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10); "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33). You thus observe here that it is better to be faithful in your confession -- even if you do so in a deficient manner and due to being compelled by your conscience -- than to recant and do violence to your conscience. Furthermore, if you are mostly

motivated by the compulsion of your conscience, do not insist that this is not intermingled with love for Jesus and His truth. You are conscious of the one since it manifests itself most strongly, but if you were to carefully examine yourself and focus but a little upon Jesus, you will experience that you love Him too much to deny Him. You will then say, "Beloved Jesus, I do not desire to deny Thee." Love will indeed manifest itself in sweet affections, but in essence it consists in the will being engaged by the intellect. Therefore, whenever the will consciously values and chooses Jesus, and motivates us to confess Him, then such is a confession of Jesus out of love. Therefore do not let this confuse and discourage your soul, but rather rejoice that your conscience is enlightened and lively, and acknowledge that it is not only your conscience motivating you in your faithful confession. Even if, however, the conscience were silent -- yes, if it were more quiet than the intelligent will -- love would manifest itself all the more. When the sun is down, the stars can be observed much better, for even though they are also present during the day, they cannot be seen due to the presence of a greater light.

Regarding your spiritual state, if there is a heartfelt sorrow, loathing, grieving, and shame about both former sins and your sinful heart at present; if you are exercised to receive Christ as Surety and to apply Him to your soul (even if it is in darkness, strife, and without assurance); if a tender watching over the heart proceeds from this to refrain from sinning; if the inclination arises to cleave to Jesus in all faithfulness and to suffer and die for His name (even if it pleased Him not to give much light and comfort), then it is in truth and there is life and faith. Rely then upon the promises and the Lord will indeed favor you with grace and comfort, even if it be at the very end of your life. It is a much more courageous deed to remain faithful to Jesus in darkness and while being subject to internal strife, than when you enjoy many sweet frames and the comforts of the Spirit. Oh, what a great grace it is to jealously guard your heart, be humble, and run after Jesus with tears in your eyes, for such are frequently most genuine in their spiritual exercises and at times become the strongest Christians! Keep courage.

Fifthly, there will be another temptation in conjunction with the others -- all of which will reenforce each other in bringing us to recantation. The argument is as follows: The difference in viewpoint is but very insignificant. They are only desirous that we would deny the errors of Calvin, and this we can do quite readily, for Calvin has errors which I do not wish to support, and I do not need to suffer for Calvin's sake. They will also permit me to adhere to my faith in my heart. They will not inflict suffering upon me for that reason as long as I externally conform to their conduct, attend the mass, and physically bow before the wafer and their images. This external performance is but ceremonial, and salvation is contingent upon the faith we maintain in our heart. Circumstances are not the same as during the persecutions of the heathen, at which time one was obliged to renounce Christ. The parties in question now confess the truth: Christ is the Savior.

Answer: Many, in denying the truth, have stumbled over this stone. We must therefore consider all the more carefully what snake is hidden in the grass. Everything depends on this small difference -- even if that small difference were ten times smaller. To subscribe to this is tantamount to transferring into the church of the antichrist, thus uniting oneself with that people who persecute the church of the Lord Jesus and have shed the blood of the saints as water. You thus bring upon your soul all the blood of the saints, and you are guilty of all the persecutions as if you yourself had performed them personally. You will not escape the wrath of God over the blood of His saints. Yes, even if they did not require a declaration from you, the attendance of the mass, or the rendering of

any reverence to their images, being satisfied that you have left the Church of the Reformation and called yourself a member of the Romish church, then you would have denied Christ, His truth, and His church, and you would have transferred into the bloody empire of the antichrist. Even if you then confess the name of Christ, you are denying Him in deed. Why else do they persecute those who confess Christ in word and deed? They nullify the efficacy of Christ's one perfect sacrifice by sacrificing Him daily unto the forgiveness of sins, and by denying that Christ has also paid for actual sins committed subsequent to baptism. They worship a piece of bread as if it were the glorified Jesus, which is just as much a total denial of Christ as transpired during the persecutions of the heathen. Therefore, give heed. If, however, one goes further than that and attends the mass, bowing before the god of bread and the images, the excuse will not hold that you do it only with the body and not with the heart, for God also wants to have the body (1 Corinthians 6:20). God requires a confession; however, to behave in such a manner is a denial before men rather than a confession. Furthermore, it is hypocrisy when there is a contradiction between the heart and your deeds. Do not think that all this is but ceremonial. It is an actual deed -- an act of idolatry which is expressly forbidden. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them" (Exodus 20:5). The faithfulness of the seven thousand who were left in Israel consisted in that they had not bowed their knees to Baal (Romans 11:4). The faith of the heart is of no value if the confession of the mouth differs from it. True faith and the confession of the mouth always go hand in hand. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart...thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9); "I believed, and therefore have I spoken" (2 Corinthians 4:13). Also the fact that you were compelled to do this will not absolve you before God. The love of Christ must influence you to such a degree and salvation must be worth that much to you that you will not permit yourself to be compelled and that you are willing to endure all torture for Jesus' sake. Therefore be encouraged -- the suffering which has transpired has already been eliminated and you do not know what suffering will yet come. Only your present suffering is reality and that transpires as rapidly as time passes. Live and let your care be for the day, for you know not what tomorrow will bring. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34).

Sixthly, there is yet another temptation which brings unrest in the soul: There are so many godly who traverse through this world with ease. They have rest, sit under their grape vine and fig tree, enjoy their possessions in peace, and die in faith. I, however, am plagued all the day, and I am chastened every morning. Why does it go so ill with me, whereas others fare so well? My answer is: "Is not the Lord sovereign? May He not do with His clay as pleases Him? Is it not grace that long since you have not been cast into hell?" It behooves us to embrace His sovereignty with love and to be in subjection to it without quarreling -- especially since we know that all things must work together for good for those who are His (Romans 8:28), and that it is all goodness and love which He, according to His foreknowledge and determinate counsel, causes us to encounter. "For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (Job 23:14). Do not be envious of the happiness of others. May not the Lord give as well as take? May He not give of His own to whomever He wills? Is your eye evil because the Lord is good? You ought rather to rejoice that God shows you that He is good. Above all this, however, the Lord shows you greater goodness than all those who spend their days peacefully according to the body. I shall not mention to you the illuminations of the Holy Spirit, the kisses of the Lord Jesus, the sweet comforts, the submissive dispositions, and the disposition of a martyr -- all of which the Lord visits you with at times. There are others who spend their days in darkness, weakness of faith, and in the commission of many spiritual sins -- even

though they prosper according to the body. Is the body therefore more than the soul, and the prosperity of the body more than the prosperity of the soul? God on the contrary bestows upon you the greatest favor which a creature on earth can enjoy; that is, to be a witness for Jesus, to show that love toward Jesus can overcome everything, that many waters cannot quench love, to be engaged in battle as a champion against the antichrist, and to anticipate the crown of martyrs. It is the purpose of man to glorify God. The more someone answers to His purpose, the happier he will be. Each of you are more to the glory of Jesus, however, than a thousand others of the godly. Therefore be well-satisfied with your portion and rejoice in it. Thank the Lord that He has deemed you worthy to be martyrs.

Seventhly, the last temptation which I shall propose is this: "My suffering is too severe and it lasts too long; I can no longer bear it and I will yet come to the point where I will be guilty of denial. And besides that, I am very oppressed, since I have been deprived of my loved ones. They have recanted, and my children have been put into monasteries and are raised in an idolatrous environment. Wretch that I am; where shall I flee and what shall I do? I am at the end of my rope." You ought to know that you deem your cross to be too heavy and its duration too long. The fear for suffering prior to its arrival is more severe than the suffering itself. When we are subject to it, and when God calls us to be a martyr, He generally also grants a martyr's spirit. If you become discouraged at times, the Lord will again grant courage and will comfort the soul with inward grace. When grace fills the soul, suffering is no suffering. If Jesus comes in view and His love kindles the love of the soul, you will step over the mountains of suffering as if they were molehills. God knows how much you can bear, and He will not tempt you above that you are able to bear. He will either moderate your cross according to your strength or increase your strength in accordance with your cross. With the temptation the Lord will grant deliverance, doing so by granting you to be content with His will so that His grace is sufficient for you and you can glory in your infirmity, and so that you will "take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake," being strong when you are weak (2 Corinthians 12:10). It can also be that He will make the cross lighter and give you some breathing room, for it is all inflicted upon you by men, but not of men. It is inflicted upon you by God who has counted the hairs upon your head. As He sends it to you in love to glorify you, so He can also diminish your cross -- be it by entirely delivering you from it or by setting you at liberty, all things being possible to Him. Or He may also translate you into glory, saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matthew 25:21). As far as being deprived of your loved ones and their recantation is concerned, it is true and it aggravates your suffering. Jesus must, however, also be worth that much to you. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37). Thank the Lord that you have some in this world who are dear to you, so that by forsaking them you may demonstrate your superior love to Jesus. As far as the recantation of so many thousands is concerned, it is indeed true that they are wretched, for they have denied Jesus. Next to the Reformation, however, the antichrist has not received a heavier blow than the one inflicted by their recantation, for thereby a great multitude is now intermixed with popery who hate popery in their heart, and through them more light is kindled among the papists. They perceive the inferiority and falsehood of their religion as well as the veracity of the Reformed religion. They are capable of turning away from popery and transferring to the Reformed camp when times change -- a change which is imminent. As far as your children

are concerned who are confined to monasteries, God will care for them according to His immutable covenant, namely, "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:7). The Lord is providing for them as far as their sustenance is concerned, and preserves them from the many vanities of the world in which they otherwise perhaps would have drowned. He can preserve them in the truth, or, if they are not acquainted with the truth as yet, reveal it to them. If one day times change, God will then cause them to acknowledge, confess, and experience the truth. Let there be much prayer for them and surrender them to a faithful Lord. Therefore let nothing disturb you, and in all things prevail as a champion. Let none of these things move you, and neither count your life dear unto yourself (Acts 20:24); "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10); "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12). My beloved brothers, from whom the luster of glory emanates, permit me to encourage you to be valiant and steadfast. If you are not in need of such encouragement, being sustained by the Spirit of liberty Himself, having striven valiantly until now, it is nevertheless my duty and inclination to share with you what the Lord has granted me. Permit me therefore to show my love to you, so that I may hear in the Day of Judgment, "I was in prison, and ye came unto Me" (Matthew 25:36).

First, consider the examples of so many thousands of martyrs who, striving uprightly, have received the crown of glory and who are now triumphant in heaven. It is God's way throughout all ages to call some to be blood witnesses in order that the Lord Jesus may be glorified, the world be brought under conviction, and the church be strengthened. If I may understand something about the Revelation of John, it appears to me that the fourth vial is now being poured out and that the fifth vial is about to be poured out upon the throne of the beast (that is, Rome) which not long after that is destined to be destroyed, whereby the empire of the antichrist will be obscured. Some time subsequent to this, the beast himself will be eradicated and a glorious state for the church will follow upon this. It thus appears to me that you are among the last who have the privilege of being martyrs for Jesus. I repeat, "among the last," for I believe that the church, also in other lands, must expect persecutions -- however, they will be short. Therefore do not succumb in the end, but take as an example of suffering and steadfastness all who in former times have been martyrs for Jesus' sake -- who were persecuted, tortured, and killed by Jews, the heathen, and the antichrist for the name of Jesus. In all this, however, they remained conquerors, kept the faith, and confessed Jesus until the very end. It would be an impossible task to enumerate all their glorious testimonies, severe and lengthy suffering, valor, and faithfulness. This is not subject matter for a single letter. I shall only present the register recorded in Hebrews 11:35-39. "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith," etc. Behold, such was the steadfastness of the martyrs -- yes, many having too great a desire for martyrdom have imprudently offered themselves, did not hesitate to encourage the martyrs engulfed in flames, and at times would cry out, "I am also a Christian." Women would even hasten to the places where believers were gathered, having heard that the enemies were on the march to murder them all. These women would be fearful that they

would come too late; they also took their children along so that they also would be privileged to become martyrs in their youth. Would you then succumb who are called to martyrdom? Will their steadfastness not stir you up to endure everything -- as they did -- steadfastly and resolutely for the name of Jesus? The greater the suffering, the greater will be the glory. Do as the companions of Daniel did, who would not worship the image upon the command of Nebuchadnezzar, and said to him, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we shall not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:16-18).

Secondly, compare your suffering for a moment with eternal glory. What do you have to lose? You will say: "Honor, possession, father, mother, children, conveniences -- yes, even life." And what have you to suffer? You will say, "Hunger, cold, nakedness, stinking prisons full of abominable vermin, heavy chains, bloody labor, merciless beatings, scarcely being able to lie down to get a little sleep -- and then in the end to be abused, burned, hung on the gallows, and to be eaten of dogs." Know, however, that all these are but light tribulations which will readily pass. Paul refers to them as such in 2 Corinthians 4:17. Will recantation yield you all those desirable things again, and will recantation enable you to flee all these miseries? You yourself know that such is not the case. If by recanting you would get that wish, and you then would have an unbearably turbulent conscience which would not give you rest day nor night; and the wrath of God filled your soul with terror and anxiety and your body with painful stones, with unbearable gout, with evil sores, with painful discomfort, exhausting you to the very bone so that you would then seek death without being able to find it; or your wretched soul, having been restored to all freedom, perhaps in all luxury, would depart with the sense of hellish agony some days after you had recanted, would you then have gained anything? Be assured that as soon as you would have recanted, you will regret it, and you will wish and seek to be in that state again. By their fallen cheeks, their dejected countenance, and the pallor of death, it is to be perceived how the internal condition is of those who have denied Jesus and retained their possessions. They elevate your state a thousand times above theirs. You are now in this state and you cannot recover what has been lost. The wrath of God would pursue you if you again regained everything. The presence of your wife and children would only aggravate the distress of your soul. The avoidance of the water would be the equivalent of jumping into the fire, and all would at last end in damnation. Be assured -- for experience teaches this daily -- that the enemies do not believe your recantation. You would still be hated by them, for they seek after your life. Is it then not better to remain steadfast in your confession of Jesus, since you cannot gain anything by recantation? And if you could gain the whole world with it and would do injury to your soul, what would you give as a ransom for your soul? "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:25). Place eternal glory over against all your suffering and the pleasures of the world, and you will come to the same conclusion as Paul did: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Oh, how blessed, how sweet, and how glorious it will be, regardless of what the manner of your death may be, to be ushered into heaven by the holy angels after death! Oh, how all the inhabitants of heaven will arise when they witness the triumphant entrance of a valiant champion of the faith who has overcome! How friendly will be the manner in which the Lord Jesus will welcome such a soul! What joyous hallelujahs will resound because of

your victory! It exceeds our understanding. Our tongue is too weak. No eye has seen it, no ear has heard it, and it has never arisen in the heart of men what God has prepared for those who love Him -- and particularly for His faithful blood- witnesses. The inheritance of the saints in glory, the immediate communion with God, the life of beholding Him, to be satisfied with the Lord's all-sufficiency, to be irradiated by the light of His countenance, to be embraced by His love, to be surrounded by His omnipotence, to be filled with His goodness, even to shine forth in pure holiness, to be aflame with love, to be incomprehensibly joyful in God, to be among the angels, to be in the company of the souls of the most perfectly righteous men, and while being in His immediate presence, together with them behold and experience the perfections of the Lord, and thus magnify and praise these perfections -- that is felicity and that is glory. To be united with one's own and yet glorified body; to be conformed to the glorious body of Christ; to stand at the right hand of King Jesus in view of the entire world -- particularly of those who have tortured and killed them; there, according to soul and body, to be glorified and crowned as conqueror; to be ushered into heaven by the Lord Jesus and there to eternally experience undiminished fulness of joy without end and without fear -- all this is the great benefit which the Lord has laid away for all those who fear Him and put their trust in Him before the sons of men. Attentively consider the following passage: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number...stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;...What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?...These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation 7:9; Revelation 7:13-17). Now compare all your suffering and all that is glorious and delightful upon earth with this eternal and felicitous glory, and you will not be able to make a mental comparison, since the difference is too great. Would this then not cause you to rejoice in your suffering? Will this not make you courageous in the warfare in which, by the power of God, the victory is sure and the crown a certainty?

Thirdly, view the Lord Jesus from every perspective. He is so eminently glorious that it is our greatest glory to confess Him as our Lord and King. We are therefore not to be ashamed of Him. God the Father makes confession about Him by declaring from heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The angels bore witness to Him at His death and resurrection -- yes, all angels worship Him. How boldly and joyously have all martyrs professed Him and sealed their profession with their death! Would you then be ashamed of Him? Is He not worthy of a measure of suffering? He is worthy a thousand times to be professed by you while suffering in some measure. How much good has He done for you! Out of love for you He left His glory, took upon Himself your human nature, doing so in the form of a servant, became poor so that He had nothing upon which He could lay His head, and took upon Himself your sins and put Himself in your stead as Surety. How heavy a task it was for Him to deliver you from eternal damnation, to reconcile you with God, and to lead you to glory! God's wrath upon sin caused Him to crawl over the earth as a worm and to wallow in His own blood -- blood coming forth as sweat due to the hellish agony within His soul. He was betrayed, shackled as an evildoer, and led away captive. The ecclesiastical authorities judged Him worthy of death as a blasphemer of God, He was beaten with fists, and they spat in

His blessed countenance. He was smitten in the face, and He was mocked in a most contemptuous and grievous manner. He was delivered to the Gentiles, dragged from the one court to the other, led along the streets of Jerusalem with a robe of mockery, placed on a duo with a murderer, and had His death demanded as if He were the most wicked among the people. He was scourged in a most wretched manner and crowned with a crown of thorns, which was pounded into His head with sticks. He was led outside the city while bearing His cross, and died on the cross in the greatest distress of soul while suffering the most extreme measure of scorn and pain. All this He suffered out of love for you in order to deliver you from sin and damnation. He made a good profession, namely, that He was the King and the Savior -- a confession which cost Him His life. Would you now be ashamed of Him and deny Him? Would you not suffer somewhat for this loving and loveable Jesus, and not show by your suffering how dear and precious He is to you? The Father, in consequence of His suffering, bestowed this honor upon Him: "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:11). Would you then withdraw yourself from the opportunity to render Him glory? Would you, in response to all His love and goodness to glorify you, defame Him, be ashamed of Him, and deny Him? Far, far be it from anyone that this would arise in one's heart. Therefore let the love of Christ constrain you, and let nothing be so precious to you that you would not be willing to set it aside for Him, thus to glorify Him by way of a bold profession. Rejoice in the fact that you still have a body and a life to demonstrate thereby that you love and honor Him. Be joyful that your suffering continues somewhat longer, so that your profession should continue that much longer, and you should glorify Him for a lengthy period of time upon earth.

Fourthly, acknowledge the grace which God has manifested toward you. Others He permits to remain choked in sin, permitting them to walk on the way to destruction. However, He has bestowed the riches of His grace upon you. How wondrous are the ways by which He has drawn you to Himself! Every deed and every step is an evidence of His love. Reflect upon the entire way along which the Lord has led you since your youth. His eye remained upon you when you departed from Him. He was longsuffering when you persevered in your stubbornness. All the day He stretched forth His hands to you when you were gainsaying. He allured you, drew you with love, convinced you of your wretched state, revealed His Son to you, gave you faith whereby you received Jesus as your Surety, made you a new creature, gave you a new heart, and caused you to walk in His holy ways. How frequently has He comforted you and spoken to your heart! He enabled you to remain faithful when He called you to suffer, has sustained you hitherto, and kept you in the faith by His power. He grants you His Spirit which makes you bold and courageous, and makes you willing in the day of His power in the beauties of holiness. He gives you power when you are faint and increases your strength when you have no might. At times He causes you to behold the crown and causes you to taste how good it is to be near to God. He causes you to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the world and addresses you as follows: "My son, be valiant, be of good courage, and fear not, for I am with you. Be not perplexed for I am your God. I take hold of your right hand, strengthen you, and sustain you with the right hand of My righteousness. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 43:2). Will not all this divine benevolence kindle your love, so that you will say, "I shall cleave to the Lord; He is my portion and therefore I shall hope in Him. I surrender my body and soul to Him; let Him do with them as

pleases Him. May He but give me faithfulness as I presently suffer for His Name's sake, and may He make me steadfast to valiantly endure all that is yet to come. For nothing will befall me except it be through His hand. I look beyond my enemies, for God commands them as follows: "Curse David, and inflict such and such upon him." That -- and no more -- will they be able to do to me." Therefore, as champions of God, be vigilant and strong, and the Lord will strengthen your heart.

Fifthly, the faithful profession of Christ and His truth is of an unspeakably great advantage for the church in general as well as for specific individuals. The church will not be eradicated by torturing and putting martyrs to death, but she is built up by it. When persecutions for the Word's sake come about, the church is purified, the chaff blows away, the gold is separated from the dross, the luster of the church becomes brighter, and she inspires more awe in the eyes of the world. The church is much more glorious when she is small and pure than when she is a large, mixed multitude. If in the one locality the church is eradicated due to having been thoroughly corrupted, the number of the truly godly being extremely small, and there being practically nothing left, she will raise her head in a different locality all the more gloriously. If there were as yet many godly left, their dispersement would grant them the opportunity to let their light shine in other localities. Every individual believer becomes, so to speak, a minister and establishes a little church in those localities where he resides -- as occurred during the persecution of the church recorded in Acts 8:4. It is true that prospects are gloomy and will even become more gloomy. Furthermore, I believe that other churches will also be refined by persecutions. I am assured, however, from the Word of the Lord, that the antichrist will no longer have dominion in such a general sense as in the past. The Lord will preserve for Himself a portion that will persevere and not lose courage. Rather, they will remain standing as champions and battle against the antichrist with the word of their testimony until the Lord -- one day, suddenly and unexpectedly -- will pour out His judgments upon him and will glorify the church.

Brothers, you are the pillars of the church. You are the voice whereby the glory of the Lord Jesus is declared and your testimony resounds throughout the world. See to it, therefore, that you remain steadfast, for every eye is upon you. Thus, the enemies will not be able to rejoice, and the godly will neither be put to shame nor be grieved for your sake. Your steadfastness causes many to come to themselves, and they begin to seek after the truth of the gospel. Who knows how many children you will beget in your bonds! Those who stumble along are strengthened, and those who for fear have succumbed and recanted when the first storm arose, will, by reason of your steadfastness, become bold to reverse their recantation and by renewal to strive and suffer for the truth. Due to your steadfastness the enemy will have much more work than he had first anticipated.

Maybe God, who brings forth new martyrs by the thousands, will cause your church to arise from its ashes to the remorse of her enemies. For indeed I anticipate something great from the restoration and steadfastness of such an innumerable multitude. When fire is restricted, it will burst forth all the more vehemently. If the enemy would have left alone those who by renewal united with them and would have been satisfied with their recantation, then the church in that locality would, humanly speaking, be finished. However, now there is yet hope. Behold therefore what a great matter the Lord has entrusted to you! Those who have become bold by your steadfastness would again succumb due to your cowardice and recantation. Therefore, quit yourselves as men and you will prevail with your testimony.

Sixthly, and as far as you personally are concerned, has not your martyrdom yielded you much benefit? Prior to this you lived in, or rather fell into, many sins which now do not have the least effect upon you. Perhaps some of you have been converted who were unconverted while enjoying freedom. Some of you who for fear have denied the truth now courageously endure everything. Has not your knowledge of divine truths increased and become more spiritual? Has not your heart become holier? Have not your prayers become more vehement? Do you not have more frequent and intimate communion with God? Do you not see more of God's friendly countenance? Do you not enjoy more comfort? Are you not able to rejoice more in the hope of glory, and has not all that is of the earth decreased in value in your eyes? And even if there come days of darkness, weakness of faith, and strife, are not your wrestlings that much stronger and does not the Lord time and again strengthen your soul? Would you be willing to exchange your condition for the crown of a king and all the luxuries of the ungodly? Observe therefore and gratefully acknowledge the grace which God bestows upon you. Oh, how precious you are in the eyes of all the godly throughout the world! How many texts are there not in the Bible which declare you blessed! Permit me to bring them to your remembrance. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Peter 4:14); "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:11-12). Consider Paul's triumphant declaration shortly before his death as a martyr: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Lift up your heads; by faith make the words of Paul your own, and emulate him by saying, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:33-39).

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be courageous in the battle. Do not withdraw yourself from the battle, and do not surrender one inch, for the more you capitulate, the more your enemies will exact of you. They are never satisfied. It is safer to stand firm in a matter, in which you in certain circumstances would perhaps concede, and which stand could be called impudent, than it is to concede too much. You will be more secure and avoid many snares. Your conscience will enjoy ten times more peace concerning the first than over the latter. The more courageous you are, the more the enemy will lose courage, the more you will gain in strength, and the more glorious will be your victory. Let them do with your body as they please, or rather, what God wills that they will do to you, and, with David, strengthen yourself in the LORD your God.

Possess your soul in patience -- of which you are truly in need. Arm yourself against any desire for revenge even entering your heart. Yes, even if you could avenge yourself, do not do so, but be as

a sheep that is dumb before her shearers. Pray for those that persecute you, and reward them good for evil. Let the Lord Jesus continually be an example for you in order that you may follow His footsteps. The weapons in our battle are not carnal, but nevertheless are strong Godward. Arm yourself therefore with the entire armour which the apostle proposes in Ephesians 6:1-24. The meek person is to be preferred over the strong person. Patience not only reduces the suffering, but it yields luster to the one who is patient, and it convicts and even conquers the enemies. Consider therefore that time is short, and that your suffering is transitory. It proceeds from the hand of the Lord and is to the glory of Jesus. Let patience therefore do her perfect work; that is, suffer all things with quiet patience for the duration of this suffering, for the victory and the crown will ensue.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Be faithful unto death and the Lord will give you all the blessings which He promises to those who overcome. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. I will give thee a crown of life. He...shall not be hurt of the second death. To him...will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it; to him will I give power over the nations: Confession, and conduct and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. The same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. Him...will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name. To him...will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22). Behold, such are the invaluable promises which God makes relative to faithfulness and the endurance of a small measure of suffering. Therefore, be faithful unto death. I conclude with the benediction of the apostle: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you, Amen" (1 Peter 5:10-11).

Beloved brothers who are adorned with glorious, divine luster, I remain with my whole heart, Your loving fellow brother in Christ.

Final Exhortation to Believers

Citizens of the Netherlands, we shall now turn again to you. If this discourse has stirred up your heart and you have become desirous to confess the Lord Jesus, make work of this at once. You are living in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation which neither knows God and the way of salvation, nor has a desire after godliness. Come out from among her, having as your objective to confess Jesus by a godly life, so that every one may come under conviction by reason of your self-denial, humility, meekness, love, and good-naturedness; and so that everyone may perceive the heavenly nature which is within you. Speak of Christ, of the necessity and efficacy of His suffering, and of the nature of faith and regeneration.

Join yourself to the godly so that it may become manifest that you are one with them in your support for Christ and your opposition to the world. Remain with the true church and be diligent in attending public worship and in partaking of the Lord's Supper. Thereby one confesses the Lord Jesus. To separate yourself from her and to remain on your own is a quiet denial of Christ and His cause. If shame and injury come upon you due to your confession, rejoice in this, for it is a small beginning of martyrdom. When the Lord brings persecution upon the church by the world, if errors are stubbornly adhered to in the church and if she persecutes such ministers and others who promote the truth and godliness -- then oppose such and be a companion of those who fear the Lord and profess His truth. If you are cast out by those who persecute you, are compelled to join them, are robbed of your possessions due to refusal to do so, are cast into prisons, are treated as criminals -- yes, are threatened with the sword, the gallows, and torture, or even put to death -- then pause for a moment and reflect upon the fact that the Lord calls you to martyrdom. It is one and the same thing whether persecution takes place by those from within or from without by the antichrist. Your confession is the same, your faithfulness is the same, and your reward is the same. Do not be disturbed if men cause you to suffer under an evil name, for that is an old practice. The Lord Jesus was also persecuted and killed due to an evil reputation, for they said, "We do not stone thee for any good work, but for such and such a reason." The old pretenses are: "You are disobedient to your government, you are resisting her, you are instigating rebellion, you are causing schism in the church, and you are promoting soul-damning errors and heresies, seeking to promote them. Enough of this fuss; away with him." I repeat, do not be troubled concerning them, but remain steadfast in cleaving to the truth, as well as in bearing witness to it in words, conduct, and suffering.

If persecutions proceed from the antichrist, you are permitted to flee as far as you can in order that you may be spared for better circumstances. However, do not flee where you feel you can best get through the world, but whereto the godly flee, where there is a church, or wherever there is a possibility to institute one. Do not esteem worldly possessions that highly that you would bring yourself into danger for them.

One may flee the persecutions of the antichrist; however, you may not do so if persecutions arise within the church, where the antichrist already has been eliminated and cast out -- who now does nothing else but quarrel with fire and sword. One may not flee persecutions arising within the church, but must stay in order to bear witness against the persecutors -- and if necessary, to seal the truth with his death. New persecutions require new martyrs. If, however, we cannot escape the hands of the antichrist by way of fleeing, we must know that God calls us to bear witness to His cause and to remain steadfast. When speaking of fleeing, we do not understand this to refer to ministers and elders. The exception is when their congregations, in fleeing, call them to accompany them and they thus remain with their congregations. Otherwise, they must remain with their congregations as long as they remain in those localities and are in a condition for them to do service there, even if it means the sealing of the truth with their death before their eyes. In order to arm yourself against persecutions -- whatever their nature may be -- do the following:

(1) Read frequently the Word of God. Do so not only for the strengthening of your faith, but also to be confirmed more and more in the truth, and thus to be more qualified to fight and suffer for it. It is the sword of the spiritual soldier.

(2) Frequently read books about martyrs -- be they either old or new ones -- for then you will get a lively impression of their spirit and valor, as lively as if you were present. This will enliven the heart and give a desire for martyrdom, and if your turn comes, these well-known examples will be in your memory to strengthen you. You will also observe the mistakes they have made, providing you with good beacons of warning.

(3) Have much fellowship with the godly, speak together about giving witness both in times of peace and of persecution, and encourage each other.

(4) Pray frequently that the Lord may give you a bold spirit, knowing that if the Lord would withdraw His hand, you would not be able to stand, but that even a little fear would cause you to recant. Know your weakness and distrust yourself, however much you may currently be convinced of the truth. Cleave to the Lord so that you may be faithful in the hour of temptation.

(5) Frequently exercise faith in Christ in order to be assured of being a partaker of Him, and to learn by experience how good it is to be near to the Lord, so that faith may be all the stronger -- also then when the feeling disappears and faith is assaulted from all sides.

(6) Be very diligent in sanctification, so that you may lead a blameless life and have a conscience void of offense before God and man, for "the righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1).

069. Chapter 64: Contentment

----- CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR -----

Contentment

Since profession of the truth generally has an adverse effect upon one's temporal belongings, and since this impedes so many in being bold in their profession, it is therefore necessary that we endure such adversity by being content with the will of God in regard to temporal circumstances. This we shall now discuss. The word "contentment" in Hebrew is dai, that is, fullness, abundance, and sufficiency. Frequently this word is attributed to God. The Lord calls Himself El Shaddai; that is, the God who possesses everything and who is able to bring forth everything out of His fullness. It is generally translated as "the Almighty One." In Greek the word is autarkeia which is a coalescence of two words: "being sufficient" and "self." This is indicative of having sufficiency for ourselves or with ourselves, for no one can be content unless he has enough, and we have enough if we no longer desire anything. Thus, contentment does not consist in the multitude of possessions, but in the fulfillment of desire. If the desire is great, then much is needed for the fulfillment of this desire; if it is small, only a little will suffice. A little will fill a little bottle and much is needed to fill a large barrel. Man needs but little to live in the service of God, and if his desires are commensurate with what he needs, a little is sufficient to fill his desires and his stomach.

Contentment is a Christian virtue consisting in a correspondence between the desire of God's children and their present condition--this being true because it is the will of their God in Christ and according to His sovereign determination. In this they rest with delight, in quiet confidence, joyfully, and with gratitude, trusting that the Lord will cause the present and the future to turn out to their advantage. This causes them to utilize their present condition to the advancement of their spiritual life and to the glory of God.

Contentment is a Christian virtue of God's children. The unconverted are to all good works reprobate and are not acquainted with the nature of this virtue. When they perceive it in God's children, they despise it as a low level of intelligence, day-dreaming, stoic insensitivity, and deem them unfit for loftier matters -- this being a treasure which is hidden for them. God's children, however, have this virtue in principle, and they, perceiving the beauty of this virtue, make diligent effort to possess this in greater measure. The heart is the true seat of this virtue. Contentment is not a matter of words. It is not of a compulsory nature, nor does it consist in refraining from pursuing the goods of this world. It is not a mental determination to keep ourselves satisfied, but it is a disposition of the soul. The intellect, the will, and the affections are in a contented disposition, and out of this propensity actions issue forth which are consistent with this disposition. This disposition is only to be found in the children of God -- in the godly. "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). The Object of Contentment The object of contentment is our current condition. Believers, being and remaining in the state of grace, encounter many things according to soul and body. Sometimes the condition of both agree in a general sense with their desires, and sometimes there is a very great discrepancy between the two. It is easy to be

content if the Lord grants the desire of the heart. If, however, our circumstances do not agree with our desires, it will be a difficult task to bring our desires in harmony with our circumstances. The Christian is exercised about this. Possessions do not yield contentment. Man can be either discontented or contented, irrespective of whether he is rich, of average means, or poor. One who is rich or one of average means must strive just as much to be contented with his state as the poor person in his. We may not strive to be in different circumstances, thinking that we shall then be better off. Rather, we must labor to conduct ourselves well in the condition in which we are. A poor person thinks, "If I were only of average means"; one of average means thinks, "If I were only rich"; a rich person, "If only I had more"; a single person, "If only I were married; " a married person, "If only I were single"; a sailor, "If only I had an occupation on shore"; a craftsman, "If only I were a businessman"; etc. These are foolish thoughts. Contentment does not consist in this, but in a being contented that the condition in which we are is best for us. The exhortation is as follows: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have" (Hebrews 13:5). The Nature of Contentment The nature of this virtue consists in there being harmony between our desires and our present circumstances. Man is not naturally self-sufficient; he is but a vessel into which something can be inserted. And, in order to be filled, he has desires which -- as hands -- reach out for that which he deems to be fulfilling to him. After the fall our desires have become inordinate, both in reference to the matters desired, which cannot fulfill, as well as to the manner desired; doing so too vehemently and passionately. This vice is still partially present in the children of God after regeneration and yields them much grief. They, even though they are judgmentally opposed to this, also desire much. They desire that all be well according to their aspirations. These are such, however, that they cannot be filled with that which is of the earth, whereas their desires ought to be moderated according to the good which they have -- be it much or little.

We must not eliminate all desires -- as if the absence of desire would constitute true contentment. That would be to dehumanize man and to make him less than an animal. Our desires must be contrary to that which is evil. That which is evil must be a burden to us, must grieve us; one must feel pain under it, and must have the desire to be delivered from it. That which is good must be desirable to us and our desires must be focused on its enjoyment. We must pursue these desires by using those means which are subservient to this. Thus, contentment neither excludes the having of desires nor the use of the means, but it excludes all those desires which are focused on sinful matters. This relates to all desires for all that which exceeds our needs; all vehement and passionate desires for something which normally could be lawfully desired; all mental anguish, heartache, and pouting if things do not go our way; and the use of all evil means for the fulfillment of our desire -- whereby all lawful means are neglected, and God is tempted.

However, all of this does not yet constitute contentment. Contentment consists in the correspondence of our desires with our present circumstances, and in a willingness to be in the circumstances wherein we are and in none other. Prior to being in such circumstances we may indeed have desires (a matter which we deem to be essential); however, we must do so with a true and righteous judgment. Also, if we come into difficult circumstances, we may then indeed desire to be delivered from them and to come into better circumstances. This is not contrary to being contented. However, while we are in our present circumstances -- whether they be good or evil -- we must be content with the present and regulate our desires in harmony with the conditions

in which we presently are. Even natural men -- who adhere to a *fatum stoicum* (that is, it must be this way; nothing is to be done about it) -- being desirous to quiet themselves, say, "If one cannot do what he wishes, then one's wishes must be according to his ability." Thus even they demonstrate that contentment consists in a correspondence between desires and current circumstances. The godly have much more reason to regulate their desires according to their circumstances and to cause their will to be in harmony with this -- it being the will of God. This is not only applicable to the physical but also to the spiritual. To be contented when things do not go according to our wishes is a difficult task in both respects; however, this is much more true in the spiritual realm. If we are in spiritual darkness, suffer from spiritual desertion, are spiritually assaulted, and are subject to the power of corruption, then we must also be content and regulate our desires according to our circumstances. We must do so not because such circumstances are desirable to us or ever could be, and not because we should not endeavor to be delivered from them, but because it is the will of God not to give us more grace presently, since it pleases Him to lead us along that way to salvation and the glorification of His Name.

The Foundation of Contentment The foundation upon which our present circumstances are based, and why we are satisfied with them is because that such is the will of our God in Christ Jesus, and He has directed these circumstances to be thus. Man cannot love that which is grievous and desire it as such. Rather, there is a different reason why believers embrace current circumstances which are evil and grievous -- the reason being that it thus pleases God. It is one thing to appease ourselves simply because our condition is according to God's will (which cannot be opposed), and that all must yield to God's power and hand. Then there is not a desire that such be the case, for the desires do not correspond with the circumstances. Rather, it is a being compelled to acquiesce, and this does not differ much from pagan fate. It is quite another thing to embrace the will of God as being most eminent in and of itself, and as desirable to them. In order for the will of God to be efficacious unto contentment, we must consider God to be our God -- our reconciled God in Christ Jesus. The exercise of faith is of great significance here -- be it while expressly receiving Jesus as offering Himself, and thus coming unto God, or be it that faith is operative reflexively and with assurance concerning our state of grace. The exercise of faith is also of great significance when one may consider himself as being reconciled only by virtue of the propensity of faith, apart from a renewed manifestation of assurance, and when one only cleaves to Jesus in order to have a part in Jesus, thus coming to God through Him while exercising hope. The stronger faith is, the greater the contentment with the will of God will also be. This believing disposition engenders love toward God, and love acknowledges the majesty of God and the suitableness of subjection. Love engenders a delight in the will of God, and thus love for the will of God conquers and prevails over love for self. In the meantime, one will grieve over that which is evil; this may and must remain. The love toward God's good pleasure has the upper hand, however, and therefore the desires of the believer correspond with his circumstances. He will desire it to be so -- even if it is with tears in his eyes -- because the Lord wills it to be so. This will is precious to believers above everything else and makes all that is bitter to be sweet and that which is heavy, light. Observe this in the perfect example of the Lord Jesus: "For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:38); "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

The Effects or Fruits of Contentment The effects or fruits of contentment are:

(1) A being pleased with given circumstances since it is the will of God. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

(2) A quiet confidence. This is not a being careless and insensitive, but an active embracing of the will of God which causes believers to be silent -- not reluctantly or in discouragement, but in believing submission. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Psalms 39:9).

(3) A cheerful or joyful disposition. This does not pertain to one's tribulations as such. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous" (Hebrews 12:11). The will of God makes that which is bitter sweet, however, and therefore the apostle says, "We glory in tribulations also" (Romans 5:3); "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2).

(4) Gratitude. A Christian views the hand of God as being the hand of a loving father. He knows from experience that it is good for him to be afflicted and that He afflicts in faithfulness. Therefore he gives thanks to God in everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18), and says with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

(5) A resting and trusting in the Lord's providence. A contented person finds such delight in the will of God that he has neither concern for the present nor for the future, since he believes that God is his Father and that therefore all -- whatever God brings upon him -- will be well and to his advantage. He is therefore confident and well-satisfied. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust" (Psalms 91:1-2).

(6) Spiritual growth. By way of contentment we shall escape many obstacles which hinder us in the practice of godliness. Malcontent either engenders many sins and keeps us in a sinful condition, or it impedes the practice of many virtues. By way of contentment we shall "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us," which will enable us to "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:10). Only when we bear our cross with contentment, will the cross be to our benefit and we be sanctified by it (Hebrews 12:10). If we may glory in tribulation then tribulation will work "patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Romans 5:3-4). Then the cross becomes a school. "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law" (Psalms 94:12).

(7) That God is glorified thereby, for believers thus demonstrate that the Lord is sovereign and may do with His creature according to His good pleasure. They then manifest that God is all-sufficient and that, when having God, we can miss everything else. Then it will become manifest that God is good, faithful, true, wise, and omnipotent. "That the trial of your faith ... might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7); "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:16). The truth we have presented and explained is suitable to convict the unconverted of their evil condition and the godly of their deficiency and sin.

Discontentment: A Characteristic of the Unconverted The unconverted are discontented.

(1) Something is always wrong. He either has no child or he has one too many. He has learned the wrong trade, for "if I were a storekeeper, knew a trade, or had such and such a skill, then I would be much better off. In whatever I begin, I go against the stream; where will it ultimately end? Such and such get all the customers and enjoy love and esteem; however, they turn their backs upon me. Everyone opposes me; they shortchange me, deal with me and my family in an ungodly manner. They slander me, rob me of my honor, and everyone is after me." They are always

surrounded by bears so that neither day nor night can they find rest due to external and internal unrest.

(2) Another person may be lethargic and lazy -- and thus insensitive.

(3) Another person has a sweet and tender disposition and can endure everything. (4) Others use reason and perceive how matters are, or else they perceive that there is no way out. Therefore, patience par force; that is, there is nothing to be done about it. Or they will engage themselves in such a manner that all will go well.

(5) Others, when the shore eludes them, hold on to a floating patch of grass and occupy themselves with one thing or another.

(6) Others become completely discouraged and despondent and would be inclined to hang themselves in order to bring their suffering to an end.

(7) Others, even though they can handle the present, are concerned about the future. Every evil tiding causes them to tremble, robbing them of the peaceful enjoyment of the present.

(8) Others want to find their satisfaction in eating and drinking, money, prestige, and the gratification of their sinful lusts.

(9) Others seek gratification in the work of their hands and burrow as moles in the earth to derive their gratification from that. Or they seek it in men by being obsequious, flattering, and by worshipping them in order to gain their favor. Every unconverted person seeks rest in this manner without finding it, and his contentment is nothing but unrest.

(10) Another will fare somewhat better and, according to his saying, is satisfied with the will of God -- even though he has never sought nor obtained reconciliation with God and therefore cannot expect God's help or favor.

All whose disposition agrees with what has just been stated ought to know:

(1) That you are without God and Christ, and that God is not for you, but against you. If He stirs things up, who will then quiet matters down? If He forsakes you, what will then be of assistance to you? Then you cannot but be filled with fear -- within and without.

(2) That all your tossing and turning, and all your contentment and discontentment, are nothing but sin and filth in which you wallow as a swine wallows in the mud. It makes you increasingly abominable in the eyes of God and increasingly a stench for the truly godly. And if you imagine your current circumstances to be either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, the outcome of all that you pursue will have evil consequences for you and will issue forth nothing but discontent, sorrow, terror, apprehension, and fear -- until eternal damnation will rob you of all that with which you now occupy yourself to some degree. The wrath of God and the fire of hell will then forever occupy you. Therefore, turn to the Lord and seek reconciliation with God in Christ. He will then be your satisfaction, and being satisfied in Him, all things will work together for good. The Godly: Also Subject to Discontentment

I shall now address the godly. It is sad that those who have God as a reconciled God, who have chosen God to be their only and all-sufficient portion (while rejecting all that is not God), yet have

so much discontentment, because they, both according to body and soul, do not fare in this world as their nature would desire to have it.

(1) Their eyes and heart look too much to that which is of the world; that is, to that which is lofty, beautiful, and good, as well as to food, drink, and clothing -- as if that could yield them any satisfaction.

(2) They also want to have their way, and if this does not occur and men do not yield to them, they are sorrowful, fretful, and angry.

(3) They eat their bread with discontentment since the quantity and the taste is not such as they would desire it to be.

(4) They tremble and quiver as far as the future is concerned. They say, "What shall we eat and wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

(5) Anxiety troubles the heart, and concerns take away the joy of life.

(6) They waver in regard to God's providence.

(7) They immediately perceive God as being angry with them.

(8) They reject their spiritual state.

(9) They make themselves vulnerable to the assaults of the devil who then easily gets hold of them, tossing them to and fro.

(10) Spiritual life will lose its vigor, and if the Lord were not faithful and immutable, they would be corrupted in body and soul -- so severely can worldly tribulations injure them. In such a condition they delight in being pitied and desire to be comforted, but in a manner concurring with the receipt of their desire -- then they would be encouraged. Sorrow must first disappear, the matter must first be attained, they must first see and possess that from which they will live, and then comfort will have an effect. Then they would be able to live carefree and serve the Lord. The Godly Exhorted Not to Be Fretful

What shall I say? Shall I pity you? That I shall do, but in such a manner that I shall neither harm nor encourage you in your sin. Rather, I shall do so by stirring you up to overcome these unproductive anxieties, this wicked discontentment, and these concerns which drag you down.

First, as we uncover all this, you yourself will perceive that you are yet very carnal and that you focus your attention upon things which are insignificant. Are you then still of this world as others are whose portion is in this life? Is that which is of the world able to satisfy you? When you entered into the covenant of grace, did you not stipulate that whatever would befall you according to the body would be to your satisfaction, or did you change your mind and have you rescinded this? Why should there be more concern for your body than for your soul? Why should bodily deficiencies be more grievous than the deficiencies of the soul? Be ashamed before God and man that you are yet so carnal.

Secondly, do you not perceive that this is idolatry? There is a secret departure from God, a neglect of depending upon Him, and a secret denial of God's providence. There is a secret accusation of

cruelty and unwillingness on His part to care for you, of mutability, and of not being faithful to His promises. Under pretense of being concerned about necessities, there is a desire to rely upon temporal things and a living by bread alone -- and even if one does not solely put his trust in temporal things, it is nevertheless partially true. God and the things of this world together must grant you satisfaction. Or else, do you serve God in order that He would give you temporal things? What an evil disposition this is! How far removed this is from Asaph's disposition: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalms 73:25-26)! Upon coming before God, be therefore ashamed about your sinful disposition.

Thirdly, these concerns and anxieties which cause one to tremble issue forth from a proud heart -- relative both to God and to man. It is pride relative to God, as it implies that one is worthy of something and that God is obligated to serve us according to our wishes. If one were truly conscious of his sinfulness and guilt, and would reflect upon this, he would come to a lower place and sink away in amazement that God has still borne with us -- yes, and has given us so much above others who have much less than we do -- considering that we have sinned so grievously and are perhaps even more sinful than they are.

It is also a manifestation of pride relative to our neighbor, for we look toward those who are superior to us and ask, "Why not I as well as he?" Very seldom does the concern truly pertain to what is presently lacking, for as far as temporal needs are concerned, little suffices. Instead, it pertains to our lust to possess, to have as much as the other, and the retention of dignity by not being despised due to being poor and having to depend on the church or others. It is true that this, when considered in and of itself, should not be a matter of indifference to us. It is God's will that we have desires for our well-being and that our journey through this world be with dignity. However, we must overcome and deny these desires when God wishes to humble us and keep us humble. Therefore, concealed under the cover of being concerned about necessities, dignity, and being able to serve God, is pride. God wishes to be served by the one while having a higher position in the world, and by the other while in a more lowly position. The will of God must be our delight in whatever circumstances we are. Discouragement about being in a lower position is nothing but pride. Therefore, become humble and you will be delivered from many unprofitable cares.

Fourthly, all your concerns are in vain and you will not gain one penny by them. God has already decreed from eternity how much you will have. There is a "convenient" portion (Proverbs 30:8) which God has appointed for everyone and which He gives at His time. No one will take away this portion from you nor will it be diminished. With all your concerns and anxiety you will neither add one nickel nor break or change the determinate counsel of God. There were covetous Israelites who gathered much manna; however, when they came home, they had no more than their measure. There were others who, either due to lack of strength or being at a location where not much had fallen, had gathered little. When they came home their measure was also full. The one had no leftovers and the other did not lack anything (2 Corinthians 8:15). "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek" (Matthew 6:25; Matthew 6:27; Matthew 6:32).

Fifthly, you dishonor God and harm yourself, for by way of these nagging concerns you show that it does not suffice you to have God alone as your portion and that you cannot be satisfied with Him unless you have as many temporal goods as you deem necessary. Would it not be a dishonor to a father who has sufficient wealth if he were to permit his children to suffer want in spite of their cries and supplications? Are you then not also the cause that others by means of your dissatisfaction and fruitless concerns would begin to think about the Lord in this manner, as if He had neither love, mercy, compassion, nor care for His children? You would glorify Him, on the contrary, if you would be satisfied with your present circumstances, and if your felicity consisted in the enjoyment of God Himself. As far as you yourself are concerned -- you bring yourself into continual unrest, apprehension, fear, and anxiety. You rob yourself of delighting and rejoicing in God. You impede your growth, since your disposition displeases God, and renders you unfit to appropriately use the means for spiritual growth. Your concerns will cause the Word and your good inner motions to be choked, thus rendering them unfruitful (Matthew 13:22). Unbelief has opportunity to surface and will toss the anxious soul to and fro. The desire for religious exercise decreases and free access to God is hindered. The thoughts that these adversities come upon you in God's wrath cause the soul to tremble. Thus, to a great extent quietness, dependence upon God, a childlike confidence in God, and walking with God disappear. Would you lose all this for a greater or lesser quantity of bread, for getting your way, for your own honor, and for the future, of which you do not know how it will be? Oh, these matters are too insignificant to permit the well-being of your soul to dissipate.

Sixthly, after the Lord will have delivered you from your perplexity -- which He certainly will do in His time -- then, due to your previous dissatisfaction and grumbling, you will have made yourself incapable of being truly grateful to the Lord, and a sense of shame about your prior distrust will cause your soul new grief. It can also happen that the Lord, upon having fulfilled your inordinate desire, will send a leanness into your soul. You will then be confounded and wish that you were in the previous strait when you were in a better spiritual condition. Therefore conduct yourself well while you are in a school in which you can learn much that you cannot learn in a time of prosperity. Take heed therefore, and be on guard not to be murmurers and complainers about your condition while walking according to your lusts (Jude 1:16). Rather, possess your soul in patience and be satisfied with the present. You will then be fit to serve the Lord in both prosperity and adversity.

Exhortation to Strive for Contentment

Therefore, children of God -- either rich, of the middle class, of limited means, insignificant, poor, oppressed, or tossed with tempest -- whoever you may be and whatever your circumstances may be, you are all in need of an exhortation, for no circumstances in and of themselves yield contentment. Learn to adjust your desires to your circumstances -- regardless of what they may be -- and do not endeavor to adjust your circumstances to your desires, for there would be no end to that. Cast dissatisfaction far away from you as being a harmful pestilence for your spiritual life, and possess your soul in contentment. To that end you must first of all meditate upon all forceful exhortations. Hear them from the mouth of the Lord, speaking to you in this way: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5); "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalms 55:22); "Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5); "Therefore take no thought ... for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:31-32); "Bread shall be given him; his waters

shall be sure" (Isaiah 33:16); "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Do not readily pass over these texts, but give attention to each one -- yes, to every individual word. Take note of these words as being addressed to you by the God of heaven. He not only commands you to take no thought, but also to be content. Does not the command of God suffice so as to motivate you to render obedience? Is not His exhortation sufficient to stir you up? Take also notice, however, of the promises which the omnipotent, good, and true God makes in addition to this: "He shall bring it to pass; He shall sustain thee; He shall not forsake thee; your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things; He careth for you." Are the promises of God not enough for you? Would He say it and not do it? Therefore, be satisfied, delight yourself, and rejoice in His promises, which will most certainly be fulfilled. It is true that the Lord does not always fulfill His promises when we judge it to be most suitable for us. However, the Lord will most certainly do it at His time. It is thus best if we do not receive it at our time; there is yet something to be learned by us and we must first be capable of using the promises well. It is the Lord's wisdom and goodness that He postpones the matter; however, the fulfillment is beyond doubt. He has not promised to give you a certain quantity, but rather as much as you will have need of. That ought to be sufficient for you and He will most certainly give it to you. Therefore, "though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk 2:3). Even if you do not perceive any means by which or from where it will come, He is almighty. He can also do it without means and sustain you and your children without food. Or else He will provide the means -- even if ravens would have to bring it to you; even if He would cause bread to rain down from heaven; even if He would have to multiply flour and oil; or even if He would have to close the mouths of the lions and cause the fire to have no power. Therefore, be still and see the salvation of the Lord.

Secondly, is not God, who is your Father, sovereign? Would you wish that He were not so? You will indeed reply, "No I am glad that He is so and do not wish to stand above Him. I approve of His sovereignty, and even if He were to kill me, I would worship His sovereign majesty." However, here the will of God stands over against your will. You say, "I wish to have this," and God says, "I do not wish to give this to you; such and such is the measure that you will have." Whose will shall have the upper hand, however -- God's will or yours? Since you know that you cannot prevail against God, will you therefore fret and grumble, as children sometimes do toward their parents? That would indeed be a striving against God. Since He is sovereign, however, His will is supreme, and you approve of it with delight, subject your will to His will, and will what He wills. Delight yourself in your circumstances, since it is the will of God concerning you -- especially since God is your Father to whom you pray daily, "Thy will be done." Since you subject yourself to His will in prayer, should you then not also subject yourself to His will in His dealings with you -- even if they are not according to your desires? Submit yourself therefore to God and glorify Him in doing so.

Thirdly, did not God, by saying, "I am your God!" cause Himself to be your portion so that you would enjoy all felicity in Him? If you have the all-sufficient One as your salvation, are you then still in need of anything else? Is He not better to you than a thousand worlds, a piece of money, or a piece of bread? Therefore, speak and practice what the godly did. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him" (Lamentations 3:24). As you consider God -- the only blessed God, the God of full salvation -- to be your portion, turn to Him in times of distress, take refuge with Him, delight yourself in Him by faith -- even if it pleases Him not to give you the measure of enjoying Him as you would desire. This is laid away for you in eternity. Delight yourself in having

Him as your portion, and let this satisfy you while foregoing the things of the world which you would desire to have. To that end, hold before yourself the example of Habakkuk: "Although ... the fields shall yield no meat ... yet I will rejoice in the Lord" (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Fourthly, the very God who has given you what is most precious to Him, namely, His own Son Jesus Christ, in order to deliver you from your wretched state and to bring you to eternal glory (which He has laid away as an inheritance for you (Romans 8:32)) -- would He permit that you would truly lack anything as far as the needs of your body? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Romans 8:32). Behold, Christ has been given you as a Savior, you are partakers of all the benefits of the covenant of grace, and salvation is your eternal inheritance. Is that not sufficient for you? Must a piece of money and a piece of bread yet be added to this before you will be satisfied? Be ashamed that you think such thoughts. Would He who has given you that which is superior and eternal deny you that which is needful for your body? Would not He who has given you your life and body, also give you food and clothing? "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment" (Matthew 6:25). How do you dare to think such a thing? Therefore, be content with your present circumstances, and it will suffice you. Adjust your desires to your circumstances.

Fifthly, what is the world to you? What is it that you are so desirous for? What is it that you are so concerned about? Is it not all transitory? You yourself will not remain here eternally, and you, as well as all that exists in the world, do but exist for a moment. Why then do you trouble yourself so much about it? When death comes, it will not grieve you that you had so little in this life, nor will it render you joy if you had an abundance; you will not die any more peacefully because of it. If you were to consider every day as being your last and you were to imagine continually that you are presently dying, you would not be disquieted by whether you have either more or less -- which you presently are doing. Therefore, remain focused upon the transitory nature of your existence and the insignificance of all that is of the world. Simultaneously focus upon the promises of God: He, as an added benefit, will bestow the things of the world upon you as you have need of them, and will care for you. You will then learn to be content.

Sixthly, has a godly person ever lacked anything? If you read the entire Bible, you will not find a single example. Consider your own case. God cared for you when you were small. He provided clothing for your convenience, breasts to be suckled, a bosom at which you could be cherished, bread and clothing as you grew up, and He has nourished you from the moment of your existence until now. And when you came into perplexing circumstances, did He not frequently deliver you? Would God then cease at this moment? He who grants the young ravens food when they cry to Him, provides food for the birds of heaven and sustains all that lives, who grants the ungodly food and gladness, would He forget you? Would He refuse to give you that which you need? Therefore, be content, trust in Him, and be satisfied with His dispensation. Even if the measure is not according to your desires, it will be as much as you have need of. That is sufficient and that ought to be sufficient for you. The Blessed Benefits Issuing Forth from Contentment

Seventhly, contentment engenders many good things. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28).

(1) There will be a quiet spirit, which is of great price in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:4). There will be a great inner delight. A contented person tramples upon all that is of the world, lives above that

which is visible, and is beyond the reach of all the arrows of the enemies.

(2) There will be alienation from the world. Man by nature is greatly occupied with his body and with making provision for it by way of temporal things. There is still much to be found of this in a regenerate person. If, however, he becomes content with the will of God, he then begins to disassociate himself from the world and does not seek gratification in it, but sojourns in it as a stranger.

(3) It is a state in which there is prayer and communion with God. Since God is the believer's portion he delights himself in this and observes God's hand in all that he encounters, believing that it is to his advantage -- even when a knife is used to cut open a boil. If he is in need of something, he prays in faith and believingly anticipates that which he has need of.

(4) There is a frequent experience of the help of God. To perceive that God looks upon him, hears his prayer, and delivers him, is ten times more precious to a believer, yielding him incomparably more joy than if he were to be translated from a state of extreme poverty to extreme wealth. This experience strengthens him in believing that the Lord will also deliver him time and again in the future. He who has delivered me from the bear and the lion will also deliver me from this Philistine. He who has delivered me from six troubles will not forsake me in the seventh.

(5) There will be gratitude. If we lack everything and see no way out, and God then grants us His help, a piece of bread will taste better than all delicacies enjoyed in prosperity. Then a shelter behind which there is refuge against rain and wind is more delightful and convenient than a palace previously would have been. The soul then lifts herself up to the Lord, acknowledging Him as the Giver. Then the soul will rejoice in the Lord and acknowledge herself not worthy of the least of all the Lord's mercies. The confession will be, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (Psalms 103:2;Psalms 103:4).

(6) There is a longing for the state of glory. Then the believer will perceive that it is not to be found here below, but in heaven. He will therefore long to depart and to be with Christ. He will comfort himself with this expectation and will thus be strengthened and encouraged to endure all tribulations. He will then rejoice that rest has been laid away for him, and he will be hastening to enter into that rest.

(7) There is the manifestation of holiness. As the cares of this world are the thorns which choke the good seed, contentment likewise renders one fit to deny self, to be humble, to trust in God, to delight himself in God as being his portion, to freely own the Lord's cause, and to demonstrate that there is an all-sufficiency in God. Here is the fountain of all godliness.

Objection: Some may perhaps say, "I would indeed be content if I but knew that I was a child of God, that the Lord was near to me, and that He would cause me to sense His goodness."

Answer: This is as much as to say, "If I were only in heaven, I would be satisfied." No, we must find satisfaction here below in the will of God, by faith. Unbelief concerning your state issues forth from discontent and not from your lack. As long as you are not satisfied except your desire be fulfilled, so long will you also be tossed to and fro as far as your spiritual state is concerned, and your soul will be as "a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:6). In order for

faith to be exercised, you must be content with the present, and upon being content you must then exercise faith; these two belong together. May the Lord grant you both!

Objection: Others will say, "The Lord does not hear me, I am not delivered, and my perplexity becomes greater all the time. How can I then be content?"

Answer: Do you now see that your contentment is contingent upon possession? No, not to possess and yet to be satisfied with the will of God, trusting that there will be deliverance -- that is true contentment. The reason the Lord does not give it to you is because you do not yet need it. The Lord wants to teach you to be content with Him alone. He wishes to guide you into the proper use of what is good. He wishes to comfort and help you in a different manner from what you would prescribe to God in your foolishness.

Guidelines for Learning How to Be Content If you wish to learn how to be content, then practice the following:

- (1) Always consider what you deserve, and you will then be happy that you are not yet in hell.
- (2) Look at others, and you will not want to exchange your condition with theirs. The one will have much less, and will be much more wretched than you are according to the body and will be an example to you as far as contentment is concerned. The other person will be without grace, and you would certainly not wish to trade places with him.
- (3) Live only by the day and do not take upon you the difficulties of two, ten, or a hundred days. This would be too great a burden for you. Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.
- (4) Your difficulty is perhaps not as great as you make it out to be -- this in consequence of your desire being excessive. You must therefore make more of an effort to adjust your desire to your circumstances -- considering it to be the will of God -- rather than seeking to improve your circumstances in accordance with your desire.
- (5) Make use of the means with all diligence and faithfulness so that your conscience will not accuse you, and leave the outcome to the Lord. Trust in His promise and He will make it well.
- (6) Let your focus continually be upon heaven, and consider the insignificance of all that is upon earth. The nearer you are to God, the more you will be at a distance from the creature. Everything will pass away, but he that doeth the will of God shall abide forever.

070. Chapter 65: Self-denial

----- CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE -----

Self-denial The denial of self issues forth out of love for the will of God, and a being content with that will. In Greek we have the word *aparneomai*, which is derived from *arneomai*. This means a total, complete, and radical rejecting and casting away of property and honor. It means a relinquishing dominion over, denial of, renunciation of, a not knowing or acknowledging something to be one's property, and thus a forsaking of and desisting from it (Hebrews 11:24). It is also referred to with other words, such as the mortifying of one's members which are upon earth (Colossians 3:5), the putting off of the old man (Ephesians 4:22), and a crucifying of the flesh with the affections (Galatians 5:24).

Self-denial Defined

Self-denial is a Christian virtue, granted by God to His children, whereby they, out of love for God's will, neither give heed nor yield to their intellect, will, and inclinations insofar as they are in opposition to the will of God -- and oppose and suppress them instead. They do so by a voluntary forsaking and rejection of all that pertains to their natural well-being, if God's cause demands such from them -- this to the honor of God and the welfare of their neighbors.

Self-denial is, first of all, a Christian virtue. Pagans have observed that their inner peace has been disturbed by their lusts. Some therefore sought to extinguish them by way of reason and appeared to practice self-denial in regard to some things. However, it did not issue forth from the right motive -- love for the will of God. They did not have the right objective in view, but rather it was a seeking of self (be it in a different manner from others), resting in this as their peace and seeking to be honored by men. Their self-denial was thus a splendid sin which had a counterfeit luster, and was not accompanied by deeds. Our reference here, however, is to the self-denial of a Christian as being exclusive of all inordinate self-love (and self-reliance which issues forth from this) and seeking of self. Such self-denial issues forth from love for the will of God and culminates in the glorification of God.

Secondly, the moving cause of self-denial is the Lord and not man himself. Man is too deeply immersed in self-love to be able to rid himself from it. And even if he could divorce himself from this, he would not be able to bring himself into the opposite virtuous disposition. Self-denial does not consist in a negation, but is rather a propensity. It is the Lord who grants this grace to His children, for He grants them spiritual life in regeneration (Ephesians 2:1; James 1:18). Through this virtuous disposition He causes them to be active and thus works in them to will and to do (Php 2:13). He particularly works in them the mortification of sin: "... but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13). God, having given life in the soul, stirs up this life and renders it active by His prevenient and cooperative power. The believer, uniting himself by faith with Christ -- and through Christ with God -- takes hold of His strength as his own, and by reason of this received strength is active in mortifying sin within him. God is thus the

original cause, and man having been affected by this power, is himself active in the casting out of sinful self-love and its consequences, as well as in purifying and adorning himself with the contrary virtue. "Let us cleanse ourselves" (2 Corinthians 7:1); "... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do" (Php 2:12-13).

Thirdly, the subjects of self denial are the children of God. The unconverted are void of all spiritual life and therefore the motions and operation of life cannot come forth from them. Rather, it is a gift to God's children as presently being in a converted and believing state. They are those who are Christ's disciples and follow Him (Matthew 16:24). Self-denial does not consist in a few deeds, but is rather a propensity and disposition of the heart. Their heart has been turned away from self-love and a seeking of self -- albeit imperfectly. The one has made more progress in this respect than the other. The stronger this disposition is, the stronger and more pure the deeds will also be. What is true for all virtues is true for this virtue: In their essence they have been infused by God and are strengthened by way of much exercise. This is the reason why the one progresses in the one virtue and the other in another virtue. Once this virtue has become deeply rooted, the person who practices self-denial will have much inner peace. He will not so readily be enticed to entertain ulterior motives, or be envious, wrathful, and guilty of misuse of words -- all of which frequently issue forth in a rash manner due to self-love and a seeking of self. He does not fear evil tidings, harm, or whatever may externally affect him, but is quiet and thoughtful, while at the same time engaging in his duty with boldness. All of these do not move him, and all that he does renders him pleasant to all -- before God and before men.

Fourthly, the object of self-denial is man himself. God has created self-love in man, and mandates the exercise of this love in the second table of the law by giving command that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). After the fall, however, love has become entirely distorted, as it causes man to be opposed to God, to make himself as God, and wanting all to end in man. This principle governs fallen man in his operations, and he wants everyone to function toward him in harmony with this principle.

What Self-Denial is Not

One must not deny his spiritual self, that is, one's regenerated self, which Paul refers to as I in Romans 7:20. This is the sin of many true, but nevertheless weak, believers: Upon falling into a sin, the arising of a sinful thought, and an assault by the devil, they immediately reject their spiritual state and think, "I have no grace; I have deceived myself and it has been nothing more than imagination." To do this is to deny received benefits and in some measure a grieving of the Holy Ghost. This is a manifestation of pride, for it suggests that we are naturally much more virtuous than others, as well as that the former good spiritual frames, motions, and deeds had come about by our own strength. Therefore, refrain from rejecting your spiritual state; preserve what you have, and render honor to God.

One must also not deny his natural self; that is, the inclination to promote the well-being of the body or one's health, the inclination for food, drink, clothing, etc. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" (Ephesians 5:29). If, however, this inclination stands in opposition to Christ and His cause, we must deny all this and deem it to be but loss and dung.

We must also not deny the desire for the well-being of our soul, the fear of hell, the desire for faith, hope, and love, and a desire for communion with God and felicity. This was one of the erroneous arguments of the Labbadists whose activities the Lord has overturned.

They insisted that love for all this -- since it would make us happy -- should be rejected as impure and abominable before God and that one ought not to come to Christ with such love in order to become a partaker of Him. They insisted that one should first have died to and denied this, for else one would make Christ a servant of sin and of the sinner; or else, one should only come to Christ from the perspective of and out of love for the glorification of God for His very own sake. In this they hindered poor souls, as they would first teach the denial of love for these spiritual benefits and their salvation, bring them to view the glory of God and stir up love to glorify Him for His very own sake. Only then they would lead them to Christ. They thus misled longing souls, and made themselves guilty of the damnation of the souls of those who, as a consequence of this, have died unconverted among them. They thus opposed the Word of God which stimulates man, either by fear for evil or by a desire for salvation, to run to Christ and to believe in Him. For a more comprehensive treatment of this refer to our work Doctrine and Life of the Labbadists, beginning with page 15. The Specific Aspects of Self-Denial

Instead one must deny his sinful self; that is, there must be a denial of the old Adam in general with all his motions and desires -- whatever the nature and contrary to whatever commandment these motions may be, and whatever the faculty of the soul and of the body may be by which such motions are executed.

Specifically, one must, first of all, deny his natural and darkened intellect; that is, to refuse to make a rule of doctrine and life. We do so when we say, "I understand =x' to mean this, and I cannot comprehend it any other way. This I may abstain from, this I may do, and this is not sin." One then relies upon such argumentation. However, the natural man does not understand the things which are of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). We must renounce this corrupt intellect and not give heed to or follow it. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Secondly, we must deny our own will. Man wants to have his own way -- no matter what the cost. If he has an impure lust, it must be satisfied. If he has the lust of gluttony, it must be satisfied. He wants to do whatever pleases him, and he says, "Who is lord over me?" Others must also behave according to his wishes and, as a king, he would wish to prescribe laws and to have that all would end in him, as if he were a god. If this does not occur, he becomes dissatisfied, envious, wrathful, and vengeful. The man who seeks himself thus becomes an abomination before God and man. The Lord Jesus said, "... not as I will" (Matthew 26:39), and He teaches us to pray, "Thy will be done" (Matthew 6:10).

Thirdly, we must deny our inclinations. Natural man is empty and desires to be filled. He does not know God as the all-sufficient One and he has no desire after God. His passions therefore focus on the creature and he says to whoever appears to be capable of entertaining him, "be thou my satisfaction." He does not cease desiring until he gets what he wants; and if he does not get it, he becomes restless and fretful. To such inclinations we must not yield. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you ... abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

Fourthly, we must deny our own honor. There is no sin more common to man and more deeply rooted in the heart than a desire to be honored. Even if one has the most despicable disposition and even if his conduct is abominable, he nevertheless wishes to be honored and somewhat esteemed. In all that he does he has his honor in view, wanting others to acknowledge and treat him according to what he imagines himself to be and considers himself worthy of. He who fails to do so, or does something which appears to dishonor him, must expect his wrath. Such an objective and such a desire we must purge ourselves of. "Let us not be desirous of vain glory" (Galatians 5:26); "Let nothing be done through ... vainglory" (Php 2:3).

Fifthly, we must deny our desire for possessions. Man's corrupt nature focuses on the physical. He desires to possess much, puts his trust in it, and determines to live from it. If he lacks all this, he is discouraged; all his passions, objectives, and seeking are solely focused on possessions. If he acquires it, he is encouraged and rests in it. A person who denies himself, however, is satisfied with necessities and purges himself of a desire to have much. If he does not have much, he is well satisfied; and if he prospers, he does not set his heart upon it. We find the following exhortation in 1 Timothy 6:8-9 : "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." If the cause of Christ requires it, the person who denies self will relinquish all that he has -- even that which is needful -- and deem all that stands in opposition to Christ to be no more than loss and dung, as Paul did (Php 3:8).

Sixthly, we must deny our friends. Man will very readily cleave to another person who either loves or pleases him. Father, mother, children, husband, or wife are very dear to the heart. God commands appropriate love in the second table of the law; however, we so readily make an idol of them, cleave to them in an inordinate manner, and rely upon and put our trust in them. The person who denies self purges himself of such inordinate cleaving -- particularly if it draws him away from the genuine practice of religion and the profession of the Lord Jesus. Then he knows no father, child, or friend. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37); "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26).

Seventhly, we must deny our life. It is the duty of a Christian to preserve his life. To cleave to it, however, as if it were tantamount to salvation and felicity itself -- and thus to quake and tremble when thinking about death -- issues forth either out of ignorance concerning eternal glory, from not believing that we are partakers of this, or due to a condemning conscience conveying to us that we shall be eternally damned if we die in such a condition. A Christian must therefore not be so attached to his life, but must by faith commend it into the hands of his Father and rest in this. If then the cause of Christ is at stake, and we must either forsake our life or forsake and deny Christ, the person who denies self will surrender his life and will be glad that he has something precious which he may yield to Christ. "If any man come to Me, and hate not ... his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26); "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself" (Acts 20:24). The Motivation for Self-Denial: Love for the Will of God The essence of self-denial is that its acts ensue out of love for the will of God. It is the believer's desire neither to give heed nor yield to his desires concerning the aforementioned matters, insofar as they are contrary to the will of God, but rather to oppose and purge himself of them.

(1) He does so out of love for the will of God. Man will not forsake that which he loves except there be something superior which he loves more. A person who denies self loves God above all that exists -- also far above himself. Since he loves God above all, he also loves God's will above all -- also above his own will. Since God loves holiness and hates sin, and since God commands the one thing and forbids the other, he also loves the one and hates the other.

(2) From this love proceeds that he does not give heed to his lusts. He does not lend his ear to them, nor does he even consider whether he will conform to his desires.

(3) He does not yield to them. He does not do the will of the flesh nor of the mind. He is neither a servant of his desires and lusts, nor does he obey them.

(4) Rather, he resists his lusts when they surface, suppresses them, and promptly casts them out -- as one, without hesitation, would shake off fire from his clothes.

(5) Yes, he roots them out, for he cannot endure that lusts continually arise in his evil heart. He is not satisfied with rejecting lusts as they arise, but does not even want them to arise. He therefore seeks for a purer motive. He purifies his heart by faith, strives for communion with God, and endeavors to fear and love God, so that his heart may attain to a holier disposition. Desires will arise out of such a heart which are more holy and less sinful, and thereby the regenerated man will have more power to deny the lusts of the flesh.

(6) Yes, if the cause of Christ necessitates it, he will be more ready and willing to depart from all that which he was permitted to have and enjoy without sinning in doing so -- it being the will of God that he surrender all for Him and His cause. In this manner the person who denies self will know whether having possessions is contrary to or agrees with the will of God. The Objective of Self-Denial: The Glory of God and the Welfare of Our Neighbor The objective of self-denial is to glorify God and to promote the welfare of our neighbor.

(1) The objective is not to eradicate all desires -- and thus to be without fear for evil and a desire for that which is good. To do this would be to dehumanize man and to render him incapable of serving God according to His will and being of benefit to his neighbor.

(2) The objective is also not to receive honor from man, nor to be esteemed as a saint; for that would be the ultimate in hypocrisy.

(3) The objective is also not to merit thereby something before God. Such is the practice of some within blind popery, who, due to their erroneous objective, use erroneous means. They deprive themselves of lawful foods, walk about in a hairy garment, do not sleep upon a bed, scourge themselves, and perform similar examples of will-worship, which are "not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" (Colossians 2:23).

(4) It is also not the objective to base one's salvation upon this self-denial. That would be a pagan activity. Rather, the objective in self-denial is,

[1] the glorification of God as being holy, worthy of obedience, and the only lawgiver. This is true for themselves, and also to others they reveal that God is to be acknowledged as such, and ought to be obeyed. And if the cause of Christ necessitates it, then with the denial of all that is dear to us (which apart from such circumstances would be lawful to desire and enjoy), one has the objective

to glorify God in that He is both sovereign as well as that He may require again all that He has given. We thus indicate that He is so precious that we would let go of that which is most precious for His sake.

[2] In self-denial one's objective will also be to be beneficial to one's neighbor; that is, to adorn godliness so that the ungodly may be convicted and converted, and the godly be aroused to deny their sinful self also, and willingly to forsake everything for the cause of Christ. The Converted and Unconverted Distinguished

We have thus presented to you the nature and the attending circumstances of self-denial; this can serve as a mirror for you. The unconverted may thus perceive his failure to deny self, and his living for and cleaving to the world and his own lusts. A converted person may thereby also detect his faults, the extent to which the old man is still present within him, and in what measure he still cleaves to his sinful self. In order to make this even more clear to you, we shall place a person who does not deny self in contrast with a person who does deny self. A person who does not deny self:

(1) Is a slave of his lusts, makes that which is of the world his portion, and insists that his lusts be satisfied at any cost. He clings as tenaciously to worldly things as a bat bites into bacon -- even though it has been nailed to a piece of wood. It is either a desire for money, honor, entertainment, immorality, or food and drink which ignites his lusts, and he must have it even if it is contrary to his judgment, and even if he is tired of sinning.

(2) Entertains great thoughts about himself. The one is beautiful and attractive in his own eyes, the other is wise, the third is of noble descent, the fourth is rich, and the other is a scholar. And thus everyone has something which he imagines himself to be -- even if in reality this is not true. He will puff himself up concerning this as a balloon filled with air.

(3) Has a proud disposition of the heart engendering a desire to be honored and perceived as such. He is worthy of this, and it is his due. Even though he is conscious himself that he is not what he imagined himself to be, he nevertheless wishes to be honored, served, revered, and loved.

(4) Has himself in mind when he is or intends to be in the presence of people -- not to take care of that which is honest in everyone's view, but to be honored by men. This is his objective when he dresses himself. His choice of color and fashion; his decision to join or abstain from certain company; the manner in which he carries himself; and his speaking or being silent are all governed by a seeking of self. If his ego did not stir him up, he would be lazier than a donkey, grimmer than a hog, more careless than a beggar, more foolish than a fish, and more talkative than a fool. However, his ego is the wind in his sails that renders him active.

(5) Takes careful notice of what everyone says of him. If he is praised -- even if it is in his presence -- he is wonderfully delighted. With delight he allows this to transpire and as a result thinks a bit more of himself.

(6) Will immediately be displeased at heart if, in his estimation, he is not loved, served, and revered according to his wishes; or if this is manifested more to others than to him, displeasure will immediately arise in his heart and he will abhor such a person. He hates them and will no longer

have fellowship with such persons. His anger is aroused and he avenges himself as much as he can -- be it with words or with deeds.

(7) Is envious of others if they receive more love and honor, and do more business than he does. Even if the other person is more worthy of this, he nevertheless imagines by himself that he deserves it as much as others. And even if he is personally convinced of his own unworthiness, he not only wishes to be treated equally, but wants to be honored and esteemed above the other. Those who are elevated above him, as well as those who elevate such a person above him, are his enemies.

(8) Becomes sorrowful and despondent if others do not fulfill his desires. His work stagnates, he functions at a slower pace, and he may even go in the very opposite direction of his previous course. The wind is no longer in his sails, for he can neither attain love nor honor. Thus, a person who does not deny self shows that he is not satisfied unless everything ends in him. In his activity he has himself in view, ends in self, and also wants others to behave in this fashion toward him.

(9) Will be a zealous Christian in the realm of religion, as long as he can gain love, honor, and profit -- yes, he even wants to be counted among the most orthodox. If, however, that does not materialize and the very opposite occurs, his religion is also finished. Before losing esteem, position, or possessions, he would rather let go of Christ and His cause. Once having denied Him, he will then become the greatest persecutor in order to make his apostasy all the more honorable. Such is the person who does not deny himself.

Over against this we shall present a person who practices a great measure of self-denial -- as is generally true for a godly person -- so that everyone may perceive how it ought to be, may be enamored with that condition, and endeavor to increase in it.

(1) A person who denies self desires no honor of men. He does not wish to do anything that would render him dishonest and despicable, for that would be sin and to the detriment of godliness. If he receives honor and love, he acknowledges himself to be unworthy thereof and becomes smaller in himself. He does not want people to end in him, but is desirous that God be glorified through Him. He thus lets all things pass him by or, through him, allowing them to end in God. However, he neither desires nor strives for honor in himself. Yes, even if honor did not belong to anyone and were, so to speak, lying upon the street, he would not pick it up out of a love for honor itself. He perceives that if any one should receive it, he would not be the one, since he is acquainted with his abominableness. Since he does not desire to have it, he can thus accept it if another person receives it -- and that from all sides. He is not envious, for he neither desires it, nor is worthy of it -- yes, he does not want people to end in him. This would be burdensome and grievous to him. Honor is therefore not his objective in all his activity. He is neither grieved nor becomes fretful if he is not honored for his accomplishments. He does everything out of God, through God, and unto God. It is sufficient to him to serve the Lord -- he has surrendered his honor to the Lord Jesus, and it thus no longer belongs to him.

(2) The person who denies self does not desire love. To be loved is even more deeply ingrained in us than to be honored. The person who does not deny self wants to have the heart of the other person, but the person who denies self neither desires nor seeks this. He judges himself aright and knows himself to be hateful, defiled, and abominable. He perceives that all that he does is so

maimed and deformed, that it would rather stir up repulsion instead of a being pleased. He would therefore demand something unreasonable if he were to desire that others would love him. He finds delight in loving others, and this he pursues with his entire heart. He rejoices in the fact that others are loving and exercise the virtue of love -- even if it is toward him (although he considers himself the wrong object). If he is loved, he uses it as a suitable opportunity to be of benefit to those who love him. However, he neither seeks nor has in view the love of others unto himself. He does not find delight in the fact that he is loved for the sake of who he is. He is also neither grieved nor becomes ill-tempered when he is not loved. He is not envious when another person receives more love than he, for he is not worthy of love. And, if anything of Jesus' image is to be perceived in him which is truly delightful, he desires that this be delighted in. This is not of himself, however, and he therefore does not want the expression of love to end in him. He neither wants to be attached to another person in an inordinate manner nor does he wish to be someone else's idol. He jealously guards against receiving from others who are attached to him anything which would be God's worthy due and thus cause the Lord to be loved less. With such a heart he loves his God -- a heart which is divorced from the creature. This suffices him and he stands amazed that he is loved of God.

(3) The person who denies self also does not desire to be revered. A person who does not deny self also wants to be revered, since he imagines himself to be worthy of honor and love. He imagines himself to be in possession of awe-inspiring traits. He imagines that his riches, circumstances, and position -- all of which render the other person of lesser importance than he is -- make him awe-inspiring; he is the man and she is the woman who inspires awe. When he is seen and speaks, others ought to tremble and shake for his wrath. Poor worm! A person who denies self, on the other hand, does not consider himself to be in possession of awe-inspiring traits but of despicable traits. Therefore, he does not wish to be revered. External riches and prestige he knows to be but as a garment cast about his shoulders, which do not change him personally. He therefore considers it great foolishness if anyone were to revere him for this external garment. If he has been placed over others in government or within the home, he will uphold this position and insist that others acknowledge, respect, and revere him in this capacity -- not in view of his person, but because of God's command. He is thus humble in his elevated position, wants to be revered, and yet at the same time, not be revered.

(4) A person who denies self also does not wish to be served. A person who does not deny self is of the opinion that he has a right to everything and that everyone must be ready at his bidding. Those who are subordinate to him will never be able to satisfy him; he becomes angry if there is the least deficiency in their obedience. A person who denies self, however, always desires to be of service and of help to others -- that is his delight. It is more a burden to him than a delight when others run around, sweat, labor to serve him, and are ready to obey at his bidding; for he does not consider himself worthy of being served. If he requires service of someone who is subordinate to him, he does not do so for his own sake, but because the Lord has established that order. When others serve him, he is quickly satisfied and graciously overlooks faults. He tenderly cares for his servants, seeing to it that they neither become too fatigued nor toil too much in his service. He is even compassionate toward his cattle.

(5) The person who denies self also does not desire riches. He has chosen God to be his portion, thereby renouncing all earthly possessions. He entrusts the care of his body to God. He knows

that he is not worthy of one bite of bread in his mouth nor of any sackcloth to cover his skin. He also considers the goods of this world as being too insignificant and unstable as to concern himself with them. He is satisfied with such food and clothing as are necessary. He lives out of the hand of God and is therefore neither envious of the possessions of others nor of the great profit they earn. It does not matter to him if others boast of their possessions and tower above him; the lowest place suits him best. He is not discouraged if he has little and loses possessions -- for they were not his portion. It suffices him to diligently use the means to earn his living. If he fares well, he does not cleave to it, but becomes humble by it, as the patriarch Jacob. He does not squander it, but is all the more generous to the poor. And if the cause of Christ necessitates this, he willingly renounces everything and can joyfully witness being deprived of his belongings. In such a manner the person who denies self lives in this world -- in union with God and divorced from everything else. The Need for Self-Examination

Behold, this is the mirror; examine yourself in it. An unconverted person will be able to perceive that he is entirely void of self-denial and still lives according to his own lusts, is a servant of sin, in all things seeks himself, and wishes all things to end in him. You who do not deny self -- consider in what condition you are! First, it is a clear evidence that you are as yet unregenerate and cannot thus enter heaven (John 3:5). Secondly, you are not a partaker of Christ and His merits (Luke 14:26). Thirdly, you are a worldly-minded person and your portion is only in this world (Psalms 17:14). Fourthly, in this life you will experience nothing but sorrow as you either seek, find, or miss the things of this world, and after this life there will be eternal destruction. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Romans 8:13). The godly can also perceive hereby how much or how little of such self-denial they have. How much their heart still yearns for honor, love, respect, service, and the possessions of this world! Here their ulterior motives originate which at times pollute their very best works, cause them much grief, and rob them of all joy in their work. This is the cause of discouragement and lack of freedom, estrangement from each other, wrathfulness, quarrelling, and a boasting and speaking of one's own performance -- be it more openly or in a more subtle and concealed manner. Oh, you who are godly, examine yourself closely. Seek to ascertain what it is that your heart still cleaves to and consider the abominableness of being self-focused and of such seeking of self. Consider that it is the dead fly which causes the precious ointment to stink. Consider that it is an abomination to God and that it irritates others, for it will readily be perceived by both the converted and unconverted alike. Consider that, to a large extent, you render yourself unprofitable to make gain with your talent and to be of benefit to others. Therefore, abhor yourself, resist it, and strive against it. For if you have not denied self now in time of peace, how will you then fare in time of persecution?

Exhortation to Self-Denial

It is thus necessary that we courageously resist our sinful self and endeavor to arrive at a disposition and propensity of inward self-denial, as well as the manifestation of self-denial in all circumstances which occur. Take the following to heart:

First, consider your own state. Who are you that you would pride yourself in anything and seek anything for yourself? God answers you, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19). Bildad the Shuhite answers, "How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm" (Job 25:6). Job replies that we are "a leaf driven to and fro" and "dry stubble"

(Job 13:25). And if that were yet too lofty, David answers: "Man is like to vanity" (Psalms 144:4). Even that is yet too lofty and therefore he says, "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity" (Psalms 62:9). Such is true for you. Are you then worthy of honor, love, and esteem? Do you now dare to pursue something in order to cause it to end in you?

Secondly, what is it that you desire and cleave to? It is also as insignificant and vain as you yourself are. Are you any better off if a dead dog -- which every man is -- renders you honor, love, and friendship rather than if a piece of peat or wood were to bow to you? Are you any better off than if you were to gather a heap of shells or shards as children do, and if this were to render you attractive in your own eyes? Be ashamed that you would turn your heart and eyes to that which is nothing at all. Why would you pollute your soul with the pursuit of such trifles and thus displease both God and man by pleasing yourself? Therefore, divorce yourself from this.

Thirdly, believers, has not the Lord granted and laid away better things for you? The Lord has granted you that steadfast and durable benefit, consisting in the enjoyment of God, communion with Christ, the experience of peace and joy, and eternal glory. He has granted you this in principle, and He will cause you to possess it in perfection. God says therefore: "This I have given you and I shall as yet add such and such to it. Now, it is My will that you only keep that in view, only seek that, and only delight yourself in that. It is My will that you would look away from all that is of the world. Neither focus upon, nor seek it, but be divorced from it, and deny self in regard to these things. If I give you a measure of them, it is only that you would use them for your growth in grace and to glorify Me." Therefore, if the cause of the Lord necessitates it, be content with eternal things and renounce that earthly filth.

Fourthly, it is a righteous thing to deny self as far as the things of the world are concerned, for all honor, reverence, service, and possessions are the Lord's; you are not entitled to them. Shall a man rob God? Give unto God that which is God's. It is unrighteousness if you desire to be esteemed and to be something, considering that you are nothing; to desire to be loved, considering you are hateful; and to be revered, considering you are nothing but a slave of the lowest order. It is an unrighteous thing to consider yourself to be something and hypocritically appear to be what you are not -- wishing others to acknowledge you to be what you are not or to be of a more elevated position than you are. Recognize this sin therefore, hate it, and flee from it.

Fifthly, self-denial engenders great peace. All your restlessness is the result of a seeking of yourself. For then your conscience convicts you of sin, you do not get your desire, someone else is in your way, people oppose you in words and in deeds, and you receive the opposite of what you are striving for. Something is always wrong and everywhere there are thorns to prick you. There is much you must care for and preserve, and there is nothing but restlessness and sorrow. However, there is much peace in a heart where self is denied -- which is content with Jesus. Such a heart is elevated above the earth and is beyond the reach of the world and all that is to be found in it. One then dwells in the secret place of the Most High and abides in the shadow of the Almighty. Therefore, cast self away as being a troublesome burden. Speak as follows: "Away sin, away pride, and away self-love; I have been plagued by you long enough. I no longer know you, I no longer desire you, and I wish to live in peace with my God, perform my task with freedom, and run my course with joy."

Sixthly, a person who denies self has freedom, for he has nothing to lose. He fears neither shame, hatred, nor damage to his possessions, for he has renounced all this -- and whatever the Lord has loaned to him he will readily return to Him if He requires this. Therefore he says what needs to be said, and he is silent when the Lord commands him to be silent. He lets his light shine in spite of all those who hate this and for this reason would wish to cause him grief. He is under no obligation, and is loose and free from everything. In such a manner a person who denies self manifests himself. His path is as a shining light; he proceeds and sheds forth light until it is full noon; he proceeds from strength to strength. He remains steadfast in his course and increases in strength. Therefore, undertake this task and proceed in it with the courage of a man.

Seventhly, continually hold before you the example of the Lord Jesus and His saints. The Lord Jesus has denied Himself for your sake. Would you then not renounce self for His sake? He who was rich became poor; He who was in the form of God, took upon Him the form of a servant. The Lord of glory was ridiculed and despised, and He who is love was hated. He who is worthy of being served by all, came to serve. The Prince of Life was crucified for you, and would there then be anything too precious to you to relinquish for His Name's sake? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob left their homeland and everything else. The prophets renounced everything in order to be faithful to the Lord. The apostles left everything and followed Jesus. The godly martyrs witnessed the spoiling of their goods joyfully, and willingly they surrendered their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Do therefore likewise and no longer seek yourself.

Eighthly, even though all that we possess is not ours, and all that pertains to the body is not worthy of attention, God wants to reward abundantly for whatever one has renounced and relinquished upon His command out of loving obedience toward Him, and for His Name or cause. If we renounce our honor, He will give grace and glory (Psalms 84:12). If we deny ourselves love, the Lord will love us (John 16:27). If we deny possessions, the Lord will be our abundant gold and our plentitude of silver. Since the Lord will not permit a service to be unrewarded, He will also not permit all that we relinquish out of love for Him and for His Name to be unrequited. Observe this in the following passages: "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39); "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29); "But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:30). Much true profit can be gleaned from casting away that which is sinful, from ridding ourselves of that which hinders us, from returning that which was loaned, and then receiving in return such great and glorious matters. That truly ought to stimulate us to deny self. If God is willing to promise this, we ought to be made lively by the promises.

Final Advice for Those Who Desire to Deny Self

If you are desirous to be in such a holy condition and have such liberty, and to be weaned from all and whatever the Lord wants us to be weaned from, then:

(1) Make a firm resolution -- not only in a general sense, but also pertaining to whatever you are most attached, hinders you most, and most pollutes your walk.

(2) Do not imagine, however, that all has been accomplished if you have lively desires for that condition and activity, and now fully want to commit yourself to this, for your own "I" is strong. It was the first to reside in you and it does not readily want to depart. It is not so easy to deny self. Therefore, be aware of the strength of the old man and the weakness of the new man, and call upon the Lord for help and strength.

(3) Be on your guard in all that you do as far as your conduct is concerned, lest your self be mingled with it. You will soon perceive this if you but take notice, and it will bring much strife upon you.

(4) Be encouraged, however, for self must be removed, and you will increase greatly if you are but determined to do so. It will steadily become easier.

(5) Take note of the first stirrings, and smother your own self when it initially surfaces.

(6) And if you cannot root this out so easily, do not cease with this labor, but practice the virtue as well as you can, and you will experience that you will improve.

071. Chapter 66: Patience

----- CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX -----

Patience

Contentment and self-denial engender patience, which in Greek is hupomene. It is a compound consisting of hupo -- which occasionally means through, sometimes under, and sometimes over -- and meno, which means to remain. The combination yields hupomene; that is, to remain, to remain steadfast, to persevere), and also hupomene patience. It means as much as: to overcome suffering, to remain the same during suffering, to move beyond suffering, and to remain steadfast. In our language it is a derivative of patient, which in turn is a derivative of the Latin verb pati, to suffer. Patience is thus the ability to endure suffering.

Patience is the believer's spiritual strength which he has in God whereby he, in the performance of his duty, willingly, with composure, joyfully, and steadfastly endures all the vicissitudes of life, having a hope that the outcome will be well.

Patience is to be strong in God. Spiritual valor or strength which we discussed in chapter 62 consists of the following: 1) a trusting in God's help, whereby one courageously undertakes his duty; 2) steadfastness, whereby one continues and perseveres in his duty; 3) patience, whereby one repels all that comes against this duty, so that it is no impediment. Patience is thus a type of strength or valor. Valor is a courageous disposition whereby the believer perceives the vicissitudes of life as being capable of hindering him. He not only understands the necessity of conquering them, but also of bringing glory to his Lord. As a champion he thus overcomes these circumstances. The patient person derives such strength from God. Spiritual life is feeble, the body is tender and readily suffers if not well, the flesh is evil and would readily succumb under discomforting events. However, the patient person takes hold of the strength of the Lord, and in this strength proceeds. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee" (Psalms 84:5); "Through God we shall do valiantly" (Psalms 60:12). The exercise of patience is a task of great magnitude. It is valiant to endure affliction well, to take hold of God's strength, and to be engaged by reason of this strength. It brings matters to a glorious end. The subject--that is, the seat of this virtue--is the soul of the believer. The unconverted are entirely incapable of being patient. They do indeed also endure affliction -- yes, they encounter severe trials. Some who are motivated either by glory, or by the unavoidability of the circumstances can endure them manfully, doing so without any display of fear, anxiety, or pain. They cannot be patient, however, since they do not have a divine duty in view, desiring to uphold this duty and to perform it well. They do not derive their help from God through Christ, and they have no hope that the outcome will be well, for there are no promises for them. Therefore even though they steel themselves in their affliction, they are not patient. However, patience is the ornament of a Christian. A believer views himself as being reconciled with God, and considers all affliction to come to him from God in order to promote his welfare. He has promises that the outcome will be glorious and therefore only believers exercise patience. "Here is the patience of the saints" (Revelation 14:12). In order to demonstrate that no one can be

patient except he be a believer, faith and patience are frequently conjoined (cf. Titus 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:4). Patience most particularly resides in the soul. This virtue neither consists in a boasting with the mouth, nor in a restraint of one's gestures, but is of an internal nature which in turn manifests itself externally. It is through the custom, not so much of suffering, but of continually exercising herself to possess this virtue, that the soul will acquire a patient disposition and propensity; the soul will then be patient. "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19). An impatient person does not have control over his heart; it is of no use to him. However, a patient person has his heart under control and makes use of it as such, permitting no inordinate thoughts and motions to be entertained in the heart relative to affliction. The object of patience is all the vicissitudes of life, that is, all manner of affliction. The tribulations, both bodily and spiritual, of the righteous are many -- those that come upon them without human intervention, as well as those that come their way by means of men -- be it during a peaceful time for the church or during time of persecution for the Word's sake. Some tribulations are light, some are more severe, others are dreadful, and there can even be a cruel death. They are all grievous to man and are capable of both assaulting faith and tossing it to and fro -- and if it were possible, to drive out hope, love, and other virtues, as well as their manifestations. Patience opposes this, doing so not to be delivered from affliction (for that would be in vain), but in order to endure it. The patient believer will not allow himself to be deterred from his virtuous intentions and their manifestations. He will neither permit himself to exercise these virtues in a lesser degree of holiness nor with less boldness. Thus, the soul perseveres in her affliction and continues to endure her affliction; yes, she prevails that much more strenuously and derives strength from her weakness. In view of this, patience is called "the enduring of the same sufferings" (2 Corinthians 1:6). This is neither to suggest that one finds delight in affliction, nor that a person may and must not pray for deliverance; rather, he must suffer in subjection to the will of God. The Essence or Nature of Patience The essence or nature of patience consists in the enduring of affliction willingly, with composure, joyfully, and steadfastly.

(1) We endure affliction if we take the cross upon ourselves as being laid upon us by the Lord (Matthew 16:24), follow Jesus with that cross, and perform our duty as between God and the soul only, as well as toward our neighbor. With that cross one proceeds -- even if it were from Jerusalem to Golgotha -- in order to die. Irrespective of whether it is a wooden, iron, or leaden cross, believers do not wish to exchange it. They desire to have it, for it suits them best, and they thus carry it to heaven.

(2) It is a willing enduring of affliction. Affliction is certainly contrary to natural desire and it can oppress the soul and body to such an extent that tears will burst forth from our eyes. Nevertheless, such endurance is not forced; it is not of a compulsory nature. Rather, patience embraces this and is willing because the Lord wills it. The Lord's will is the soul's will -- irrespective of whether this is Mt. Tabor or Golgotha. God's will is God's will, and this renders everything welcome and delightful. "... the spirit indeed is willing" (Matthew 26:41); "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it" (John 18:11).

(3) It is exercised with composure or a quietness of spirit. Patience precludes murmuring, discouragement -- and if our affliction is inflicted by men, it also precludes wrath and vengeance. It does not trouble the soul as a storm would do to a sea, but the soul permits the waves and billows to go over her. Such a soul is as a smooth beach upon which the waves, so to speak,

playfully run dead; or she is as a rock which remains immovable and breaks up the sea as it bears down upon it. David endured all manner of affliction in this manner. "Truly my soul waiteth upon God" (Psalms 62:1). The church is exhorted to conduct herself as such. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because He hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust" (Lamentations 3:27-29).

(4) Yes, not only does the patient soul maintain composure, but she even rejoices in affliction, be it that she already enjoys the blessed fruit of this, receives many comforts from the Lord, or suffers for the sake of godliness and for the name of the Lord. This was the wish expressed by the apostle toward the Colossians; namely, that they would be "strengthened with all might ... unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Colossians 1:11). Concerning the Thessalonians he says: You have "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thessalonians 1:6), and concerning himself he says: "I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 7:4).

(5) The patient person endures affliction with steadfastness. One can have much courage prior to affliction being inflicted, and courageously accept it. If, however, we experience the reality of affliction, and it seems to last quite long, one would desire to cast away this troublesome burden and avoid it -- even if would have to sin in doing so. And if we cannot rid ourselves of it, everything is turned upside down within and without, and impatience with all its consequences gets the upper hand. However, patience does not impose limits upon the Lord as to what the measure ought to be, or how long it ought to last. The patient believer is satisfied with the goodness and wisdom of the Lord. He proposes to himself that it may be all his life, for so precious is salvation to him. If deliverance comes earlier than that, he rejoices, and if not, it is also well. He thus endures in patience until his affliction comes to an end. "But let patience have her perfect work" (James 1:4). This is neither to suggest that patience itself is perfect in the godly, nor that it renders something perfect. Rather, one designates something perfect (or complete [Note: The Dutch word "volmaakt" can be rendered both as "perfect" and "complete" in English.]) to which the finishing touches have been applied, even though someone else could have performed this task in a far more excellent manner. In like manner, patience adds the finishing touches to our affliction; that is, it lasts as long as the affliction lasts and will not separate itself from affliction prior to that. Such is the exhortation to the congregation of Smyrna: "Be thou faithful unto death" (Revelation 2:10).

(6) Patience endures affliction with a hope of a good outcome. In this instance the proverb is true: Hope is the comfort of affliction. Patience cannot exist without hope. When there is no longer hope, patience will no longer be exercised. There is no patience in hell due to the absence of hope. Hope supports patience. "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:25). We err when we define our hope in a good outcome too narrowly, that is, within a certain time frame and by reason of such circumstances. This frequently miscarries, since the Lord's ways are not our ways. The patient person therefore holds to the promises of God in an unrestricted sense; namely, that the Lord will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13); that affliction will bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11); that it will be to our advantage in order that we may become partakers of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10); that the crown of life will be awarded in consequence of this (Revelation 2:10); and that upon much affliction a greater measure of glory ensues (Revelation 7:14). The patient person hopes upon these promises and anticipates their fulfillment. Jesus is his example in this,

"who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2). The apostle therefore calls patience the "patience [Note: The word "patience" in this text is rendered as "endurance" in the Statenvertaling. There is thus an obvious verbal relationship in the Statenvertaling between Hebrews 12:2 and 1 Thessalonians 1:3.] of hope" (1 Thessalonians 1:3). The cause of patience is not to be found in man himself. A natural man may clench his teeth, control himself, remain silent, suppress all emotions, and, control himself by way of reason -- all this in order to reap the glory of being steadfast. However, he will not be able to make himself patient. Also a godly person will not be able to bring this about in his own strength. The Lord must work it in him and He is therefore called "the God of patience" (Romans 15:5). The Lord grants the godly faith and gives them a lively view that He inflicts this affliction upon them with His fatherly hand. He secretly sustains them by strengthening the inner man. In their affliction He comforts them much according to the soul and permits them to taste His grace. He causes them to perceive the lightness, advantage, and transitory nature of affliction. He shows them how advantageous and glorious the outcome will be. This causes them to be quiet and encouraged. They are then willing to suffer, and tribulation will then work patience, and that experience and hope which maketh not ashamed. The purpose and result of patience is that believers may execute their duty well. The patient person does not end in his affliction, his suitable disposition, in enduring his affliction well, and in the manifestation of a patient disposition. He has something much higher in view. He possesses his soul in patience in order not to be hindered in his performance, but rather to be more capable of carrying out his task. He does so by his own personal godly exercises, by letting his light shine forth, by manifesting a godly walk among men, by being an example to others, by leading others to Christ, and by boldly confessing Him. That is his objective, and that he seeks. He perceives that affliction would hinder him in this if he were not to behave himself well. He furthermore perceives that in behaving well, his affliction will be to his advantage in pursuing his objective. He therefore strives for patience. Consequently, taking up the cross and following Christ are conjoined: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). This is also true for patience and running the race: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). Patience and other virtues are likewise conjoined: "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:5); "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Peter 1:5-7). The Conviction of the Unconverted This truth as presented to you is sufficient to convince the unconverted that they are void of this virtue. Whether they are entirely insensitive, or have a gentle disposition, or are able to endure a sickness well, or do so either by bearing up under it by way of reason while perceiving that they cannot be relieved from affliction anyhow and thus exercise patience, or in order to get glory from steeling themselves and being strong -- all of this does not constitute patience. From that which has been said they will be able to perceive that their patience is not spiritual strength in God, as being their God in Christ, and that their patience does not issue forth from faith in Christ nor from their union with Him. They will perceive that they do not endure affliction willingly, with composure, joyfully, steadfastly, as having a hope for a good outcome, to make them holier, and to lead them to felicity. The reason for this is that they have no basis for appropriating a single promise to themselves. They will perceive that they do not desire patience in order to be more fit to exercise all manner of virtues. Even if some have the appearance of being patient, they are, nevertheless,

generally irritable and fretful. They become more wicked and ungodly, and their wrath is expressed toward God Himself; they are as ungodly Israel in the wilderness. At one time they had no bread, then no meat, and then again no water -- and they would therefore immediately murmur, depart from God, insist on returning to Egypt, and even blaspheme God. When God chastises such, they will revolt more and more (Isaiah 1:5). If God does not help, they say, "Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer" (2 Kings 6:33). They wish to be delivered from their affliction at any cost: *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo*; that is, If God does not want to help me, I shall ask for the help of the devil. Thus, they proceed from wickedness to wickedness until they have brought themselves into hell where patience does not exist. The Impatience of the Godly

Having had the nature of patience presented to them, the godly will be able to observe on the one hand that they possess this virtue in principle; however, they will also observe on the other hand how much impatience is still to be found within them. When a spiritual cross comes upon them, when it becomes dark, when God hides His countenance and withholds His comforting influences, when He appears to neither hear their prayers nor immediately to grant the desires of their soul, then they are at once discouraged, unbelieving, and irritable. When they are surrounded by all manner of bodily afflictions, and their afflictions are of long duration and of an excessive nature, then where is their patience?

Then, with Jonah, they are peevish (Jonah 4:8), and are as discouraged as Israel was, saying, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me" (Isaiah 49:14). They immediately despair and think, "There is no hope" (Jeremiah 2:25); "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord" (Lamentations 3:18). If their affliction lasts long and is excessive, their faith falters and they think that all this comes upon them in wrath. Thus, they complain, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies" (Psalms 77:7-9).

They stumble in regard to God's providence (Proverbs 30:9) and accuse the Lord of hardness, saying, "Thou art become cruel to me: with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me" (Job 30:21). Then they will question whether the Lord's dealings are right, would demand an account of Him as to why He deals thus with them, and contend with the Almighty (Job 40:2). At times despair surfaces, so that the soul chooses strangling and death above life (Job 7:15). "Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that He would let loose His hand, and cut me off! What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life" (Job 6:8-9; Job 6:11).

Seeing the prosperity of the wicked, resentment arises in the heart, and they say, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning" (Psalms 73:12-14). When they observe that many of the godly prosper in the world, they are envious and think, "Why do I not fare as they do?" If their cross is inflicted upon them by man, they become angry, vengefulness surfaces, and, as a dog, they bite the stone being cast at them. At times God's children, to their shame and grief, become conscious of such turbulence; and, they rightfully ought to be ashamed and grieved, for:

(1) While being impatient, many sins merge together. An impatient person is a breeding ground for all manner of corruptions which grievously pollute the soul. There is unbelief toward God's promises, lovelessness and stubbornness toward God's will, pride (as if they were superior), envy and vengefulness toward their neighbor, and a holding in esteem the things of this world.

(2) They render themselves unfit to serve the Lord and to edify their neighbor. They offend those that are weak, and cause the world to mock with godliness.

(3) They bring heavier judgments upon themselves, for the Lord will prevail when He executes judgment. They are the cause that their affliction is of longer duration, is more severe, and does not yield the benefit it otherwise would.

(4) They themselves remain restless and anxious due to seeing their sins continually, and not being able to shake off the cross. "Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered" (Job 9:4). Therefore refrain from impatience, and rather "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6); "Despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction" (Proverbs 3:11).

Believers Exhorted to Be Patient

Believers, possess therefore your souls in patience. Give heed to the following motives in order that you may be stirred up to that end.

First, it is your desire to obey the Lord, is it not? How frequently have you not offered yourself to the Lord, saying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The Lord, however, commands you to be patient, and therefore listen to this exhortation as coming from the very mouth of the Lord. The Lord Jesus says to you, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19); and the apostle says, "(Be) ... patient in tribulation" (Romans 12:12); "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1); "But let patience have her perfect work" (James 1:4).

Secondly, it is a matter of absolute necessity, and you cannot do without it. "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36). There is no other way to heaven except by way of tribulations. You can neither avoid nor sidestep them. On the other hand, there is much work to be done by you in order to promote your sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord. How will you persevere (for you wish to persevere and you will persevere until you are in heaven) except by way of patience? This causes us to accept affliction, not to hinder us in our way, but that it render us fit for the performance of our duty. Therefore strive for this as being absolutely necessary. Exercise yourself in this until you develop a habitual disposition in this respect.

Thirdly, consider where your affliction originates. It does not originate with yourself, for you love yourself too much for this. It does not originate with men, for they cannot so much as move without the will of God, nor pull one of your hairs out. Rather, it is the Lord Himself who sends this upon you -- the sovereign Lord whose hand none can stay and to whom no one can say, "What doest Thou?" It is your reconciled Father in Christ who sends this upon you in His wisdom, goodness, and love, doing so to your advantage. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Hebrews 12:9). Would you then render opposition to the Lord? This is indeed neither your desire nor are you able to do so. "Shall we not much rather be in

subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live" (Hebrews 12:9). Say rather, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord" (Micah 7:9); "I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Psalms 39:9). That will be well-pleasing to the Lord.

Fourthly, when considering affliction itself, its nature is not such that you should sin relative to it by way of impatience.

(1) Affliction is light; the fear of it is ten times greater than the affliction itself. This is unanimously confessed by all who have experienced it, and you will have to admit this as well. Paul calls his great tribulations -- to which ours cannot be compared -- "light afflictions" (2 Corinthians 4:17). The reason for their severity is due to your failure to submit yourself to it, for if the apostle judges them to be light, then how do you dare to call them severe? Do not bodily afflictions pertain to the body only? Should you then be so concerned about your body which is but dust and will become dust -- and which will also be glorified? Therefore do not act as if a piece of straw is that heavy.

(2) Your affliction is but for a short season; it readily passes by. What is past is past, what is future is not yet upon you, and you do not know what will or will not come. You only have the present. And even that will pass momentarily. Even if the same affliction would last your entire life, it would also not be long, for your life itself is short, it being nothing more than vapor. Such is therefore also true for all affliction in this world. Paul calls it "our light affliction, which is but for a moment" (2 Corinthians 4:17). Peter says: "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness" (1 Peter 1:6). Should you then be impatient concerning affliction which so readily passes by?

(3) The extent of this affliction has been determined. It will last that long -- not any shorter or longer. It will be that severe, and this severity will be neither more nor less than the Lord has ordained. The Lord restricted the devil as to the measure in which he could touch Job; he could not add one ounce to it (Job 1:1-22; Job 2:1-13). Job acknowledged this: "For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (Job 23:14). Irrespective of whether you are fretful, discouraged, and desirous to escape it and cast it off, it will remain with you to the end. Is it then not better to take it upon you patiently and to endure it?

Fifthly, affliction is very beneficial; it is medicine for the soul.

(1) It humbles the soul in light of committed sins. "I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him ... till they acknowledge their offence" (Hosea 5:14-15). It causes the soul to be as a weaned child. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalms 131:2). It causes the soul to take pleasure in submitting to the Lord's chastisement. "... if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity" (Leviticus 26:41); "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God" (1 Peter 5:6). It causes the soul to be ashamed.

"Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised. ... Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed" (Jeremiah 31:18-19). It causes the soul to withdraw itself and to be weaned from all things. "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top" (Psalms 102:7).

(2) It will cause us to cautiously guard against sin and to strive for holiness. "I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (Isaiah 38:15). This is God's objective: "For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). This was David's experience, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes" (Psalms 119:71). The prophet bears witness to this: "For when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:16). Affliction causes the graces in the soul to be lively and active. It is then that prayer-life revives. "Lord, in trouble have they visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them" (Isaiah 26:16). Necessity teaches us how to pray. He who is not able to pray ought to become either a sailor or a married man. Faith will then be revived. When Abraham endured a trial of the greatest magnitude, he believed "against hope ... in hope" (Romans 4:18). David says concerning himself, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalms 27:13). Then hope is strengthened. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance" (Psalms 42:5). Then love is revived. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song of Solomon 8:7). The moon and the stars are seen best when the sun is absent. It is such with love. In bearing the cross the godly perceive that missing the Lord is what weighs them down the most, and when the Lord is near, that their affliction is no affliction. Then they have enough and would rather enjoy communion with God with the cross, than to be estranged from Him without the cross. Believers, since all these matters are indeed your delight and are the desires of your heart, why then would you not also desire the way by which you obtain these matters? And if you desire the way of affliction for its benefits, it behooves you patiently to take this affliction upon you and to endure it as being a wholesome -- although bitter -- medicine.

Sixthly, patience is a precious ornament and a profitable disposition for a believer. A patient soul is a soul which is childlike, willing, quiet, meek, self-denying, believes, hopes, and loves God. Therefore the patient person is precious and pleasant in God's sight and a suitable object for God's mercies. God also does not leave Himself without witness to such by manifesting His mercy, love, support, comfort, and help for their deliverance. "...God, that comforteth those that are cast down" (2 Corinthians 7:6); "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 1:4); "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4).

Patience renders the cross lighter, so that one can bear it with ease. One will possess his soul, so that inordinate desires are held in check -- and the intellect and will shall be under his control in order to utilize them in harmony with God's will. In this manner they will reap all the benefits from affliction which we have enumerated above, for affliction as such does not engender these benefits, but they are brought forth through patience in affliction. The Lord is then glorified by us, our neighbors become convinced of the power of godliness, and the godly will thereby be strengthened in their afflictions, being encouraged to bear them also with patience. Then the present affliction and chastisement will have their appropriate effect, and "afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11). One will then rejoice when the Lord has removed the cross and will thank the Lord for this. "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psalms

119:75); "O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me" (Isaiah 12:1).

Seventhly, hold before yourself the examples of the Lord Jesus and the saints so that you may be stirred up to imitate them in their patience. The Lord Jesus, being such a glorious example for us in our entire walk, is also exemplary in patience. "... yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7); "... but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:20-21).

Add to this the example of all other saints who have gone before you. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:10-11).

Since all those who are now bearers of the crown have been bearers of the cross, you must emulate them in the bearing of the cross in order that, with them, you may inherit the crown of life.

(1) Be sensitive concerning your cross and be on guard against hardness.

(2) Cease from having esteem for all that is to be found in this perishing world. Consider the brevity of time which as yet is left you for affliction.

(3) Consider that the way to heaven is the way of affliction, and that we cannot walk upon this way except by way of patience.

(4) Be continually engaged in exercising faith in the promises and have hope therein that all will certainly come to pass.

(5) Persevere in reading the Word, which has been written for us to teach us patience and to comfort us (Romans 15:4).

(6) Continually pray for patience (Romans 15:5). If with such patience you may exercise yourself in all things -- also in the least, -- you will increase while you are thus engaged. "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

----- 1 The Dutch word "volmaakt" can be rendered both as "perfect" and "complete" in English.

2 The word "patience" in this text is rendered as "endurance" in the Statenvertaling. There is thus an obvious verbal relationship in the Statenvertaling between Hebrews 12:2 and 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

072. Chapter 67: Uprightness

----- CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN -----

Uprightness

Uprightness is denoted by several different words in the Hebrew language, each of which renders its meaning from a different perspective. There is yashar, which means: to be right, to make right, to govern, to make smooth. From this perspective uprightness is as an even and smooth pathway which is straight and without bends, guiding the pedestrian in a straightforward manner to his goal. This agrees with the meaning of our English word: right -- rightness, to be upon the right way, to proceed in the right manner. There is tom, which is a derivative of tamam. This means: to complete, to fulfill, to perfect. Thus, uprightness renders everything perfect and applies the finishing touches to every virtue; without it everything is imperfect and invalid. There is also nakoach, which is a derivative of nokach. This means: for, against, over. Uprightness thus pursues the proposed objective, holds it in view, and does not deviate from this -- neither to the right nor to the left. Then there is emeth. When the Hebrews speak uprightly, they say, "It is beemeth (=in truth)," that is, amen, truth; it is all harmonious. In Greek we have to gnesion. This means to be born lawfully, since only that is born and proceeds lawfully from man which is the result of upright conduct. There is aptharsia, which actually means incorruptibility, and is thus indicative of uprightness, of the purity of something, of not having the principle of corruption in it, and of that which always remains immutably the same. Then there is eilikrineia, which describes that which can be distinguished by the light of the sun, for uprightness can endure the light and may be observed in sunlight. "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:21).

Uprightness is a Christian virtue which God, by means of the Word, has planted in the heart of believers, whereby they do the will of God in truth.

We designate uprightness to be a virtue. It is not a specific virtue which is only applicable in certain situations. Rather, it is a universal virtue which encompasses all virtues. Thus, whatever man does is not a virtue unless it is accompanied by uprightness and he, so to speak, is imbued with it. Perfection pertains to the possession of all virtue. Wherever there is a deficiency, there is no perfection. Uprightness pertains to the manner in which virtues are exercised, however, and thus there can be uprightness even if that which is performed is deficient.

Uprightness is a Christian virtue. In some unconverted persons there is a natural uprightness; not all their actions are hypocritical. As they deal with and walk among the people, there are many things -- also as far as their religion is concerned -- which they do with their heart. They miss the matter itself, however, and what they do is only of an external nature. They miss the disposition of heart, and their heart is neither spiritual nor regenerate. They do not have in view the spiritual objective which they ought to have. Therefore, in spiritual things they also lack uprightness, and it is thus nothing but a natural work. If the Lord Jesus commands them to do something in which

they find no delight, then with the rich young ruler they depart sorrowfully (Matthew 19:16-22). Christian uprightness is of an entirely different nature, however; it has different objects, proceeds from a different heart, has a different objective, and differs in manner. It proceeds from union with Christ and there is thus conformity with Christ. It is therefore referred to as Christian uprightness. The subject of this virtue is the heart of the believer. Prior to regeneration, God's children are as all other men: blind, evil, impotent, unwilling, and dead in sins and trespasses. However, the Lord grants them His Spirit, who illuminates, regenerates, and quickens them by uniting them to Christ, so that Christ lives in them and they in Christ. Therefore in all circumstances they do everything out of an entirely different principle and in an entirely different manner. The seat of uprightness is neither to be found in the countenance, the clothing, the mouth, nor in their actions, but in their heart. Their intellect is illuminated by a wondrous light, their will embraces the spiritual matters which are revealed to them by that light, and their passions go out after those matters in order to have them in possession and to perform them in a manner pleasing to the Lord. They thus have an internal propensity which shines forth in their countenance, clothing, words, and deeds.

Believers are the upright. "The upright love Thee" (Song of Solomon 1:4); "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright" (Psalms 37:37). They are upright in heart: "...God, which saveth the upright in heart" (Psalms 7:10); "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalms 97:11). They are upright in their ways and walk: "Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way" (Proverbs 13:6); "Blessed are the undefiled in the way" (Psalms 119:1). The object of uprightness is the will of God. God has revealed to His church in the law what He enjoins and what He forbids. The upright person embraces this will willingly and joyfully as being the will of God -- without any exception as far as matter, manner, time, or place are concerned. Such is the manner in which the upright person deals with the law. His intellect is engaged in keeping this rule in view, the will loves it, and the affections go out after it. The singular objective of the upright person is to do the will of God and in this will he ends without any ulterior motives. "Let my heart be sound [Note: The Statenvertaling reads: "Laat mijn hart oprecht zijn tot uwe inzettingen," that is, "Let my heart be upright towards thy statutes."] in Thy statutes" (Psalms 119:80); "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect [Note: Again, the Statenvertaling speaks of "den oprechten weg," that is, "an upright way."] way" (Psalms 101:2). The Pattern of Uprightness: Truthfulness The pattern of uprightness consists in doing all things in truth. Pilate once asked, "What is truth?" but he did not wait for an answer. You, however, hear what truth is. First, God is truth (Deuteronomy 32:4). He is nothing but truth, essence, life, eternity, holiness, and glory. God is the origin of all that truth which is external to Him. His work is truth and His words are truth. Secondly, the Lord Jesus is the truth (John 14:6), for He is the antitype and the embodiment of the types and shadows. Thirdly, the word of God is truth (John 17:17), and it is the object and rule that must be believed and performed. Fourthly, there is also truth which is to be found within man. "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts" (Psalms 51:6). It is the latter which we shall discuss here. To this belongs truth as it relates to our mind, heart, mouth, works, and objectives.

(1) There is truthfulness which pertains to the intellect. Thus, the intellect, being illuminated by the Holy Spirit, perceives and understands the divinely revealed matters -- which pertain to the way of salvation through Christ -- in such a manner as is consistent with their very essence. There is harmony between their perception and the matters themselves. "... the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness" (Titus 1:1). This is to have "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). "If so

be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21); "The truth of Christ is in me" (2 Corinthians 11:10).

(2) There is a truthfulness of the heart, which is the acquiescence of the will with those divine truths to be believed and performed. The heart is united with this will so that with desire and love it believes and does this will. Thus, that which is truth in the Word of God is also truth within them. "O how love I Thy law!" (Psalms 119:97); "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22).

(3) There is a verbal truthfulness, which is the harmony of words with the heart -- the heart which, as has just been stated, is now illuminated and exercises love. This transpires when we speak of divine matters, confess the truth, and in our fellowship with people, express the matter as it is and as it is to be found in the heart. "My mouth shall speak truth" (Proverbs 8:7); "I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not" (1 Timothy 2:7); "Speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Ephesians 4:25).

(4) There is a truthfulness of performance when our countenance and conversation -- regardless of whether this pertains to the spiritual or civil realm -- agree with the heart which knows and loves the will of God as revealed in the Word of God. "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalms 119:97); "But be ye doers of the word" (James 1:22); "I will direct their work in truth" (Isaiah 61:8); "I found of thy children walking in truth" (2 John 1:4). There is a truthfulness of objective when our objective is in harmony with the will of God, as well as our heart, mouth, and deeds. In being upright it is particularly required that the goal we have in view be in harmony with all that we say -- or else it is all corrupt. An evil objective corrupts good means and evil means corrupt a good objective. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalms 66:18); "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (Matthew 6:22-23). Now consider all this collectively; it all must harmonize. When all this harmonizes, there is truthfulness; and this truthfulness constitutes the true essence of uprightness. Where such truthfulness is lacking in some measure, uprightness will not be functioning.

God: The Origin of Uprightness

God is the cause of uprightness, for God grants light to know the truth, gives love for the truth, and gives truth in the heart. Thus, this is also true for uprightness in all actions which issue forth out of the heart which is spiritually alive. "I will direct their work in truth" (Isaiah 61:8). David recognized that this has to proceed from the Lord and he therefore prayed for it. "Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes" (Psalms 119:80). Although God touches and reforms the heart directly, He nevertheless uses the Word as the means. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The nature of this virtue having been presented, everyone is obligated to exercise it. God required this from Abraham and all who are His children by faith. "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1); "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 18:13); "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). Your heart will inwardly be convinced of the justness of this requirement and the obligation to it. As you turn to yourself, however, and hold before you the above mentioned truth as a mirror, what manner of person are you? Do you belong to the upright? It is necessary to bring those who are not upright under conviction by showing them their wretched state; may it be a means unto their conversion. It is also necessary to convince the upright of their deficiency in this respect.

Hypocrisy: The Sin of the Unconverted

First, you truly still belong to the hypocrites if you are yet in an unconverted state. How can your heart be upright before God if you do not know Him in the face of Jesus Christ? How will you walk in the way of uprightness if the right way unto salvation is still hidden for you; if you have neither an inward desire nor love to enter upon the way to God through Christ and to tread upon the way of holiness; and if you have not even placed your foot upon that way, but yet have your darkened understanding, your stony heart, and your life in this world? All within you is corrupt and is entirely contrary to God and His will, and thus, there can be no uprightness. Even if your objective and some of your deeds -- be they civil or of an externally religious nature -- are in harmony with your heart, there is nevertheless no uprightness, for the heart itself is not right and therefore all that is in harmony with it is not right. Even if you are not a hypocrite, you are, nevertheless, not upright before God.

Secondly, you are an avowed hypocrite if you seek yourself in all that you do -- and if in all things you are striving for honor, love, and gain, and to that end conduct yourself differently from what you are. You rarely examine yourself and are so accustomed to being two-faced that it does not even occur to you when you do this. We shall therefore now depict your life and show you what you really are in your social and religious walk.

(1) As far as his social walk is concerned, it is as if the hypocrite had been educated by Cain. He speaks friendly to his neighbor and draws him out, doing so, however, to kill him. From Saul he has learned the trick to engage others, to praise someone in order to catch him in the net, or to shower him with many favors: "I shall give my daughter to David in order that she may be a snare to him." He has copied from Joab how one can express joy to someone, inquire about his well-being, and then thrust a murderous weapon into his heart. Absalom teaches him how to arrange for a meal in order to kill Amnon. Judas has instructed him how he can betray someone with kisses. David describes such as follows: "... the wicked ... speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts" (Psalms 28:3); "They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly" (Psalms 62:4); "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords" (Psalms 55:21).

(2) As far as religion is concerned, the church will be filled with hypocrites during a season when godliness is in esteem. How desirable it would be if the hypocrite would stay away from the pulpit, and that one would not find such there who study with all their might! The one does this to acquire the reputation of being a scholar, although this is in reality not the case. If he has a conscience which points out his wrong motive, he will pacify it by insisting that after having acquired a reputation he will be better able to edify. The other pursues this in order to be esteemed as being eloquent, and the third to arouse adoration for the fact that he has a voice and gifts which are such that they bring men into ecstasy and press tears from their eyes. A fourth, while praying, appears to be drawn into heaven, and preaches as an angel. However, all this is but to gain the honor, esteem, and acclamation of the people. Upon coming from the pulpit, such men will inquire in what measure they have delighted the people. It is a balm upon their soul if many people have been in attendance, the congregation has been moved emotionally, and people say, "This is a remarkable minister." They prefer to be in that company where they are praised and people make an idol of them. The devil can change himself into an angel of light, and thus also his servants can indeed

put on the hairy mantle of Elijah and the robe of John the Baptist in order to lie (Zechariah 13:4). However, the one is able to put on this garment better than others. There is no more abominable and loathsome thing under the sun than a minister who is a hypocrite.

We shall now turn to the members. The hypocrite observes how the godly conduct themselves, and he imitates this in order also to be esteemed as a godly person. Evil is thus not to be found in the external manifestation -- as if all who conduct themselves as such are hypocrites, for then the hypocrite would avoid all that. For he does not seek to be known as a hypocrite, but as a godly person. Thus, those who slander the godly refute themselves when they call the godly hypocrites, for it is evident to everyone's conscience that one ought to be godly and live as the godly do. When hypocrites seek to imitate this -- and precisely because the hypocrite seeks to appear to be such a one -- then, for the one who possesses the essence of that appearance, it is godly indeed.

However, the vice of the hypocrite is to be found in his heart and objective: He does not endeavor to be what he wishes to appear to be. He neither is nor strives to be as such, but only has the name in view. Once he has the name, he is satisfied and will know how to use this name to his advantage. In order to get this name, he will diligently frequent the church. Irrespective of what the circumstances may be, he must be present and one must not miss him there. He goes to hear the minister whom the godly delight to hear most, and then will specifically find a seat where he can be seen by all. When there is singing to be done he will also take a book in his hand -- even if he should not read one letter in it. He will also lift up his voice, doing so not to stir up himself and others to praise God, but that others would hear what a beautiful voice he has, or else how well he knows the tune. He will therefore start before the lead-singer and will, at the end, give the final sound. In prayer he will bow himself with much ado, or else will stand up. During prayer he will manage to heave sighs and after prayer will wipe his eyes as if he had cried. During the sermon he gives the impression of being very attentive and will occasionally arise. He will not take his eye from the minister, and it appears as if he draws the words out of his mouth and, so to speak, eats them. Occasionally he will open his Bible and will fold one of the pages as if he were marking a given text -- even if it is far removed from the text which the minister mentions. In the meantime he secretly glances sideways to see if it is being observed that he is so attentive, even though there is nothing he thinks less about than the sermon. He may perhaps be counting the panes in the windows, the pipes in the organ, or observing the engravings on the pulpit. When the deacon comes to gather alms, he pretends not to notice until the deacon is near, pretending to be disturbed by him in his attention. If he gives a coin, he selects the thinnest one so that it will sound as if it were a piece of silver. If he gives a bit more, he would wish that it would resound throughout the entire church. After the worship service, our hypocrite departs and visits this one and that one with his Bible in hand in order to show that he has come from church. He will speak very highly of the sermon and relate that it has been so edifying for him, even though he cannot say a word about it and complains about his poor memory. When hypocrites offer a prayer or read a chapter, it must be done so loudly that others would be able to hear it -- even if they were on the street. If they expect the minister for family visitation, the Bible especially must be open and sometimes two or three books will be added to this. They will be reading so attentively that they do not notice the minister -- even when he has entered the room, and will then act startled. They make acquaintance with the godly and speak to others about the familiar relationship which they have with other godly persons. Occasionally they will hold their heads a certain way, be very particular

in the manner in which they measure the words of the godly (as if they gave careful heed to their words), and they even imitate some of the bad habits which some of the godly have unconsciously acquired. Yes, to stand out even more, they will make the carrying about of an insignificant thing a matter of conscience. They are very zealous about external things and conduct themselves with an air of superiority in rebuking others. Their mouths are always filled with complaints about the corruption and decay of the church. They presume to instruct ministers as to how and what they ought to preach, and have something to say about every minister and every sermon -- particularly about those whom the godly hear the least.

Hypocrites conduct themselves as beggars do: The one pretends to be thus and the other as such a person, each one understanding his art of beggary best. Likewise, the one hypocrite functions best in this respect and the other in that respect. The one is so rude in his hypocrisy that everyone can detect it, and the other can be so sophisticated that he would deceive the very best among the godly. Some have learned the art so well that they deceive themselves, and for failure of giving heed to their heart, imagine that they are sincere. If it were possible, they would even deceive God Himself. Be ashamed, hypocrites! With great aversion I have occupied myself with discovering you to yourself in order, if it were possible, to bring you to repentance. To that end consider:

(1) What an abominable monster you are in yourself, for you are not even human in the true sense of the word! Everything about you is convoluted, abominable, and evil. Are you not afraid of yourself as you resemble a devil more than a man?

(2) How abominable and hateful you are to honest people -- in a godly as well as a civil sense! Do not imagine that you will remain unknown. For a while you may be able to create the impression that you are upright in both a social and religious sense, but it will not last long before people will detect you, and then you will be the most despised man that is alive. Even if you remained undetected, what more do you have but a handful of flies?

(3) God, with whom you have to do, does know you. He is thoroughly acquainted with you and takes note of your wicked objectives and of all your hypocritical subterfuge. How abominable you then must be in the eyes of God! Hear what David says of this: "Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (Psalms 5:6).

(4) Job asks, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite ... when God taketh away his soul" (Job 27:8). Read the answer: "The hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job 8:13); "Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites" (Isaiah 33:14). In Matthew 23:1-39 Jesus pronounces woe upon hypocrites eight times. A hypocrite will not be saved, but in hell will be under the most unbearable circumstances, for when the ungodly are threatened with hell, it is said that they will be with the hypocrites. "And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:51).

Impress this upon your heart -- you who are not upright and you hypocrites -- and repent before it will be too late. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded" (James 4:8).

True Believers: Upright in Principle True believers are principally upright, for:

(1) They have spiritual light and life, are partakers of the divine nature, and Jesus has been formed within them.

(2) They perceive their wrongdoings, are grieved over them, confess them, by faith seek forgiveness in the blood of Christ, and do battle against them.

(3) They are concerned about this, since they mistrust their hearts and become conscious of their corrupt impulses. They bring their heart before the Lord and pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24).

(4) This is true in a general and universal sense of the word as far as matters, time, and place are concerned; they make no exception whatsoever. Regardless of whether they fall more into the one sin than the other, it is nevertheless contrary to their intent and the wishes of their heart; it grieves them. Yes, in secret they are much more upright than they are in the presence of men, and their heart is even more upright in principle than it is in its manifestation. They can and dare say to the Lord: "With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments. Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psalms 119:10;Psalms 119:128).

All these matters are true evidences of uprightness. With this, believers may support and comfort themselves when they, due to detecting so much deficiency within themselves, are concerned as to whether or not they are upright. Nevertheless, they must humble themselves over their deficiencies and transgressions. To that end we wish to hold before them their faults.

(1) Reflect upon what we have said about hypocrites and thus examine yourself as to whether you have not made yourself guilty in one respect or another.

(2) Consider whether an intention suddenly surfaces which battles against the conscience and prevails. Or you may seek to pacify your conscience with spurious arguments that there is something good in it. Nevertheless, the objective is not pure, but is intertwined with a seeking of self, so that there is a discrepancy as far as the heart, countenance, words, or deeds are concerned.

(3) Carefully give heed as to whether your corrupt nature is continually engaged in suggesting ulterior motives, for example that there is not a lively and strong endeavor to have the proper objective in view; that the corruption is not sufficiently mortified and subdued; that we are careless and do not give heed to our heart; that there are circumstances in which we make room for the temptations of the devil, not earnestly battling and praying against them. Corruptions thus gain strength to stir up self-seeking motives. Sometimes when the devil tempts us to seek self, these temptations will have no effect and will be shaken off without harm being done. Sometimes he will accuse us -- be it deceitfully -- that with a given task we have self in view and thus prevent the performance of that which is good and so trouble the person. A believer, not being acquainted with his vices, is of the opinion that he truly seeks self in this endeavor and is thereby troubled and accused in nearly all things. He continually says, "This is the reason why I am doing it," and in a different situation says, "I am doing it for such and such a reason." If, however, a believer is acquainted with such assaults, he will not be disturbed by this, but will proceed with the performance of his task -- even if he does so as a man who proceeds on his way during a

hailstorm. However, corrupt nature and ulterior motives will frequently surface.

(4) It is also contrary to being upright if we do a task partially. This is not to suggest that those deficiencies which are to be detected in the very best works render a man as not being upright. Such is the case, however, if our heart is not in our work and if we do it listlessly and in a lukewarm and sluggish manner, the task is performed but not with the whole mind, will, and strength, and with every effort to have a holy objective. Our own intellect, will, activity, and seeking of self will intermingle, so that the task is performed but in a half-hearted manner. Consider if you also do not perceive yourself as being guilty of this. If so, then know that:

- even though you are pleasing in Christ as far as your person is concerned, the Lord is nevertheless displeased with your lack of uprightness.

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- your lack of uprightness will soon be detected by others -- particularly by the godly. It will grieve them if they are strong Christians and it will arouse aversion and antipathy against you if they are little in grace.

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- it will render godliness suspect to those who are of the world, and for your sake there will be a widespread slandering of the godly. They will say all the more, "See, such people are they; they are a group of hypocrites."

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- you yourself will have a troubled conscience and will lack freedom in all things.

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Therefore humble yourself greatly before the Lord, be grieved over it, and let the view of the wickedness of your heart and deeds cause you to loathe yourself, and may you thus be fearful of the sin of not being upright. May it cause you to battle against it all the more earnestly and to strive for uprightness. The Necessity of Being Exhorted to Be Upright Be determined to be upright and to conduct yourself as such, for uprightness is, in the first place, an absolutely essential characteristic of the Christian, for a Christian is indeed upright. "... the upright love Thee" (Song of Solomon 1:4). Of Job we read: "That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1); of David: "I was also upright before Him" (Psalms 18:23); of Hezekiah: "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight" (Isaiah 38:3); and of Noah: "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations" (Genesis 6:9). Uprightness is also an inseparable attribute of all virtues. Uprightness is a requisite in prayer: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24); of faith: "Now the end of the commandment is charity ... of faith unfeigned" (1 Timothy 1:5); of love: "Let love be without dissimulation" (Romans 12:9); of the entire disposition of the heart: "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless" (1 Thessalonians 5:23); and of our entire conversation: "Therefore let us keep the feast ... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8). Since uprightness is thus such an essential and inseparable characteristic of the Christian as well as of his work, what shall

we then undertake unless we do so with uprightness?

Secondly, uprightness is desirable and befitting for a Christian, for the God with whom we have to do is pure light, is the only searcher of the hearts whom we cannot deceive, who perceives the least deviation, desires truth in the inward parts, whose eyes are upon the truth (Jeremiah 5:3), and who delights in those who are upright in their way (Proverbs 11:20). Does having fellowship with such a God not require uprightness? The Lord Jesus in whom we put our trust is perfectly upright and there is no guile in His mouth. The Holy Ghost who dwells in you as in a temple, is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17), who leads His children in the truth (John 16:13). He would be grieved if you were to corrupt your ways and deviate toward unrighteousness. The Word of God by which you have been regenerated, which is your food and the rule of your life, is truth (John 17:17); it is the word of truth (Psalms 119:43). Ought this not to motivate you to be truthful in all your dealings? The spiritual life which is in you, and the image of God which you bear, "is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). Pursue therefore the principle of uprightness of spiritual life, follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, and in all uprightness walk before the all-seeing eye of your God. See to it that your deeds are in harmony with your name.

Thirdly, uprightness is a very precious ornament, and insincerity renders all virtues which someone may possibly possess despicable. However, uprightness renders all other virtues glorious, adds luster to godliness, and causes the upright to be loved by natural men, by the godly, and by God Himself.

(1) They will be loved by natural men. As much as they may mock with the godly, they have esteem for the upright. They say, "They are a group of hypocrites; however, so and so is genuine and is upright and with such a person I would wish to die" (even though it is mostly out of self-love in order not to be deceived). The words of the upright find entrance with them, and the upright are able to win others also without words. If uprightness were to shine forth in all the godly, what a luster godliness would have in the world!

(2) The uprightness of others is precious to the godly; they do not desire to have fellowship with two-faced people (Psalms 26:4). Rather, their eyes are upon the faithful and upright ones (Psalms 101:6). Even though someone has been regenerated in essence, but his uprightness nevertheless is penetrated with a seeking of self, the godly can have no fellowship with him. It is their desire to love them, walk sweetly with them, and take counsel with them; however, there is inner resistance. They cannot unite their heart with them; such cause them labor, toil, and sorrow. However, the heart is at once united with the upright, and the godly find delight in and are edified by their company. Lydia used uprightness as an argument with Paul by saying, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there" (Acts 16:15).

(3) However, all this is superseded by the fact that God Himself finds pleasure in the upright. "Such as are upright in their way are His delight" (Proverbs 11:20). Just as we delight in observing those whom we love, so it is written of the Lord, "His countenance doth behold the upright" (Psalms 11:7). The upright are harmless and do not wish to use evil means to help themselves. Rather, it is the Lord who "saveth the upright in heart" (Psalms 7:10). God adopts the upright to be His intimate companions upon whom He bestows a special measure of His goodness. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart" (Psalms 15:1-2). The Lord causes the

heart of the upright to be joyful. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalms 97:11). If there is anything that ought to motivate you, this ought to be it. Be therefore upright, for the upright are loved by everyone, whereas hypocrites are hated.

Fourthly, God evaluates his children according to their uprightness. It pleases the Lord not to make His children perfect in this life. Everything is only in part here, and daily they still offend in many things. However, they are called the upright according to their inherent uprightness. By way of this uprightness all their weaknesses are, so to speak, covered in Christ. David had committed great sins, for at one time he misbehaved himself in this respect and then again in a different respect. Nevertheless, due to his uprightness, it is written of him, "Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:14 -- for in that instance he had behaved himself hypocritically. Such is also true relative to the sins of Asa. "Nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect (upright) with the Lord all his days" (1 Kings 15:14). The conclusion of the rebuke addressed to Jehoshaphat was, "Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou ... hast prepared thine heart to seek God" (2 Chronicles 19:3). Hezekiah prayed, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary" (2 Chronicles 30:18-19). In Christ, God will overlook your defects if you walk before the countenance of the Lord with a truly upright heart. Therefore, be upright.

Fifthly, uprightness will give much liberty in the performance of our duty. Let the hypocrite fear the light, let the darkness be his refuge, let him be fearful of doing anything where opposition is to be expected, and let him be terrified and tremble due to each plague God sends into the world, but the upright man will be fearless, will have the courage to stand up for God's cause, will manifest himself as a young lion, and will perform his duty. He will stand firm against all slander and danger, for he has freedom within and anticipates God's help without. "God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go" (Job 27:5-6); "If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom: Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire is ... that mine adversary had written a book. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me. I would declare unto him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto him" (Job 31:33; Job 31:35-37). Uprightness will render a person to be that courageous. Even if he meets with violent opposition, he nevertheless does not fear, for the Lord helps the upright, according to this promise, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9). An upright person needs no other weapon but his uprightness.

Sixthly, uprightness yields a peaceful life and a dying in comfort. A hypocrite continually lives in unrest and fears that he will be found out. Much calculation is required to cover one hypocritical act with the other. An upright person, however, has a peaceful conscience, and he is steadfast and sure of himself. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity ... we have had our conversation in the world" (2 Corinthians 1:12). And, if the hour of death arrives, and sins come to mind, it will be a comfort that our heart has nevertheless been upright before the Lord. "O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight" (Isaiah 38:3). The Means to

Uprightness

Therefore, by way of continual exercise, be very zealous to acquire a propensity of uprightness and to have such an entirely upright disposition -- so that uprightness will, so to speak, spontaneously issue forth, manifesting itself in all your deeds.

(1) Before the Lord acknowledge the corruption of your heart and that which issues forth out of this heart, and show at the same time the hatred and aversion you have for it, and your desire for uprightness and truthfulness.

(2) Acknowledge your impotence, and that it is impossible for you to bring and maintain your heart in such an upright disposition. However, also acknowledge that the Lord has both the power and goodness to grant this to you. Therefore, come before the Lord with that desire and your destitute condition. Pray the Lord for this, doing so earnestly, humbly, and persistently, saying, "Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes; that I be not ashamed" (Psalms 119:80). As you thus pray, look unto the Lord Jesus, who has merited spirit and life for you and has appropriated these merits to you. Come before the Lord with this, while holding before Him the promise He has made, namely, that He would cause our work to be in truth (Isaiah 61:8).

(3) Pay careful attention to your heart, which leans toward insincerity, and resist this insincerity at once. No matter how much shame or injury may come upon you, remain steadfast in your uprightness.

(4) If you have done something insincere, reflect upon this for some time, so that it will deeply grieve you and make you more careful in the future.

(5) Remain continually in the presence of the Lord. The perception of the presence and omniscience of God is a powerful means unto uprightness. These two are therefore conjoined: "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1).

(6) As you thus proceed, focus continually upon the Word of truth. Endeavor to understand its spiritual meaning, and the truth will make you free. You will increase in a walking in the truth; and one thus enters heaven. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way" (Psalms 119:1).

073. Chapter 68: Prayer

----- CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT -----

Prayer The acknowledgment of all God's perfections, and the exercise of all virtues toward God coalesce in prayer -- that necessary, profitable, holy, and sanctifying duty of a Christian. Consequently, the exercise of religion is comprehensively expressed as praying and calling upon God: "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26).

Since prayer proceeds from a variety of motions of the soul, it is also referred to by various designations, such tefilla, which means prayer (Psalms 4:2); techinna, which means supplication (Psalms 6:10); siach, which means complaint (Psalms 64:1); tse'naqah, which means calling or crying (Psalms 9:13); deesis, which means prayer (James 5:16) or supplication (1 Timothy 2:1); hiketeria, which means supplication (Hebrews 5:7); enteuksis (1 Timothy 4:5), euche (James 5:16), and proseuche (Colossians 4:2), which all mean prayer; and proskunein, which means to worship (Matthew 4:10). In view of a variety of manners, times, matters, and respects relative to prayer, one may distinguish between various forms of prayer. The Various Forms of Prayer in Scripture

First there is worship. This occurs when, while viewing and acknowledging the perfections of God, we reverently bow ourselves before the Lord and render Him honor and glory, and if -- be it without words, with inward thoughts, or by way of external words -- we "speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works" (Psalms 145:5). This is also the work of angels toward Christ: "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Hebrews 1:6).

Secondly, there is invocation. This occurs when we request something from God, be it the deliverance from some oppressing or imminent evil, or the receipt of some benefit for body and soul. "And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee" (Psalms 50:15); "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him...with long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation" (Psalms 91:15-16).

Thirdly, there is supplication. This occurs when, with much humility and by presenting many arguments, we persevere in prayer. "...Nevertheless Thou hearest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto Thee" (Psalms 31:22); "... he wept, and made supplication unto Him" (Hosea 12:4).

Fourthly, there is groaning. This occurs if we cannot find words to give expression to our desires or the lofty matters which we have in view and desire with great yearning. The apostle calls them, "groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26), and the psalmist says, "Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee" (Psalms 38:9).

Fifthly, there are public or communal prayers. This occurs when the congregation calls upon God in either a public gathering place or in a private home, where someone audibly leads in prayer. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5). Prayers which are

offered when some gather to pray together are also considered communal prayers. "That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:19-20).

Sixthly, there are private prayers. This occurs when we bring our particular desires before God. There are:

(1) Ejaculatory prayers, which are sent heavenward to God during our work, while walking, or during a conversation with people. Thus, Nehemiah prayed to God while he was speaking to the king (Nehemiah 2:4), and Moses did so while he stood before the Red Sea with Israel (Exodus 14:13).

(2) Seasonal prayers, which in turn are either of an occasional nature when a particular incident prompts us to seek solitude in order to pray; or regular prayers, that is, at our designated devotional times in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. Both ejaculatory as well as seasonal prayers are either:

[a] Mental, when bringing our desires before God by way of exerting ourselves mentally, and by way of reflection and contemplation. This occurs without words as is to be observed in the quoted examples of Moses and Nehemiah.

[b] Or oral, which occurs when we express our desires with words -- even if we form and pronounce words without using the voice. Such was the case with Hannah. "Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard" (1 Samuel 1:13).

It can also be that we express our desires with our voice, doing so either more loudly or softly, depending on how far or how close we are to the people. "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord" (Psalms 5:3). It is no wonder that the papists elevate mental prayers above oral prayers, since their oral prayers are nothing but recitations of form prayers, pater nosters, and Ave-Marias.

Seventhly, there is intercessory prayer. This occurs when we desire something from God for others. Such can occur for the church in general: "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles" (Psalms 25:22); "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Psalms 51:18); "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalms 122:6). This can also occur on behalf of given individuals. "Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him" (James 5:16); "Brethren, pray for us" (1 Thessalonians 5:25); "Pray one for another" (James 5:16); "Pray for them which despitefully use you" (Matthew 5:44); "Prayers ... be made ... for kings, and for all that are in authority" (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Many abuse this practice in our days by repeatedly saying to each other upon parting, "I commend myself to your prayers; remember me in your prayers; I request your intercessory prayer; or pray for me." They do this as commonly as the expression of a greeting. Apart from the fact that it is impossible to remember all those who make such a request, it is necessary that we know specifically what we are to pray for on behalf of someone else. The one who makes the request ought to be in specific circumstances, which should be revealed to those whose intercessory prayer he requests. Only then may one request intercession from another, and the one to whom

the request has been made is obligated to do so, so that God, being beseeched by many, would also be thanked by many. However, the trend of making such requests is frequently no more than a custom, and it can cause one to lose sight of the intercession of the Lord Jesus.

There can be no intercession for the dead; they already are where they will eternally be and will remain; purgatory is indeed hell itself. There also can be no intercession for those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16).

Eighthly, there is imprecatory prayer. Here we must be cautious and on guard that we are not carried away by our own passions, as occurred with the disciples of Christ, who wanted to pray that fire consume the Samaritans who would not receive them (Luke 9:54). One may never pray for someone's eternal perdition, nor for the bodily destruction of someone who is our personal enemy. We may also not do so relative to those who offend God's congregation. If, however, the Lord moves us to pray against those who oppress and persecute the congregation in an extraordinary manner, we may then pray that God would convert them, and if such is not to be the case, that God would punish them so that they would no longer be able to oppress the church. It would thus be apparent that the Lord takes vengeance upon the blood of His church and furthermore that God would be glorified therein. "Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Thy name, O Lord. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: that men may know that Thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth" (Psalms 83:16-18).

Ninthly, there is thanksgiving. Such occurs when we joyfully acknowledge the goodness of God manifested in all temporal and spiritual blessings bestowed hitherto, doing so especially for specific blessings. Such acknowledgment will motivate the supplicant to pray zealously for that which he presently desires. This is what Jacob did in Genesis 32:1-2, as well as the church in Psalms 75:2-5. Therefore thanksgiving and prayer are frequently conjoined: "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Php 4:6); "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Timothy 2:1). The Nature or Essence of Prayer In our treatment of the subject of prayer we shall first show what its nature is, and then we shall stir you up to the exercise of prayer. In order to unfold the true essence of prayer we shall present 1) its definition (which we shall expound and enlarge upon); 2) its characteristics; 3) its external incidentals; and 4) the exercise of prayer, consisting in preparation, practice, and reflection.

Prayer is the expression of holy desires to God in the name of Christ, which, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, proceed from a regenerated heart, along with the request for the fulfillment of these desires. Each word is of emphatic importance and needs to be further enlarged upon.

Prayer is the expression of desires. With this phrase we wish to give expression to what the soul's activity is in prayer. There is total involvement; that is, the intellect, will, passions, eyes, mouth, hands, knees, the entire soul, and the entire body are involved.

(1) The supplicant is focused upon himself. He knows, sees, and perceives his deficiency. He perishes from hunger and desires to be filled. He perceives his impotence--his inability to help himself. He also knows that no creature can give him this and he also does not desire to receive it

from the creature. God alone can give this to him, but he sees and perceives with sorrow and anxiety of heart his unworthiness, hatefulness and abominableness. God can thus not be moved to help him by his disposition -- indeed, this would sooner provoke Him to wrath. He perceives that he is not worthy -- not even from afar -- to address God, for his prayer is so sinful and so deficient that by it he cannot move God to hear and help him. He is so intensely focused on his disposition that he sinks away in misery and despair, and does not have a hope in anything within him or that proceeds from him.

(2) The suppliant is focused upon God, holding the Lord before Him as being majestic, omniscient, glorious, immanent, holy -- as well as gracious in Christ, merciful, and omnipotent. Here he bows in humility and trembles due to the respect he has. Here he takes liberty to receive Christ and to make known his desires in and through Him, knowing that God is glorified in hearing and helping repentant sinners.

(3) The suppliant is focused upon the matters which he desires -- be it deliverance from a cross which oppresses or threatens him, or a blessing for either soul or body. He perceives how necessary and beneficial it would be for him either to be delivered from this, or to receive a blessing. He knows what he desires, vividly reflects upon it, is enamored with it, and pants and yearns for it. The suppliant intermingles these three matters. In one motion he focuses upon himself, God, and the matter at hand. Being in that disposition, he not only presents himself before God as such, but also gives expression to his desires before the Lord. The expression of desires is vividly presented in Scripture, conveying to us both the matter itself, as well as all who are or have been in such a disposition. Furthermore, Scripture stirs up inclinations toward such a disposition -- yes, frequently causes a soul to be thus disposed. That which we denominate as an "expression," Scripture refers to as:

(1) a pouring out: "... but I have poured out my soul before the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:15);

(2) [Note: We have placed (1) and (2) under the same heading, "pouring out," since the Dutch words "uitgieten" and "uitstorten" are both translated as "to pour out" in the KJV.] "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord" (Psalms 102:1);

(3) a declaring: "I have declared my ways, and Thou heardest me" (Psalms 119:26);

(4) a lifting up: "Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul" (Psalms 25:1);

(5) a looking up: "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee (that is, arrange everything in as orderly a fashion as an army is organized in rows and divisions) and will look up" (Psalms 5:3);

(6) a conversing: "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalms 27:8);

(7) a crying, a panting: "They cried unto Thee, and were delivered" (Psalms 22:5); "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God" (Psalms 42:1).

(8) a seeking with all our heart and our whole desire: "They had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire" (2 Chronicles 15:15).

All these expressions are indicative of the intense involvement of the soul in prayer. When the soul intends to pray, she can frequently not find words -- yes, all words are too inferior and inadequate to express the desire and the intense disposition of the soul. Therefore:

- (1) She does so by simply manifesting that disposition to the Lord.
- (2) Sometimes she does so by a sigh, which conveys more than she can express.
- (3) When the soul is more enlarged, she begins to formulate words, doing so either strictly mentally, or quietly with the mouth -- only moving the lips noiselessly, or with a soft whisper.
- (4) As the desires increase in intensity, the voice also becomes louder, and if one is so far removed from people that one cannot be heard, there will be a calling out.
- (5) And if the emotions become more abundant, there will be tears, especially if hope and love become stronger. What a wonder it is when a man who is not easily moved to tears and would be ashamed if he cried (this being inconsistent with his dignity), at times melts before the Lord in tears, which flow down his cheeks as rivers! The soul is never more in her element than when she has been soft and has been able to weep in a heartfelt manner. Job, that unemotional man, was able to cry: "I cry unto Thee" (Job 30:20). David, that valiant hero, who had the heart of a lion, wept before the Lord as a child: "All the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears" (Psalms 6:6); "Hold not Thy peace at my tears" (Psalms 39:12). The brave and respected Paul generally prayed with tears: "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears" (Acts 20:19).

Prayer: The Expression of Holy Desires

We denominate prayer to be an expression of desires -- not an expression of matters. An unconverted person who has a judgmental knowledge of spiritual matters, and who furthermore is eloquent, has an expressive voice, and has control over his emotions, can have a perception of the necessity and beauty of spiritual matters (although in a more natural manner and as if relating to natural matters) and present them in prayer in a very emotional and mournful manner. Yes, he can stir up his emotions to such an extent that he can speak tearfully about these matters. This is particularly true when he knows that he is being listened to or could be listened to; or, if he leads in prayer in a gathering where he can render himself pleasant by such expressions and tears, so that it appears that he is very spiritual, is very near to God, and is ignited with holy zeal -- and yet it is no more than a natural work. I therefore refer to prayer as an expression of desires, and not of matters. Man is but an empty vessel who must obtain his fulfillment from elsewhere -- from a source external to himself. To that end the Lord has given man the ability to desire and to give expression to his desires. The strength of his desires is proportionate to the measure in which he is sensitive of his deficiency, the magnitude and desirability of the matters which in his judgment could satisfy him, and the probability that they are to be obtained. He endeavors to express these desires accordingly. However, this does not necessarily render the desires holy, and we therefore do not merely refer to prayer as an expression of desires.

Instead, it is an expression of holy desires. We can indeed desire temporal matters in a spiritual sense, and spiritual matters in a carnal sense. Desires are carnal if they relate to sin, or if we desire good things with a sinful motive, in order to gain honor, love, favor, advantage, and

pleasure. We desire temporal and spiritual matters in a spiritual sense if it is lawful to desire these things and we desire them in order to be able to better serve God joyfully and zealously -- that is, if we desire those matters in the way we have prescribed earlier, and so that in them we may observe, acknowledge, and praise God's grace, goodness, help, and power, finding a delight in doing so.

We call prayer an expression of holy desires toward God. We then look beyond all creatures -- both good and evil -- knowing that they are not able to help. Yes, even if they were able to help, we would nevertheless not wish to pray to them. Apart from God we do not wish to be helped, because we love God and do not wish to give His honor to another.

(1) It is idolatry to serve those who by nature are no gods (Galatians 4:8).

(2) God wills that we call upon Him alone. "Call upon Me" (Psalms 50:15); "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:10).

(3) Only such prayer has a promise associated with it. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).

(4) God alone has the required perfections of someone who is to be worshiped. He who prays aright desires to glorify God in prayer as the One who alone is worthy of worship; the only fountain of all good gifts; the omniscient One who knows the hearts and the mind of the Spirit; the omnipotent One for whom nothing is too wonderful; the One who is good, merciful, gracious, and the One who delights in mercy; the One who waits for someone to come to Him in order that He might be gracious to Him; and the One who is true and has promised to hear and to give. It is for this reason that the supplicant turns to the Lord, bows before Him in humility and reverence, displays his needs before Him, requests from Him the fulfillment of His desires, and thus waits upon the Lord. It is his delight and joy to worship God.

Prayer to Be Offered in the Name of Jesus Christ

Prayer must be offered in the name of Jesus Christ. "... and the Branch that Thou madest strong for Thyself" (Psalms 80:15); "... for the Lord's sake" (Daniel 9:17); "If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14); "... that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you" (John 15:16).

(1) "In the name of" occasionally means out of love for someone. "And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me" (Matthew 18:5). To pray thus in Christ's name is as much as to say, "Lord, Thou dost love Thy Son, Thou art pleased with His sacrifice, and Thy Son loves me and I love Him. I now pray for the sake of the love which Thou hast for Thy Son that Thou wouldest hear me and grant my desire."

(2) Occasionally "in the name of" means upon the command of: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Then it means as much as to say: "Thy Son, who is my Surety with Thy approval, has sent me to Thee and enjoined me that I would call upon Thee and petition Thee for all that I stand in need of. This gives me boldness to humbly make this request."

(3) Sometimes, yes, most frequently, it signifies: for the sake of Christ Himself; for the sake of His atoning suffering and death. "Through faith in His name hath made this man strong" (Acts 3:16); "... for there is none other name under heaven" (Acts 4:12); "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25). Since man, due to his sin, has made a separation between God and himself, he neither may nor is able to immediately come unto God. God would be a consuming fire to him and he would encounter what Nadab and Abihu experienced, who approached unto God with strange fire and were killed by God through fire. However, the Lord has given Jesus to be a Surety and Mediator who, by His suffering and death, has reconciled the sinner with God and has eliminated the separation. Upon His death, the veil was rent in the temple so that without any impediment one would be able to look into and enter the Holy of Holies. Believers thus have boldness to go unto God "by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:20). Christ is the way by which alone one may and can go to the Father (John 14:6). If we therefore pray in Christ's name, that is as much as praying for the sake of the merits of Christ. The supplicant receives Christ who is offered to him and thus becomes a partaker of Christ and all His merits. With these merits he goes to God and displays them, and in this manner he petitions God for all that he desires.

Those who pray are not always in one and the same condition. Some are not able to assure themselves that they are partakers of Christ. Since they have strong desires for spiritual and temporal blessings, they take their refuge to God. However, they do so not directly, but with an eye upon Christ and His satisfaction, and they pray that God would be gracious to them for the sake of Christ and His merits and thus bless them. This constitutes praying in Christ's name -- although faith is weak. Some are principally assured of their portion in Christ; however, there is an estrangement from God. For such, upon engaging in prayer, it is therefore their first task to receive Christ and to reflect expressly upon His merits while consciously repenting. They thus show to the Father the merits of Christ and pray that their prayer for the fulfillment of their desires be heard on the basis of those merits. Some live a closer life and habitually are focused upon the covenant of grace, as well as the satisfaction and merits of Christ. Such, when engaging in prayer, are not always in need of an express transaction with Christ and a specific reflection upon His merits for the purpose of showing them to the Father, to say that they are coming and praying in Christ's name and that they request the fulfillment of their desires for the sake of the merits of Christ. Rather, they approach and remain in the disposition of being partakers of the covenant, children, and partakers of Christ. They pray by way of the covenant and the atonement of Christ, even though they do not mention it as such. However, we must take care not to be without an express transaction with and a returning unto Christ too long and too frequently, lest we lose sight of Christ and approach unto God in a more direct sense, thus dealing with God in a less humble and appropriate manner. The Originator of True Prayer A true prayer proceeds from the Holy Spirit. Man is spiritually dead by nature, and neither has a good disposition of heart, nor good desires. He is blind and ignorant of what can truly satisfy him. Nevertheless, he perceives bodily deficiencies and is fearful of evil. He also takes refuge to God when he is deprived of creature-help; however, neither the disposition of his heart, nor his prayer is pleasing to God. In order for anyone to pray aright, the Holy Spirit must grant the disposition, the desires, and the expressions. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications" (Zechariah 12:10); "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying,

Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6); "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). This means that He grants the disposition and desires, gives the words in the mouth, goes before them, and causes them to pray after Him. In proportion to whether the Holy Spirit moves in a moderate or stronger manner, prayer will also be either more feeble or more zealous. Sometimes the supplicant is fervent at the beginning of his prayer, but then there gradually comes more darkness and he becomes increasingly dull. Sometimes he is in darkness and dull at the outset, but while he is wrestling he becomes more lively. Sometimes he is completely closed up within and He can neither produce a prayer, sigh, nor tears, and in such a condition He must arise and depart. Sometimes he is so filled that he does not know where all these desires, words, and tears originate, so that he is more in want of time than desire.

Question If we cannot pray aright without the Holy Spirit, why are we then commanded to pray for the Spirit? Answer: Man has a natural intellect, he perceives his deficiency, and nature teaches him that he must pray. Under the administration of the means of grace he learns that the Holy Spirit is the author of prayer, and he learns from the Word of God that he must pray God for the Holy Spirit. By means of these natural convictions and motions the Holy Spirit works in the elect the inclination to pray and shows them that they neither have the right prayerful disposition, the right desires, nor do they express them correctly. The Holy Spirit will show them that He must work all this in them and that therefore they must pray for the Holy Spirit. They are thus secretly wrought upon to pray for the Spirit, and are therefore already praying for the Spirit by the Spirit. Those who presently perceive in themselves the beginnings of the operation of the Spirit will pray that this might be increased by the Spirit.

Man, upon the Holy Spirit having wrought and stimulated a prayerful disposition in the soul, begins to express his desires from a regenerated heart. The regenerate man is thus the formal cause of his deeds. If even a natural man has an inclination toward prayer, this is much more so for a regenerate man due to the regenerate disposition of his heart. Since not all the regenerate know that such is the case with them, but perceive that they have a sinful heart; and since all manner of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds proceed from this sinful disposition, they become concerned as to whether they are permitted to pray -- yes, at times they do not dare to pray, for it is as if they mock God. As they engage in prayer, it is always their intention not to sin, but they, nevertheless, always fall again into the same sin. The following passages come to their mind: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 15:8); "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Proverbs 28:9); "Now we know that God heareth not sinners" (John 9:31). For your instruction you ought to know:

(1) It is the duty of all the ungodly to repent and to pray. The abomination lies not in the fact that they pray, but in that, while praying for temporal matters, they do not repent, they willingly and consciously continue to sin; neither do they beseech God to be reconciled with Him, nor for a change of heart and deeds. They do so routinely, being accustomed from their youth to offer a prayer both morning and evening, which, if they were to neglect, would cause them to be restless. Or they do this hypocritically, being desirous, in spite of their worldly lifestyle, to be esteemed as good Christians.

(2) The prayer of those whose heart is upright before the Lord, who seek for reconciliation and the forgiveness of their sins, desire to be delivered from sin and to live in the love and fear of God

according to His will, and pray for this while endeavoring to focus upon the Lord Jesus -- their prayer will not be an abomination, but be pleasing to God. The Lord seeks after such supplicants, and He deals tenderly with such bruised reeds and smoking flax. Therefore let this give you liberty. Your repeated falling into sin is contrary to your intent, grieves you, and does not proceed from an evil intent. Rather, it is the result of weakness, the flesh becoming stronger than the spirit.

Prayer Under Consciousness of Committed Sin

They who presently know that they have been translated from death to spiritual life, or may perceive the evidences within themselves from which they may conclude this (even if the assurance of this is not very strong), occasionally come into a condition which is more sinful than their common trend of life. They can also be taken captive by sin to such an extent that at the moment they cannot make a complete, joyful, and courageous resolution to presently arise from this sin and earnestly strive against it. Or it can be when the trend of their life is good, that they occasionally fall into a special sin. If under such conditions, they were to engage in prayer immediately -- that is, without first coming to themselves, making a resolution to repent so that their heart convinces them that they are upright in their intention -- it would be an irreverent undertaking and displeasing to God. Such persons would personally have no liberty in prayer, nor do so with holy attention, for their heart condemns them while they are thus engaged. Those who are in such a condition must first recover themselves, so that they may have an upright intention to battle against that sin, and betake themselves to prayer to beseech God for reconciliation and strength against this sin. They will then be at liberty because their heart does not condemn them (1 John 3:20-21).

It occasionally also happens that a regenerate person is entirely void of desires -- not in essence, but in the exercise. When such a one engages in prayer he knows not what to pray, for he has no desire for anything. He has either lost sight of the desirability of the matters due to spiritual darkness, or he is discouraged due to not having received his desire after so much prayer. This will close his heart. What shall he do? Pray? He cannot. Shall he neglect prayer? -- which such a person neglects all too often, and, due to such neglect, turns away from prayer entirely. That he cannot do, for his regenerated nature will not permit this and will continually incline him to pray. Such a person must not resist such feeble inclinations, which is so easily done; rather, he must be as a small child. Or, as one who revives from a fainting spell moves about very feebly and speaks very softly, he must follow his feeble inclinations, present them before the Lord, persevere in prayer, and acquaint himself with the Lord -- or else he will backslide even further. However, in doing so he will experience that "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Psalms 102:17). The Purpose of Prayer The purpose for which one presents his holy desires is the fulfillment of those desires, beseeching that they be granted. The supplicant makes a request. When someone makes a request to another, he will support that request with arguments; such is also the case here. The supplicant will not merely say: "Lord, save me, and create a new heart within me; say to my soul 'I am thy salvation'; teach and guide me," but the supplicant will enlarge his request by way of argumentation. This is to be observed in Christ, David, and other saints, for this renders the supplicant:

(1) More humble, for as he perseveres, he will behold God and himself all the more clearly. He will think: "How do I dare to speak so boldly -- I, who am so sinful, so abominable, and so unworthy!"

He sinks away, so to speak, and acknowledges that it is nothing but incomprehensible grace that he may speak with God and that God would hear him.

(2) More active and his prayer more fervent, for he perceives the necessity and desirability of the matters all the better. His desires are quickened, and his heart is enlarged and begins to flow forth as a river.

(3) More holy in his prayer, for his objective will be more genuine, he is more aware of this genuine objective. The more genuine his objective becomes in desiring a matter, the more liberty he will have in desiring it.

(4) More fit to persevere in prayer, since he then views the matter from all angles. The one desire will then engender another and those desires in turn will engender others. Such perseverance causes him to dwell longer in the presence of God; the soul comes into and remains in a more holy disposition, and has already received a blessing. The presentation of such arguments must not occur artificially, but as they spontaneously issue forth from the prayerful heart and as the Lord causes matters to come to our attention. We shall then strive for the glorification of God, whose glory, goodness, and power would manifest itself in the hearing of prayer and in granting the matter itself. At one time we shall use as an argument that, if the Lord were to grant us our desire, our abilities would be such that the congregation would be edified and it would be to the benefit of others. Then again we shall focus upon the promises of God, being exercised with them until we believe the immutable truth of God in a more lively manner and we can be more assured that this matter will also become our portion -- God having promised the hearing of prayer. At another time the godly will present themselves to the Lord as being His children, knowing that God, being pleased when His children hunger and thirst after Him, will consequently give them something and gladden them -- just as a father according to the flesh is compassionate toward his hungry and desirous children, and rejoices in giving them their desires and making them happy. Then again they will present with urgency the merits of the Lord Jesus. They will remind the Lord of His mercies previously manifested toward them -- as Jacob did in Genesis 32:9-12, and the church in Psalms 85:1-5. While thus engaged, faith will be quickened, love will become active, they will engage in more intimate transactions, and, with quiet resignation, will submit themselves to the will of God. The Characteristics of True Prayer The characteristics of prayer are as follows: It is engaged in humbly, in spirit and in truth, earnestly, fervently, incessantly, and by faith.

First there is humility. This is the sensible, humble disposition of the supplicant, resulting from a view of the majesty of God, and of his own sinfulness, unworthiness, and impotence either to supply for his deficiency or to have it fulfilled by God. Man must in all things be humble toward God. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to ... walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). This must particularly be the case when engaging in prayer, for:

(1) The creature then approaches his Creator, the lowly one to Him who is majestic and exalted, the sinner to the Holy One, the despised one to the glorious One, and one worthy of condemnation to the Judge of heaven and earth who has power over life and death. When Moses approached the burning bush, the voice of God resounded, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). Here one may think in truth: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God" (Micah 6:6). Abraham said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and

ashes" (Genesis 18:27). "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

(2) Humility in prayer is very pleasing to God. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:17); "... for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy" (Hosea 14:3).

(3) God hears and answers humble supplicants. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

(4) A godly supplicant finds a special delight -- yes, acknowledges it as a great grace and as an answer upon his prayer -- if, with such a humble and reverent disposition, he may have a view of the Lord's majesty and glory, even if he received nothing else upon his prayer. However, he does receive immediate assurance that God has heard him and will provide according to His will, for He "giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

Secondly, it is done in spirit and in truth. To recite verbally what has been memorized (even if we pay attention to every word and even if it is our general objective to pray to God) but not to understand the matters, and if we do understand them not to desire them, is but a mocking with God. It is foolishness if we desire a matter, and to that end recite the Lord's prayer, a morning or an evening prayer, in order to attain it.

Praying in spirit and in truth:

(1) Consists of a praying with the understanding; that is, to be acquainted with the Lord to whom one is praying; with the Christ through whom one approaches unto God; with ourselves in our perplexity and unworthiness; with the matter which we desire; and with the objective in requesting the matter. Not only is it necessary to be habitually acquainted with this (thus being able to be conscious of this if we were to give heed to this), but there must be an actual knowledge of all this. Thus, while presently praying, we shall perceive and observe that which is being expressed, and by such perception will be moved and made active. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15).

(2) Is an exercise of the will, so that we desire the matters in truth. Our conscience must testify before God that we desire them, that this is our objective -- not only when considering the matter as such, but also together with its attending circumstances, willingly renouncing all that stands in opposition to the desired matter. An unconverted person when hearing the desirability of holiness presented as such would perhaps say, "Yes, I want this, and I have a desire for holiness." If, however, that sin which he views as an honest practice, cherishes, delights in, and deems profitable is observed in this light, and he perceives that he must fully renounce it, he does not desire holiness, but his sin instead. Alexander wanted to be Diogenes if he were not Alexander. The rich young ruler had a desire for salvation and the keeping of God's commandments; however, when he must part with his goods, he departs sorrowfully (Matthew 19:21-22).

(3) Is also attended by thoughtfulness and attentiveness. We must be on guard that passion does not run ahead of the understanding and the will; rather, the engagement of the understanding and

the will must precede, stimulate and govern our zeal. If matters proceed in this way, the heart will remain in a proper disposition. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Ecclesiastes 5:1-2).

Spirit and truth are absolutely essential in prayer, for:

- [1] "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24);
- [2] God requires the heart: "My son, give Me thine heart" (Proverbs 23:26);
- [3] God knows the heart as well as the mind of the Spirit: "... for Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men" (1 Kings 8:39);
- [4] God desires truth in the inward parts (Psalms 58:8);
- [5] "Thine eyes (are) upon the truth" (Jeremiah 5:3), "for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4:23);
- [6] God hates and punishes such who approach unto Him physically and not with the heart. "Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me. ... Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:13-14).

Thirdly, there must be earnestness and fervency. This neither consists in calling out loudly, nor in the lengthy expression of words in fluent sequence, nor in a joining together of intellectual arguments in a passionate and mournful manner. All this a natural man can do. Rather, fervency is an intense motion of the heart which is engendered by a strong desire, expressed in an understanding and thoughtful manner. Fervency is the engagement of all the energy of soul and body. It penetrates through all opposition and overcomes the wandering of thoughts, the lethargy of the flesh, and the arising of unbelieving thoughts (such as, "It is in vain; God does not hear you; you will not receive it," etc.), and the subtle deceit and insinuations of Satan, etc. The believer cannot so readily desist, for his desires are too strong; he perseveres. "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me" (Genesis 32:26). With the Canaanitish woman, he pursues the Lord with prayer and supplication (Matthew 15:22). However, fervency neither takes away reverence for God, nor the quiet and composed disposition of the soul. Quietness and fervency go hand in hand here. Those who, so to speak, cannot bring themselves to pray, but rather avoid it and look up against it, ought to be ashamed. When, without their fault, an impediment presents itself at their devotional time, they are not grieved, but are secretly satisfied that they are relieved from the duty of prayer. One prays more to satisfy the conscience (having prayed) than to attain the fulfillment of his desires. Such permit themselves to be easily hindered by an unbelieving thought that they will not be heard. They do not have fervent desires toward a matter, and therefore move from the one matter to the other by merely enumerating them -- matter, words, and desires being absent. This is an abominable matter. If you have no desires, then be gone. If you do not come with your own needs, you need not come simply because of God's will. He does not desire such a lukewarm, listless, and slothful service. The sacrifices and incense had to be ignited with fire, and our prayer must likewise be aflame with fervency. The reasons for this are as follows:

(1) Fervent supplicants are pleasing in God's sight: "My suppliants ... shall bring Mine offering" (Zephaniah 3:10).

(2) An earnest prayer avails much with God. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

(3) A believer must be fervent in all that he does. "Be ... fervent in spirit" (Romans 12:11); "Be zealous therefore" (Revelation 3:19).

(4) The examples of the saints, whose footsteps we must follow, stimulate us to be fervent in prayer. Their entire life consisted of prayer. David even arose at midnight. He was ahead of the dawning of the morning. He called, and he cried; he did not cease. It becomes us to do likewise, so that the Lord may perceive that it is our objective to know Him and to acknowledge Him as the Giver -- as the One who gives freely -- and that it is grace alone which can help us.

Fourthly, there must be an incessant perseverance in prayer. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

(1) Perseverance consists in making prayer a daily activity, disciplining ourselves not to neglect prayer and letting it become an unfamiliar practice. A Christian is a supplicant. Prayer is the very essence of religion (Genesis 4:26).

(2) Perseverance consists in always being in a prayerful disposition. Even if one is not always expressly engaged in prayer, the heart must nevertheless always be near to God, be focused on Him, and walk with Him. Such a disposition will, time and again, bring forth ejaculatory prayers -- be it that we are in solitude, traveling, engaged in our work, or in the presence of people. Nehemiah prayed to God while he was speaking to the king (Nehemiah 2:3-4).

(3) There are matters which God will not bestow all at once, but gradually, step by step -- such as growth in faith, hope, and love, spiritual life, strength against sin, and sanctification. We must therefore persist in prayer for these during our entire lifetime.

(4) There are specific circumstances in which we are in special need of the help of the Lord and the guidance of the Spirit. Such is true when we must either leave or enter our home, to undertake a special task, to come into the company of people, to pay someone a special visit, come into situations where snares have been prepared for us, must make a choice between things, must hire a servant, must buy or sell, or encounter unforeseen circumstances. In each situation we must take refuge to prayer.

(5) There are matters which are extraordinarily oppressive and threatening, or which we desire in an extraordinary manner -- their fruition being imminent. It can be true in both a temporal and spiritual sense that we are subject to uncommon temptation. There can be a sin which is extraordinarily strong; there can be a strong desire for more than a common revelation of God to the soul; we can be exceptionally desirous of being assured of being a partaker of Christ and salvation, or for a foretaste of heaven, etc. In such given circumstances the supplicant will persevere 1) by expressing the same prayer, not being able to desist until having received something; 2) by repetition of the prayer for the same matters at different times, either at the regular devotional hour, or occasionally outside of these times if there is opportunity to be alone and if the desire becomes fervent. In this manner we may persevere, looking unto the Lord

(Psalms 34:5) until the matter is resolved; that is, until the Lord grants us the matter (or some measure of it) or makes the soul so content with His will that the desires are no longer that vehement. Rather, we shall be quiet and satisfied, being assured that the Lord will make it well.

(6) Sometimes there will be a strong desire for the well-being of others -- be it for the church in general, for one who has a specific or extraordinary need, or for the election of a minister, elders, or deacons. Or else one may have a strong desire for the well-being of a particular family or person, either in regard to body or soul, be it that they are converted or unconverted. Husband, wife, children, or parents can weigh heavily upon the heart. We may have a strong desire for their conversion and thus engage in prayer, not being able to desist. This prayer will beget many supplications, and we shall frequently repeat it at other times, until the Lord either grants the matter or grants us a quiet confidence that our prayer for them has been heard and that the Lord will do it even if we were never to see it. It may also be that the Lord begins to hide Himself and we no longer dare to press the issue that strongly, or the Lord may exclude these people from our prayers, not wanting to be approached by His children in vain. When it is our duty to do so, however, we must not neglect it due to laxity or discouragement, but persevere until the Lord sweetly refreshes us, showing that our earnest praying has been pleasing to Him. We shall thus give the matter over into the hand of God, our prayer will return into our bosom (Psalms 35:13), and our peace will return to us (Matthew 10:13).

Exhortation to Persevere in Prayer In order that we be stirred up to persevere, let us consider the following matters:

(1) Perseverance in prayer is everywhere recommended and commanded as being our particular duty. "... continuing instant in prayer" (Romans 12:12); "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Ephesians 6:18); "Continue in prayer" (Colossians 4:2); "And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

(2) Perseverance brings the soul into a good disposition. First, it teaches us better to acknowledge God as the free Giver who is under no obligation to us; who may either give or not give; and if He gives, it is solely due to His grace and goodness. Secondly, it will cause the supplicant to be more humble, since he perceives himself as being unworthy of all grace and blessings. "The poor useth entreaties" (Proverbs 18:23). We shall esteem a matter much more if we have received it upon many prayers, and it will render us more joy if we may perceive in all this that God has granted it to us upon our prayers.

(3) Perseverance will cause us to obtain. Upon lengthy wrestling Jacob was blessed (Genesis 32:1-32). After a long pursuit the Canaanitish woman received what she desired (Matthew 15:1-39). Upon the frequent repetition of his prayer Elijah received rain (1 Kings 18:1-46). Upon the continual prayer of the congregation Peter was wondrously delivered out of prison (Acts 12:1-25). Upon persevering with one accord in prayer and supplication, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:1-26; Acts 2:1-47). Since many pray but once for a matter and do not persevere, they also do not obtain it. Therefore see to it that you refrain from everything which would hinder you in persevering, such as: lethargy, laziness, not believing that the matters will be obtained, divergence among our desires (being partially spiritual and partially focused on earthly things), and the instability of our desires. Such and similar matters cause the supplicant to

readily desist from praying and prevent him from repeating it frequently. He thus must go forth without having received his desires. Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.

Praying in Faith The fifth characteristic is that prayer is offered in faith. Prayer requires faith in a special sense. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22); "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24); "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:6).

First, this requires that the supplicant be a believer -- a truly converted one (James 5:16). "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him" (Luke 18:7). As God hears the young ravens when they call to Him, He also does indeed hear an unconverted person, and will bestow some blessings upon him. This is but of a temporal nature, however, proceeding from the common goodness of God and apart from His promises. However, His children are the heirs of the promise and they pray through the Spirit of prayer. Therefore "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry" (Psalms 34:15); "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psalms 145:19).

Secondly, this requires that the supplicant appropriate all the promises of God's Word as having been made to him, and that he thus consider himself to be an heir of the promise (Hebrews 6:17). He must furthermore consider that not only are all promises yea and amen in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20), but that also for him they are certain and true -- particularly those that pertain to the hearing of prayers.

Thirdly, it is requisite that the supplicant consider in a believing manner that:

(1) God has ordained prayer as a means from man's side to thereby give him all that he stands in need of.

(2) God is not only omniscient and acquainted with the hearts of all men, but also that God during prayer looks upon the supplicant, takes note of the expressions of his desires, and hears this (Psalms 34:1-22).

(3) God is omnipotent and is able to grant him his desire, irrespective of whether this is probable, the means are available, or if everything seems to be opposed to it. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20); "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

(4) God is good and thus desirous to give the supplicant his desire. He is ready to forgive (Psalms 86:5), loves freely (Hosea 14:4), waits that He might be gracious (Isaiah 30:18), and rejoices over doing good to His people (Jeremiah 32:41). In prayer, faith must acknowledge God to be such.

(5) God is faithful in fulfilling all His promises made to supplicants. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalms 81:10).

Fourthly, the supplicant must with impression and with lifting up his heart believe that:

(1) Everyone who comes through Christ unto God, is pleasing to God in Christ (Daniel 9:23; Acts 10:30; Acts 10:33).

(2) The Lord is pleased with the yearning, tears, groaning, and the cries of His children to Him. "Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song of Solomon 2:14).

(3) God views his countenance in Christ, hears his prayer, and answers it according to His will. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). These matters mentioned the supplicant must deem to be sure and certain, for they are according to truth. The more he holds them before him with increased esteem, the more he prays in faith, the more pleasing his prayer will be, and the more certain it will be that he will obtain the matter for which he prayed.

However, many of God's children are deficient here. They do not actively pursue these matters mentioned and these dispositions, and they randomly give expression to their desires. Many are also weak in faith -- particularly to believe that God will hear them and grant their desire. "For," they think, "how can I believe, since I am too sinful, and furthermore, I have experienced too frequently that I did not receive anything upon my prayer." For their instruction it should be noted:

(1) That God does not hear for the sake of our righteousness, but for Christ's sake. Therefore for him who is in Christ -- the measure of the grace of light and life is immaterial as far as prayer being answered -- it is the carelessness of his prayer and his failure to exercise faith in prayer which prevents his prayer from being answered.

(2) You cannot truthfully say that God has never answered your prayer nor that He has never given you what you prayed for. It is a certainty that God has frequently been pleased with your tears and groans, and frequently has granted you blessings upon your prayer. However, you have neither taken notice of these blessings nor related them to your previous prayer.

(3) There are individual cases where God, these matters having been brought before Him, has answered prayer relative to them. However, God has neither promised time, manner, nor measure. We do not know what is best, and if God had given many matters in those circumstances as we had asked for them, we would see subsequently that it would have been better had we not received them. The supplicant must therefore indeed believe that his prayer was pleasing to God and that He has answered it. He must subject himself, however, and with contentment submit himself to the will of God, doing so neither with murmuring, fretfulness, unbelief, nor entertaining the thought: "God does not love me and does not hear me anyway." That would displease God and it would not benefit him personally.

(4) There are matters which we absolutely may not desire, and thus we may also not pray that we obtain them. The supplicant will then also not have liberty in prayer and it ought not to seem strange to him that he does not receive them. It is great foolishness to desire that God would give us that particular matter for which we do not even dare to pray. Therefore govern your desires according to the will of God and be not too passionate in your desires for temporal matters. Let God's wisdom, goodness, and will be your delight. You will then be able to pray in faith and submissively wait upon it being answered. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). The externals of prayer are: time, place, gestures, and the voice. The Time of Prayer

First, the time of prayer, considered in a general sense, is every day, every opportunity -- always. Specific times of prayer are when we engage in it corporately -- be it in public gatherings, in private gatherings, or in our individual family worship which ought to be conducted in every Christian family. This ought to occur both morning and evening, and if the opportunity permits it, also at noon. At this time the father -- or if he is absent or unable to do this, the mother -- must read a chapter, speak about it, catechize children and servants, sing a psalm together, and bow and offer a prayer -- all in accordance with the ability the Lord grants each one. Joshua desired to serve the Lord with his house (Joshua 24:15), and Cornelius feared God with all his house (Acts 10:2). One must make of his home a small church, for then the Lord will bless the home. Children and servants will learn to fear the Lord and thus will experience salvation. It will beget mutual love, there will be mutual respect, restraining everyone from sin, and one will exemplify godliness to each other and follow each other in this way. We must make use of all these opportunities, and take them into consideration, both when praying and when following the example of others.

Private Devotions In addition to this, however, everyone ought to have his private exercises of prayer, which are either prompted by extraordinary circumstances or are commonly conducted. There is no express command as to the time of private prayer; however, the saints, with their custom, have given us an example to be imitated: It is to be done in the morning, at noon, and at night. Observe this in the following passages: "Daniel ... kneeled upon his knees three times a day" (Daniel 6:10); "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice" (Psalms 55:17). These examples are to be followed -- not as if prayer at such times is more pleasing to God and more effectual, but rather to bring us into and maintain continual communion with God. For, if we are neglectful in this, we shall perceive that communion with God will decrease. At first we shall not be aware of this, since there will be many ejaculatory prayers during the course of the day. We shall experience, however, that there will be a gradual decrease in ejaculatory prayer, and if we by renewal adhere to regular devotions, we shall perceive how far we have degenerated. Then we shall perceive that there was not such a steadfast basis for intimate communion with God, that there were no extraordinary encounters and illuminations relative to the mysteries of godliness. Yes, we shall perceive that the Spirit of prayer has departed from us and that of ourselves we are not capable of engaging in fellowship with God for some period of time. Therefore he who desires to be in an assured state, to have continual fellowship with God, to attain to a higher level of illumination and experience, and to fear God steadfastly, let him strictly observe his devotional time and let him not be neglectful in this -- for the devil greatly strives to bring this about.

It is true that those who strictly observe their devotions will experience more assaults, darknesses, weaknesses of faith, and unusual strife than someone who is not steadfast in his devotions, and who only prays when there are special circumstances and otherwise is satisfied with uttering some ejaculatory prayers on the run. This takes place due to having a deeper insight into self, due to striving for a higher measure of fellowship. Others do not observe this as closely and thus avoid such strife. Furthermore, by way of such extraordinary strife, such a person will grow in grace and become mature in Christ, whereas others continue without progress.

Someone may think, "I am much more spiritual when I utter ejaculatory prayers than when I specifically engage myself to pray. Then I become listless and darkened, and I cannot pray. I am therefore of the opinion that it is better not to observe a set time, and to pray only when the Spirit

moves me." For your instruction you ought to note the following:

(1) The occurrence of listlessness and darkness is frequently due to laziness. One is not willing to wrestle, but at the very outset wishes to have that prayer which God generally does not give until the end. They desire to be carried at once rather than walk themselves. Scripture says, "Seek and ye shall find," but not "find and ye shall seek."

(2) Else, listlessness ensues due to thinking that at such times one immediately ought to have a greater measure of light, a more elevated disposition, and stronger exertion than apart from this time. If we do not immediately find this to be true, we cease from our work. Instead, we ought to use our devotional time to offer ourselves to the Lord and sacrifice ourselves to Him as a morning and evening sacrifice. Our being pleasing in God's sight is commensurate with our objective and activity in seeking to attain to this, and not whether or not He favors us with light and grace. We then wish to fly higher than befits the wings we have been granted, being of the opinion that to be in a more elevated disposition is in our own power and that we then ought to be able to make use of this accordingly. Or we may think that God, at the time set apart by us to separate ourselves in order to seek the Lord, immediately ought to enable us to engage in this duty with ease. If we then do not find it to be so, the hands become weak and we think, "God cannot be pleased with such a listless and fleshly performance. It will be better if I desist." It is thus that we shall "fall to the ground" due to wanting to fly too high at first, and will come in darkness because we initially had too strong a desire to see the light.

However, the cause of listlessness is generally in those who do not strictly maintain their devotion time in the activity and testimony which they may have sought. Because of this, as soon as they begin to observe that there is a godly person who has a greater measure of light and more intimate communion and fellowship than they do, having thought previously that all was quite well and that good progress in godliness had already been made, they now perceive that they have but little light, life, and strength. This they categorize as listlessness and the withdrawal of the Spirit, whereas it is but their feeble disposition which causes them to succumb when a greater task is to be undertaken, or when they wish to engage in something which exceeds their spiritual strength. We ought habitually to have a devotional time and we ought to be active in harmony with the greater or lesser measure of our strength and spirituality. The Place of Prayer The second circumstance is the place. It is equally true that the location does not attribute worthiness to prayer. The only requirement is that it be a place of solitude where we are not under human observation.

(1) The Lord Jesus commands this: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret" (Matthew 6:6).

(2) Such was the practice of the saints. Isaac went out into the field to pray (Genesis 24:63); Jacob remained alone at the other side of the brook Jabbok in order to pray (Genesis 32:24); Daniel went into his chamber (Daniel 6:11); and Peter went up upon the housetop (Acts 10:9).

(3) The disposition of our soul and the matter which we wish to present demand solitude; rarely would one want to make this public to men.

(4) The proximity of people is detrimental to our concentration and takes our zeal away. If we but think that someone is in the vicinity and that we are being listened to, we shall be hindered. The

Physical Gestures Used in Prayer

Thirdly, there are the physical gestures. These also do not attribute worthiness and fortitude to prayer. Saints have prayed in various bodily postures; that is, being prostrate, sitting, and standing. Generally they have done so kneeling, however, this being one of the most humble postures.

(1) David recommends this: "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Psalms 95:6).

(2) Such has been the practice of the saints. Solomon the king made his prayer while kneeling (1 Kings 8:54). Daniel kneeled three times a day (Daniel 6:11). The Lord Jesus Himself kneeled and prayed (Luke 22:41); Stephen did likewise (Acts 7:60), and so did Paul together with the congregation (Acts 20:36). How then can we do otherwise but to come to God in such a humble physical posture so that we may glorify God both in our bodies as well as with our souls? The Voice in Prayer The fourth circumstance is the use of the voice. This is not an absolute requirement, for we can indeed pray in a spiritual sense, doing so mentally without letting our voice be heard. The Lord has created us in such a manner, however, that we are able to express our thoughts by way of our tongue. Furthermore, it is His will that we deal with Him in harmony with our nature and He commands us that we should call upon Him (Psalms 50:15), open our mouth (Psalms 81:10), and speak unto God (Luke 11:2). The earnestness and the motions of the soul are at times so ardent that one opens the mouth spontaneously. Then we shall also not be plagued as much by wandering thoughts, and the soul at times gets opening by way of speaking and the motions of the soul are thereby quickened. However, we must take notice here of the place. If we are far removed from people, we shall indeed be able to lift up our soul in harmony with the motions of our heart. If we are in the proximity of people, our voice must be controlled in such a manner that we can hear ourselves but yet are not heard by others. To pray so loudly that others also hear it is an offense to the unconverted and an impediment even to godly hearers. The requirement that we enter our closet when we pray does not only imply that we must not be visible, but we must also be beyond the auditory reach of people. To pray so loudly that we can be heard on the street is as much as praying while standing or lying in the street.

Exhortations to Prayer

We shall now proceed to the exhortations to prayer. In the first place, pray -- for prayer glorifies God: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Psalms 50:23). A believer is desirous to glorify God. Therefore, even if he were in need of nothing, he would nevertheless desire to worship God, being desirous to render unto God what is His due. He desires to acknowledge God as the One who is worthy of being worshiped, for in prayer we acknowledge all the attributes of God as they are revealed in Christ: His righteousness and holiness, because we cannot approach unto Him except through Christ; His goodness, because He has made available such a way of approach and is willing to hear those, and grant their desire, who go to God through Christ; His majesty, before which we bow ourselves with delight and reverence; His omniscience, in that He knows the heart and its intent; His omnipotence, in that He is able to give everything; and His faithfulness in that He will fulfill all His promises -- also those made to supplicants. It renders joy to the supplicant to behold these perfections. The acknowledgment of them renders him more joy than many other blessings received from God. Who is able to refrain himself from prayer? Who, being acquainted

with this, does not become desirous to pray?

Secondly, the prayer of the upright supplicant is pleasing to God. However feeble his prayer may be, God finds delight in it; prayer is to Him as sweet incense (Psalms 141:2). He testifies that the voice of the supplicant is sweet to Him (Song of Solomon 2:14). And is it your desire to please the Lord and to do that which is pleasing to the Lord? Well, there is no better way to do so than by way of prayer.

Thirdly, God hears prayer; the Lord already sees the supplicant approach from afar, and He goes to meet him (Luke 15:20). And when he prays, He will hear him and will permit the supplicant to pour out his heart before Him. "His ears are open unto their cry" (Psalms 34:15).

Fourthly, prayer is a glorious work, for it permits us to enter the inner chambers of the King of kings -- of God, the Lord of heaven and earth. Yes, we enter heaven itself and speak in immediate proximity to the throne of grace. Prayer is a sweet duty. He who has been permitted to experience the softening of his heart and has been able to weep before the Lord; who, with opening, has been able to pour out his desire before the Lord; who at one time was privileged to supplicate; and who with strong crying and tears has been able to flee unto the Lord -- all of this, as frequently as he thinks of it, will yet render him joy for a long time. If this occurs at an unusual place, he will be refreshed as frequently as he returns to that place or thinks upon it.

Prayer is a sanctifying duty. After having been with God on the mountain, Moses' countenance had become radiant. When the Lord Jesus prayed, a holy radiance came upon Him (Matthew 17:2). This still occurs if we have been much in prayer. Even if it appears that the matter for which we have specifically prayed has not been received, we shall nevertheless come away from prayer with a holy and radiant soul. Reflect upon this and your soul will take flight, and you will be desirous to pray.

Fifthly, prayer is the means whereby and upon which God fulfills the desires of believers. If they do not pray, they will also not receive. If God does not stir them up to pray for a desired matter, this is generally a sign that God does not intend to give it. "... Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2). If, however, it is God's intention to give something to His children, He generally first grants them prayer for this. The promises are for those who pray. When God promises to give a new heart, to cause men to walk in His ways, and to grant all manner of temporal and spiritual blessings, the Lord states as an additional blessing, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Ezekiel 36:37). The promises relative to prayer being answered are numerous: "And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee" (Psalms 50:15); "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalms 81:10); "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8).

How much the saints have already received by means of prayer! By means of Moses' prayer Amalek was defeated (Exodus 17:11-12). By means of the prayer of Joshua the sun and moon were made to stand still (Joshua 10:12). By means of prayer the barren Hannah received a son, Samuel (1 Samuel 1:20). By means of prayer Asa defeated Zerah, the Ethiopian, and his thousand times thousand men (2 Chronicles 14:9-12), and Jehoshaphat defeated Moab and his confederates (2 Chronicles 20:1-37). Elijah unlocked heaven through prayer, so that it rained after

three-and-one-half years of drought (1 Kings 18:42-45). Through prayer Elisha brought a dead person to life (2 Kings 4:35, etc). Through prayer Hezekiah received a fifteen-year extension of his life (Isaiah 38:5). What great things have believers received upon prayer! Moreover, God is still the same God. The promises upon prayer are still the same, and they were people of like passions as we were. Therefore, believers, if you desire or are in need of something, betake yourself to prayer.

Sixthly, consider furthermore that you will experience much more joy if God grants you something upon prayer than if you receive your wish without having prayed for it. For by means of prayer you have at the same time received a holy disposition. You have then been privileged to speak with the Lord in His immediate presence. Then you will notice that the Lord has received you as His child in Christ. Then it will be apparent that God has heard you and is benevolent toward you. You will have seen His perfections and the matter received upon prayer is in the form of a blessing. Therefore, accustom yourself to pray.

Godly reader, why do you complain about your spiritual deficiency and your bodily tribulations if you are so negligent in prayer, so lax to engage in prayer, so listless while praying, and so quickly finished? Pray if you are desirous for something. Such excuses as made by many who are lazy in the practice of prayer -- which cause grief to some tender godly persons -- and will not avail here. If you were diligent in prayer, you would avoid these excuses or very readily have an answer for them, so that you would not be hindered by them. The primary mental obstacles are the following:

Mental Obstacles to Prayer

Obstacle #1: God is well-acquainted with my needs, anxieties, and desires. Why then do I need to bring them before God in prayer?

Answer: It is not to make something known to God with which He is unacquainted; rather, you thereby show that you are also acquainted with them and are sensible of them, as well as that you acknowledge God to be your only helper.

Obstacle #2: God has already decreed what I shall or shall not have. I cannot change that decree by means of prayer.

Answer: The secret things are for the Lord, but the revealed things are for us. God has bound us to the means and He wills that we believe and rely upon His promises made to conscientious users of the means. God has also decreed already how long you will live. Do you therefore desist from eating and drinking?

Obstacle #3: Many people do not pray and yet receive everything in abundance.

Answer: These are but temporal matters, with which you are not satisfied. These earthly goods are not a blessing to them, and due to their sins they abuse all the blessings of God to their destruction. Prosperity will be the death of the ungodly. However, the little that a righteous person receives upon his prayer is better than the abundance of many ungodly. The righteous have received it as a blessing and they have thereby been drawn to God. Furthermore, you are primarily concerned with the spiritual, and this the Lord will most certainly grant you upon prayer. You would have more if you would pray more.

Obstacle #4: I have prayed very much for various matters, but God does not hear me, and I do not receive them.

Answer: Perhaps you -- as was true of Samuel -- are not acquainted with the answering voice of God. Perhaps you have not given careful attention to what you have received upon prayer; or else, due to unbelief, you have not related that which you have received to your prayer. Perhaps you are too covetous and too bent on having your will, and you do not acknowledge it as long as you have not received everything which your inordinate lusts demand, there being no submission to the manner and the benevolence of that which is dispensed to you. If you take note of all this, you will not be able to say that God has never heard your prayer and that you have never received anything upon prayer.

Obstacle #5: I lack all that I have heard said in this discourse on prayer. My heart closes up when I wish to begin.

Answer: You are focusing on a measure of spirituality in prayer which exceeds your measure of spirituality, and you want to pray at such a level of spirituality, or else it is nothing. If you are a child, pray as a child; if a man, pray as a man. God also hears the mourning of a dove and the chattering of a swallow; even sighing is not hidden from Him. God does not give because of prayer, but upon prayer. Such is not only true of a very spiritual and fluent prayer, but also for those feeble efforts in expressing desires. He does not despise the prayer of the destitute.

Obstacle #6: I sin time and again, and therefore I do not dare to come again unto God -- it would be as if I were mocking with God.

Answer: When you prayed in a most acceptable manner and when God heard and answered your prayer, God saw all your future sins as if they were presently committed. It is God's will that we shall forgive our neighbor seventy times seven -- this being required in one day. God, however, is infinitely more longsuffering and benevolent than man. Reconciliation has already been accomplished in Christ and you may accept this at all times to your continual justification. You do not have it in your power to keep yourself from sin; your old man is too evil and too strong for this. God permits sin to remain in you for the very reason that you would always be of a humble disposition and to make use of Christ daily. It would be mockery if you did not repeatedly have a heartfelt desire to sin no more, while yet praying for strength against and the forgiveness of sin. Since, however, this is the case with you, do not allow the fact that you sin repeatedly keep you from prayer. Rather, come all the more, since you are in need of forgiveness and strength, so that the grace of God may be glorified all the more.

Obstacle #7: I fear that I am not regenerated. What business do I then have to pray, since the prayer of the unconverted is not pleasing to God?

Answer: Pray because necessity compels you, and because you cannot go on without the matter you desire -- even if your prayer could not be recorded on the register of virtues. God indeed hears the young ravens when they call to Him. God heard the crying of Ishmael, when he, having been laid under a shrub, would have perished for thirst. You desire to be converted, to be a partaker of Christ, to be holy, and to possess all spiritual benefits. The more you would be a partaker of them, the more it would be to your liking. Such desires and motions are indeed the beginnings of regeneration and life. The Holy Spirit alone has wrought them in you and stirs you up to pray for

them. Therefore follow the Spirit, and you will experience that your prayer is pleasing to God, and that He will repeatedly give you all that you need according to body and soul.

Since I consider to have satisfactorily dealt with all your concerns, take therefore the liberty to pray. However, see to it that you do not use these excuses to stimulate your laziness and to pacify yourself when you neglect to pray.

Guidance to Supplicants

It now remains to give some guidance to the suppliant who has been stirred up to pray as to how he is to conduct himself in the preparation for, exercise of, and reflection upon prayer. The preparation for prayer must be contingent upon the condition in which we are. If you are in a good frame, you must first of all withdraw yourself from whatever you are occupied with and conduct yourself as if you were alone in the world and had nothing else to do but to walk with God. Secondly, while lifting up your soul, you must focus upon God as One who is worthy of worship, as the fountain of all good gifts, as omniscient, as omnipotent, or in whatever manner you may be conscious of God when you lift up your heart and engage in prayer. Thirdly, you must endeavor to bring about a reverent and humble disposition of heart. Fourthly, you must lift up your heart with a sigh for the spirit of prayer, for assistance, and for a blessing upon this exercise of prayer.

If you are in a backslidden condition, if you have just entertained vain thoughts and uttered vain words, if you have just committed a sin, if there were estrangement from God due to worldly concerns, or if something else has deprived you of liberty, causing you to be confused and restless, you must resolve to bring your heart where it belongs and endeavor to have the disposition of your heart humble and meek. Such a disposition must prompt you to arise with sincere intent and be firmly resolved to be on guard against those sins in the future. Furthermore, you must be resolved that if you were again to be overcome by those sins that you will battle against them. This is to be done so that your heart will not condemn you, and that instead you will be able with a clear and quiet conscience to approach boldly unto God. Furthermore, if you add to this what we have said concerning the previous disposition, you will be fit personally in your approach to God, and do so in a manner pleasing to Him.

However, you must generally not be occupied too long with preparation before actually proceeding with that which belongs to prayer itself. You could thereby easily come into darkness, become confused, and be less fit for the exercise of prayer. In the exercise of prayer you must not limit yourself to a set order; rather you must adjust yourself to the disposition of your soul which varies greatly. If you are dull, you could begin by reading the Word of God and thus to permit your heart to be wrought upon by the truth -- or else by the reading or singing of a psalm -- in order to enliven your spirit thereby. If you are in a praising and worshipful disposition, you must not remove yourself from this, but rather adjust yourself to that disposition and immediately begin with prayer. It is to be done in this manner:

(1) Be on guard against routine in your initial address -- against always using the same terminology. Rather, address the Lord with such language which either agrees with the disposition of the soul, is consistent with the manner in which the Lord reveals Himself at that moment, is consistent with the manner in which you wish to focus upon the Lord -- or is subservient to beget humility, magnify the Lord, or strengthen your faith. Do not do this with too much premeditation,

however, but proceed in this according to the inclination of your heart. Otherwise you will easily lose your prayerful disposition.

(2) We must not use pompous words in prayer nor merely link one Scripture passage to another; this will rarely move either the supplicant or the hearer. It is a different matter if we use a Scripture passage to urgently request the fulfillment of a promise, or to obligate ourselves to obedience.

(3) You must also not take great pains to express yourself fluently. It is sometimes necessary to pause for a moment -- be it that the matter or the disposition of the soul requires this -- and that you begin by renewal with new strength and vigor. You also need not concern yourself as to what you will say first or last; that would be more the work of the head than the heart. You also need not be concerned as to whether you repeat the same matters and words time and again, as long as it does not proceed from inattentiveness. However, you must carefully guard against the thoughtless use of the word Lord as an interjection.

(4) At times we can be dull and be in darkness when commencing prayer. However, then we must not immediately desist and depart; instead, we must persevere. It can happen that after great darkness very clear light ensues, and that a languishing soul can become very lively. If you cannot bring yourself to prayerful wrestling at all, it is frequently beneficial to read a psalm prayerfully. If the soul becomes lively, you must cease to read and enlarge upon your spiritual motions. If these motions cease, you must again proceed to read prayerfully.

(5) At times we begin with much light and liveliness and then it suddenly becomes dark. We ourselves can be the cause of this. It can be that we were too high already, thus forgetting to be humble and reverent. Then we must readily sink down in our insignificance and begin by deeply humbling ourselves, conducting ourselves as a little child and thus climb upward step by step. If some business matter, worldly concern, or lust suddenly surfaces, we must be brought by this to view our sinful hearts, and while thus conscious of our sinfulness, present ourselves, with much humility, to the Lord in our wretchedness, seeking forgiveness and acknowledging that it is only grace that such a sinful man may speak to the Lord. If there be a sudden stirring of unbelief, we must wrestle against it by claiming the promises as they are confirmed in the Mediator. If unbelief pertains to a specific matter, especially physical matters, we must be very diligent in seeking to submit ourselves with full acquiescence to the will of the Lord as far as its outcome is concerned. The soul thus having been delivered from self-will and stubbornness and having been placed at liberty, may at times again receive freedom and liveliness in prayer -- yes, sometimes more so than previously. If there is an interjection of the devil, we must reject this without paying attention and responding to it. Even though the soul may have been wounded thereby, we must nevertheless proceed to rise above ourselves and lift our hearts up to God. It will then hinder us less, and the Lord will occasionally take such a soul into His protection -- so to speak, into a refuge -- and at times will grant her more comfort. If not, He will demonstrate that our resisting and avoidance of the enemy is pleasing to Him. If, however, such darkness (when occurring in the middle of our prayer) is due to a withdrawal of the Spirit, and if this prevails in spite of our pressing on, it is advisable to condense and shorten our prayer, doing so in submission to God's sovereign will. Desistance must, however, in no wise issue forth from slothfulness, being secretly satisfied that we are now permitted to terminate our prayer.

(6) While praying -- in the beginning, in the middle, as well as at the end -- we must pray that we be heard, as we generally observe with David. Yes, not only must we pray, but we must also strive for a lively assurance that both we and our prayer are pleasing to God, and that He hears our prayer, answers it, and will most certainly give what we ask for. This assurance is neither founded upon our godliness, nor upon our ability to pray, but rather upon the promises of the Word of God and the merits of the Lord Jesus, and because those spiritual desires we have expressed in prayer have proceeded from the Holy Spirit Himself. Such assurance will beget liberty and earnestness, and we shall conclude by giving thanks that we were privileged and able to pray -- even if it were but a spiritual sigh -- as well as that the Lord has heard it and will most certainly grant those desires according to His will. This will be concluded with a believing "amen," that is, it shall be.

Reflection upon prayer consists particularly in the following two matters. It first of all consists in the preservation of this reverent and godly disposition, so that a luster radiates, indicating that we have been with the Lord -- just as Moses came from the mountain with a shining countenance. Be very much on guard against those sins which we have confessed in prayer and against which we have made a holy resolution. Secondly, pay careful attention to the manner in which God answers our prayer. That God answers earnest and believing prayers is evident, first of all, from God's promises: "He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee" (Isaiah 30:19); "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer" (Isaiah 58:9); "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).

Secondly, it is evident from the prayer of saints for an answer: "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me" (Psalms 27:7).

Thirdly, it is evident from their declaration that God has answered them: "I sought the Lord, and He heard me" (Psalms 34:4); "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me" (Jonah 2:2). Observe this in Eliezer (Genesis 24:15), in Elijah (James 5:17-18), David (1 Samuel 30:8), Daniel (Daniel 9:23), and others in their special temptations, which have been recorded for us in order that we would know that God answers the prayers of His children and we thus will be assured that He will also answer our prayers.

Fourthly, it is evident from the complaints uttered by the saints when God did not answer them. "I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost not hear me" (Job 30:20); "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not" (Psalms 22:2).

Since God answers, you must also see it as your obligation to observe whether God answers you and how He answers you. It is not sufficient to commend the outcome to God and to believe that He will make it well; we must also take notice of the outcome, however, and relate this to our prayers as being an answer to them, for:

(1) This will sweetly move you to be astounded and grateful that the Lord has heard your voice, and with David you will exclaim, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me" (Psalms 116:12), which is a reference to verse 1: "He hath heard my voice." This brings forth the confession: "This is the Lord'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalms 118:23); "Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto" (2 Samuel 7:18).

(2) The experience that the Lord answers our prayer engenders love toward God. "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications" (Psalms 116:1).

(3) It begets a desire for prayer and zeal in prayer. "Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live" (Psalms 116:2); "I will confess ... and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found" (Psalms 32:5-6).

(4) This renders more joy to a believer than the receiving of the matter itself for which he had prayed. For he would rather perceive that the Lord loves him than to enjoy everything outside of God.

(5) It is a great stimulus to lead an observant and holy life. Nothing so draws out our love than that a loved one shows his love to us. If we may perceive that God loves us and that His goodness is engaged on our behalf, we shall be willing to give our all to God: "...He hath heard my voice and my supplications. I will walk before the Lord" (Psalms 116:1;Psalms 116:9); "What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it: I shall go softly" (Isaiah 38:15). The supplicant who attentively takes notice of the answers upon his prayers, will receive such glorious dispositions, along with the resultant fruit. And even if the Lord were to answer his prayers with nothing besides this, would it not be an explicit answer? He who prays and submissively leaves the outcome to the Lord, however, will indeed have his prayers answered by the Lord. Since, however, he does not give heed to those answers, and does not relate the gifts of grace as being answers to his prayers, he will rob himself of these desired fruits.

God's Answers to Prayer

Many are as Samuel when he did not yet know the voice of the Lord. Such will ask: "When does God answer? Whereby can we recognize this answer?" For their instruction it should be noted that God answers at the outset of prayer, during prayer, and after prayer.

First, God at times answers at the outset of prayer. "Before they call, I will answer" (Isaiah 65:24); "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth" (Daniel 9:23). The Lord shows that He wishes to answer if the Spirit moves the person to pray in an extraordinary manner, continually stirring up the soul, and does not give the soul any rest until she prays with free access. Yes, she may do so in such an intimate and amicable manner that it takes some effort to remember that one is but a man and a sinner, and thus to maintain a disposition of the deepest humility. What else is this but the Lord saying to you: "I know you; you have found grace in My sight; I love you. Mine eye will be upon you; I shall guide you with My counsel and shall hereafter take you to Me into glory." The supplicant will also perceive it as such, will be astonished and rejoice, and cannot but say, "Abba, Father!"

Secondly, God answers during prayer:

(1) If after a period of darkness, troubles, and wrestlings, we become of a quiet and joyous disposition due to the soul, so to speak, hearing the voice of God: "Thou art Mine. I am thy salvation. Thy sins are forgiven thee, and your prayer is pleasing to Me." Such an answer brings the soul into a holy disposition to serve the Lord with her entire heart to the glory of her God. This we observe in many of David's psalms, in which he begins with lamentation, proceeds with joy,

and ends with thanksgiving.

(2) If we strongly persevere in prayer for a particular matter -- be it deliverance from an affliction or a request for a desirable matter -- and the Lord reveals His friendly countenance to the supplicant, embracing him with His love. "Thou art greatly beloved" (Daniel 9:23); "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9). When the Lord answers in such a manner, the supplicant frequently goes beyond what the Lord has said, thinking that it was a most certain promise that a given evil would not come, and that he would receive the desired matter. If, however, this does not occur, this can be very grievous to the supplicant at other times -- as if the promise does not correspond to reality. The Lord had only shown, however, that the supplicant was pleasing to Him in prayer and that He would bring about this matter to his best advantage, not having made any promise as far as time and manner were concerned. If he had not taken the answer beyond its intended purpose, but interpreted it as he should have done, this would have resulted in a more sanctified disposition. He would have been content with the will of God, and the manifestation of the love of God would have rendered him more joy, as if he received the matter according to his wishes.

(3) When He grants him a strong faith and full assurance that his prayer will be answered. This occurs either by application of the promises which pertain to the answering of prayers, or at times by an immediate operation upon his heart, without an indication of the manner in which it is to be answered. Such an answer is sufficient to cause the supplicant to rejoice, contentedly leaving time and manner to the Lord.

However, he will easily mislead himself, if he, when praying for a particular matter, by either the probability or non-probability of it, persuades his own heart that God has declared that he will have the matter, or that he will not become a partaker of it. If he relies upon this, whatever he has imagined will fail, and if he sets it aside, he renders himself unfit to persevere.

It occurs rarely -- and that only to very few -- that God grants someone immediate revelations concerning future events, although I am assured that the Spirit of prophecy or revelation (relative to future events) has not departed entirely from the church. If, however, such is the case, a person will know very well that God has revealed it to him. He will know it as well as if a familiar friend had said such and such to him. Whatever God reveals to the one is not regulative for the other. I advise a person against having any strong desire that God would reveal the outcome of a given matter to him in advance, lest he tempt the Lord and were to delude himself due to his strong desire.

If God assures someone that his prayer has been heard, he ought to deem that as being an answer to his prayer. He ought to rejoice in this and thank the Lord for this. He should leave the matter -- as well as its execution -- in the Lord's hands, and from the outcome conclude as to the manner in which the Lord fulfills His promise to hear his prayer. This will engender much steadfastness and inner peace.

Thirdly, God answers prayer by giving the matter prayed for subsequent to prayer. It is here that the supplicant must be very attentive.

(1) There are matters of which we know that God will not grant them all at once upon the first request, but will grant them step by step -- such as growth in grace. If we have prayed for this in a heartfelt manner and if God grants some growth -- strength against a particular sin, a more

steadfast godly disposition of the soul, a stronger faith as far as our spiritual state is concerned, the exercise of a particular virtue, more liveliness and joy in the expectation of eternal felicity, etc. -- then we must note this as an answer upon all our prayers, particularly upon that prayer which had been so expressly uttered relative to a given matter.

(2) There are matters which God grants at once -- such as deliverance from a present situation which is either pressing or threatening. This can also be true for a special matter which we desire to have, the outcome of which will either be evident within a short period of time, or there being no indication of time at all. If God grants the matter at once, he who takes note of the answer upon his prayers will readily observe that God has answered his prayer. God thus answered Eliezer (Genesis 24:13-21). God does also grant the matter at a later time. If, upon reflection, we then become conscious of having prayed heartily for this, we shall also note this as being an answer upon our prayers, and we shall rejoice in a double measure about this. The Lord thus answered the prayer of Zacharias (Luke 1:13). God also answers our prayers when He does not give us a particular matter, but rather gives something else in its place, even though in some respects it relates to the desired matter. This -- either in and of itself, due to some circumstances, or due to consequences -- is nevertheless more beneficial and desirable for us. It was thus that Abraham's desire was fulfilled when he, praying for Ishmael that the promises pertaining to the multiplication of his seed would be fulfilled through him, received Isaac.

(3) There are matters which pertain to others: either the church in general, a specific godly person, the conversion of our near relatives or someone else, or someone's physical well-being. If God grants such a request, and we realize that we have prayed for this, we have indeed received an answer upon that prayer and it must make us doubly grateful and joyous. If we do not perceive this to be the case, we must nevertheless believe that our prayer has been heard. For every true prayer is heard, and God will either give the matter later -- even if it be after our death -- or the Lord will answer the prayer of the supplicant in a different manner.

Give heed therefore that you do not attribute it to the general providence of God if you receive something. More particularly, refrain from attributing it to chance, or from focusing only on the secondary causes -- to which our corrupt nature is so inclined. Even Job himself came so far that he said, "If I had called, and He had answered me; yet would I not believe that He had hearkened unto my voice" (Job 9:16). Therefore acknowledge the hand of the Lord in all the good you receive -- from the least to the greatest, and that which is common as well as extraordinary. And if you receive something good, and cannot remember that you have heartily prayed for it, be all the more amazed that the Lord has thought upon you when you did not think upon Him, and that He has granted you more than you have ever requested from Him. Then say with Hagar, "Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me" (Genesis 16:13). If, however, you receive something, and, when reflecting on time gone by, you become aware that you have prayed for this -- even if it were in your youth -- then relate this gift to your prayer as being an answer to it. Do not allow yourself to be hindered by your sinfulness, your weakness, or your deficiency in prayer, but acknowledge that the least upright sigh proceeded from the Spirit and that the Lord has therefore heard it. This will cause you to be grateful and express your love toward God. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee" (Job 22:21).

074. Chapter 69: The Lord's Prayer: Explained and Applied

----- CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE ----- The Lord's Prayer: Explained and Applied In the previous chapter we have dealt with prayer in general, considering its nature, required internal qualifications, externals, necessity, and beneficial nature. We must now show the supplicant what the matters are for which he ought to pray and the order in which he must pray for them. This has been defined for us by the Lord Jesus in the prayer He has provided for us upon the request of the disciples. This is generally referred to as The Lord's Prayer, and is recorded in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. Matthew records it with a conclusion, whereas Luke omits it. This is not to suggest that the Lord Jesus did not add this, but is an indication that it was only His intent to give an orderly presentation of those matters which are to be prayed for. For the same reason, the evangelists, when relating identical matters, do so either in a more elaborate or abbreviated form. The one evangelist writes about this matter and the other about divergent matters, as they were not all present together at all occasions when Jesus either spoke or performed something. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus has said and performed many more things than could all have been recorded. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25). However, what has been recorded is sufficient "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20:31). The papists quote this prayer from Luke without the conclusion, and we do so from Matthew with the conclusion. A Rule and Example for Our Prayer The Lord Jesus has given this prayer as a rule and example to which we must conform our prayers as far as matters and order; that is, in regard to the priority of each matter, such being the manner in which we are to desire them. It is, however, not mandatory that we repeat this prayer verbatim. The apostles, in their recorded prayers, have never repeated this prayer word for word. We may indeed pray this prayer, both in public meetings as well as privately; however, we are not obligated to do so. We must not be of the opinion that, upon having recited this, we have uttered a more holy prayer than if we had used our own words. This prayer is perfect in and of itself; however, he who prays has not prayed perfectly by merely having recited this prayer. If we do not have a correct understanding of each petition -- yes, each word -- if we do not have a holy and conscious desire for each matter, and nevertheless recite it, then it is a vain use of God's Name. It is a mocking with God, as if He were served with that rattling off of words, the meaning of which is not understood and by which one's desires are not expressed -- even if one were to have a general opinion that he were praying to God. God demands the heart. Prayer is the expression of holy desires before God, and thus praying must be done in spirit and in truth. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15). For a better understanding of this prayer we must distinguish between the various parts. This spiritual prayer is robbed of its meaning, and it is a blatant distortion of the Word of this majestic God to divide this prayer into seven fabricated periods or time-frames. It is then presupposed that some matters are already past and should no longer be prayed for, whereas others would as yet be future and do not transpire in our time. Only one matter would relate to the present; however, which one this would be cannot be determined.

Then there would indeed be nothing to be found for the spiritual needs of each individual. However, it can at once be observed that there are three divisions: 1) the address; 2) the petitions; and 3) the conclusion. The petitions can in turn also be divided as follows:

(1) There is the most eminent matter which is to be the objective of all that is to be desired (this being the first petition), and the means which are to be desired to that end (which are the five subsequent petitions); or (2) in three matters we petition relative to God and three which relate to ourselves and our neighbor. THE ADDRESS "Our Father, Which Art in Heaven!"

Prayer requires that we turn to the person from whom we wish to petition something. Since we are requesting matters in prayer which none can give but God, the supplicants thus turn themselves to God, the Father of lights, from whom descends every good and perfect gift. We acknowledge Him as the only One worthy of worship, before whom we bow ourselves with the deepest humility, being desirous to do so with our whole heart. Then we shall worship Him with all reverence, giving Him honor and glory, even if we did not need to request anything from Him. Since, however, we are always in need of something, we thus turn to God as the fountain of all that we are, of all that we have received, and of all that we desire to receive. We shall shrink back from requesting anything from anyone else -- indeed, we shall not do so. When requesting something from man, we are requesting it both from God and from man as a means in God's hand, he being under God's command. The supplicant holds God before him as being omniscient, who knows and perceives what our needs and desires are and who hears the prayerful supplicant. He notes Him as being the omnipotent One, who can give what we desire -- whether or not the means are at hand -- yes, who can do more than we pray for, purely by the exercise of His will. He notes God as being good -- not only to all men in doing them good by filling their hearts with food and gladness: "The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psalms 145:9), but toward His children in Christ, manifesting a fatherly and unfathomable goodness. He rejoices in doing well to them and He delights in mercy. He says to them, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will answer thee; open thy mouth wide, and I shall fill it; let Me hear thy voice, for it is sweet." He notes God as being faithful -- as the One who fulfills all His promises to His children, the heirs of promise, particularly the following: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do" (John 14:13); "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). Such is the nature of God, and God deals with His children accordingly. Therefore the supplicant must also acknowledge Him to be thus if he is to please the Lord and have freedom in prayer. The act of prayer demonstrates that we acknowledge the Lord to be thus, for otherwise we would not flee to Him. However, a lively acknowledgment begets a lively prayer. Not only does the supplicant turn to God as such a One, but he also addresses the Lord by using a name which either fits the disposition of the soul toward God, the need which we presently have, or the desire for a prayerful disposition, marked by both reverence and faith. The saints have used various addresses, such as: "Lord," "Oh Lord God of my salvation," "Lord my strength," "My God," "Thou Lord the searcher of the heart," "Thou art the God who has made heaven and earth," and "Oh holy and faithful Lord." The Lord Jesus generally used the address Father, and My Father in His prayers, and teaches us also to address God with the name Father. This is not to suggest that we may not use a different address, for the saints in the Old and New Testaments have generally used others. However, the name Father is the most intimate, congenial, soul-moving, and lovely name -- which engenders the greatest reverence and confidence. Such is the privilege the Lord

Jesus affords believers: They may address the majestic and living God with the name Father. The Threefold Fatherhood of God God is denominated as Father in different respects.

(1) He is Father by virtue of eternal generation, and thus in reference to God the Son. "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (Psalms 2:7).

(2) He is Father by virtue of creation and preservation, and thus in reference to the angels and all men. The heathen referred to God as such. Adam thus becomes the Son of God (Luke 3:38), and the angels are called the children of God (Job 38:7). It is from this perspective that we read, "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us" (Malachi 2:10); "A Father of the fatherless ... is God in His holy habitation" (Psalms 68:5). When it is used as such, however, the name Father cannot give any comfort, but it will instill terror due to man having fallen away from Him and God having become a wrathful avenger in consequence of sin.

(3) He is a Father by virtue of adoption. God has eternally purposed to adopt the elect in time as His children. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Ephesians 1:5). In consequence of this purpose He regenerates them and grants them spiritual life, thereby making them children of God. "Which (God's children) were born ... of God" (John 1:13); "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). These He leads to His Son Jesus Christ, granting them faith whereby they receive Him to be their ransom and righteousness, and enter into a spiritual marriage-covenant with Jesus. They are thus united with Him, the Father of the Bridegroom, and he thereby also becomes their Father. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12); "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). It is with this in mind that the Lord Jesus says, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father" (John 20:17). The God and Father of Christ and believers is one and the same, but in different respects. Since believers are the children of God and have received the Spirit of adoption, they cry out, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). This name engenders in the believer love, liberty, comfort, and confidence. The Use of the Father Name: The Practice of Believers in Both Old and New Testaments The use of the Father name does not stand in contradistinction to the practice of Old Testament believers -- as if they could not address God with the Father name. For they also were born of God, possessed faith in Christ, and had the Spirit of Christ (Psalms 51:11) by whom they were led (Psalms 143:10); God was their Father (Malachi 1:6). "Is not He thy Father" (Deuteronomy 32:6)? They were the children of God: "I have nourished and brought up children" (Isaiah 1:2); "Ye are the children of the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 14:1). They also addressed God with the name "Father": "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth" (Jeremiah 3:4); "Doubtless Thou art our Father. ... Thou, O Lord, art our Father" (Isaiah 63:16); "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father" (Isaiah 64:8). It is thus a privilege which all believing members of the covenant of grace of all times have, and not a privilege of New Testament believers only. When the Lord Jesus taught his disciples to say "Father," the Old Testament dispensation, as well as the ceremonial service, were still in force. The word "Father" is sometimes used to designate the essence of the Godhead; that is, in reference to a triune God: "... the Father of lights" (James 1:17); "Have we not all one Father" (Malachi 2:10). Sometimes it is used in a personal sense, referring to the first Person in the divine essence, or rather, God as existing in the first Person. For we cannot extract a divine Person from the divine essence and view Him independently. However, we can distinguish between the essence and the Person. This is how the "Father" is to be understood in the following

passages: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:14); "My Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1).

Question #1: How is the word "Father" in the address to be understood?

Answer: Not in reference to creation and preservation, nor in reference to eternal generation, but in reference to adoption, for the supplicant comes with a childlike disposition.

Question #2: Must the word "Father" be understood in its essential or personal sense?

Answer: The supplicant, being stirred up to pray and directed in prayer by the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of prayer, who intercedes with groanings that cannot be uttered) approaches the Father through the Son, and thus approaches God Himself as He exists in the first Person without exclusion of the Son and the Holy Spirit. We must refrain from attempting to comprehend the incomprehensible and from making too great a separation between the Persons and the divine essence. This causes some confusion in the minds of some beginners in grace, as if it would be a concern to the one Person if one of the three divine Persons were addressed more than another. We must proceed in simplicity here and be led by the Spirit to go to the Father through the Son as Mediator, and thus worship and address the one and eternal God. The Lord Jesus does not only teach us to address God with the name "Father," but He adds the relative and possessive pronoun "our": our Father. Since the word "Father" pertains to gracious adoption, regeneration, betrothal, and union with the Lord Jesus -- the Son of God -- by faith, then the word "our" must not be understood to refer to all men, but only to the regenerated, believing children of God. An unconverted person is not a child of God, and thus he also cannot address God with the name "Father." Even though he is God's creature, God thus being his Father by virtue of creation, the use of the word "Father" can render him neither comfort nor liberty to approach unto God as such, for sin has fully separated him from God and His favor, and has subjected him to the wrath of God, so that God is a consuming fire and a terror unto him. There is no approach unto God except through Christ. Since the unconverted person is without Christ, he can therefore not come unto God and address Him with the name "Father." The believing supplicant does not include only himself in the word "our," but he includes all true believers -- those whom he knows and those whom he does not know. He is a member of the church of God of which God is the Father. "And (I) will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:18). He thus includes the entire church of God when he says, "Our Father," and thereby demonstrates his love to all the members of God's family, expressing his faith that God is his portion, that he is permitted to address Him as Father, is a member of the family of God, and has communion with all the saints.

Question #3: May we not, when praying in solitude, say "my Father" instead of "our Father"?

Answer: The Lord Jesus has not furnished us this prayer so as to use its words verbatim. A believer, when in secret, frequently prays for himself, and then he may also specifically say "my Father" as Elihu did: "My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end" (Job 34:36).

Question #4: How must a weak believer proceed who is not assured that God is His Father? May he skip the words "our Father"? Must he think of God as his Father by creation? May he say in a wishful sense, "Oh, that thou wouldst be my Father"?

Answer: The suppliant, while in his closet, is not limited to the words of this prayer, but may use and present his own words as best as he knows how. No prayer is pleasing to God, nor shall it be heard, except it be offered in faith. The essence of faith does not consist in assurance, however, but in the entrusting of our soul to Jesus, He being our ransom and righteousness. The suppliant knows that there is no other way to approach unto God except through Christ. He approves of this way, desires no other way, chooses this way, and in his approach has Christ in view -- be it in a habitual or an active sense. He longs for, prays to, yearns for, receives, and surrenders himself to Him. Being thus exercised, he perceives that he has an aversion for, is grieved by, and is greatly burdened by sin. Moreover, he longs and desires to obey the Lord in all simplicity, love, and filial fear, this being the objective he also pursues. If he were to give a general evaluation of one thus exercised, he would admit that such a person is a true believer and may freely call God "Father." However, due to perceiving his darkness, slothfulness, and continual sinning, he does not dare to call God his Father, even though he perceives the aforementioned matters within himself. Such a person must put his unbelief aside, hold this for truth, and esteem God to be his Father as being the One who has given him this disposition and these fruits. To call God "Father" in prayer does not proceed from assurance, but rather from their judgment and heartfelt desires. Yes, these concerns and wrestlings are a proof of life and faith. Since in such a person there is not only love toward the Lord Jesus, but also to all His members and to His church, he includes them all in his prayer, and therefore not only says "Father," "my Father," but also our Father. The Significance of the Phrase "Which Art in Heaven" The Lord Jesus causes us furthermore to say, "which art in heaven." It must be noted here that it says "heavens" [Note: This statement, and the paragraphs that follow, are based on the rendering of the Statenvertaling, which reads as follows: "Die Gij zijt in de hemelen," that is, "Which art in the heavens."] and not heaven as in the third petition. Hereby the following is conveyed:

First, "in the heavens" does not refer to a location, for God is infinite. He fills heaven and earth and infinitely exceeds them. "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee" (1 Kings 8:27).

Secondly, "the heavens" also does not refer to the third heaven, which is the abode of holy angels and glorified saints, the paradise of God, the house of the Father, the throne of God, and the place where God's glory is seen. The third petition refers to this, but such is not true here. Mention is made here of "the heavens," and this includes all the heavens. The suppliant is thus not limited to a local perception of the third heaven, but rather it lifts the suppliant above the edifice of heaven and earth -- all of which vanishes from the heart and eye of the suppliant as something insignificant. It causes us to view God as the infinite One; as most majestic, glorious, omnipotent, and invisible; and as the One who dwells in unapproachable light, who covers Himself with light as with a garment. Both the nature and the disposition of the saints teach them to view God as such in prayer, with a lifting up of the heart and eye on high (without thinking of a locality) unto God as being invisible and all-seeing.

There is no contrast here between the supplicants of the Old and New Testaments -- between Jerusalem, the temple, the Holy of Holies, and the third heaven. It is not so that in the Old Testament they had to say, "Oh God, who dwellest in Jerusalem and between the cherubim," and that we in the New Testament may straightway go to God and say, "Our Father which art in heaven." For also in the Old Testament supplicants lifted up heart and eye to God in heaven:

"Mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord" (Isaiah 38:14); "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens" (Lamentations 3:41); "Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens" (Psalms 123:1). They prayed that God would look down upon them from heaven: "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory" (Isaiah 63:15), and God heard them from heaven: "He will hear him from His holy heaven" (Psalms 20:6). In this they are on equal footing with New Testament believers and it removes the thought that there is a distinction between the Old and New Testaments in this text. The fact that they prayerfully turned their countenances toward Jerusalem, saying, "O Shepherd of Israel. ... Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth" (Psalms 80:1), indicates that in prayer they approached unto God through the Messiah. They prayed in His name -- He being depicted by the mercy seat, which was overshadowed by the wings of the cherubim. Likewise, we in the New Testament, when praying in His Name, do not approach unto God in any other way but through the Mediator. Since they thus in both cases approached unto God by way of the sacrifice of the High Priest Jesus Christ -- who then had to come and now has come -- they were both pleasing to God and were heard, God being pleased with the sacrifice of His Son. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 17:5). The Address Renders Liberty and Reverence With divine wisdom the Lord Jesus conjoins these two matters in the address: "Father, our Father, which art in heaven (Dutch: the heavens)." The word "Father" gives liberty to lay before and to unveil to God, as Father, in an intimate manner our needs and desires -- and to pray for their fulfillment. And, lest we lose our reverence and awe due to such intimacy, we must add to this the awe-inspiring expression, "which art in heaven." However, lest we be fearful to approach due to our awe for His lofty majesty, we add the word "Father" to it. Filial freedom and reverence must go hand in hand. Finally, we say "our" to express our love for God's children. The Lord Jesus thus teaches us that we are to use an appropriate address in our prayers. If we address God out of form and custom with a certain name which so happens to come across our lips -- without a conscious acknowledgment of God, ourselves, and the condition in which we are -- it shows that as supplicants we are void of spirituality, for it is sinful to begin prayer in such a manner. We must also not occupy ourselves for a time considering by which name we shall address God. This generally causes a prayerful disposition to vanish. If, however, the supplicant separates himself from everything and turns to God, such a prayerful disposition will engender a fitting address -- be it by considering God's goodness, omnipotence, mercy, truthfulness, holiness, glory, and majesty -- or else our need, fear, or anxiety will suggest a fitting address which will bring our soul either into a prayerful frame or further enhance this frame. However, if no particular name comes to mind, then be at liberty, upon the command of the Lord Jesus, to address God as "our Father which art in heaven." The Believer's Approach to the Father

Generally, an attentive and prayerful frame will bring forth a sigh and one will begin with "oh!" If you are in the company of people, you must refrain yourself so that your sighing voice will not be heard by others; this will hinder them. Such sighs must also not be feigned, for that is hypocrisy. These sighs must also not be the result of the condition of the body; they are not related to prayer. They must also not be the result of pretense or custom. This belongs to the realm of routine, which ought to have no part in prayer at all. Instead, such a sigh must be the voice of the soul and proceed from the Holy Spirit, who "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

(1) Sometimes the soul is so overcome with either sorrow, physical sorrow, or soul's grief, that she cannot utter one word. She presents herself before the Lord, however, and pours out her heart before the omniscient One with a heartfelt sigh -- with the voice of a turtledove. This is pleasing to Him, and the Lord, knowing the mind of the Spirit, insists on hearing it: "O My dove ... let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice" (Song of Solomon 2:14).

(2) Sometimes the soul is empty. She is tense, desirous to pray, but no matters come to mind, and desires for a given matter are neither lively nor do they stir up the soul. What must she do? Leave her closet? That she cannot do, for she knows that she lacks everything. And if there is nothing in particular, a sigh comes forth out of her emptiness which cries for fulfillment -- a sigh which God understands well.

(3) Sometimes the soul is focused so intently upon a desired spiritual matter, having such profound insight in it, and her desires being so intense, that she cannot find words to express those inexpressible matters and desires. Therefore, she cannot do otherwise than make this known by way of a sigh which expresses far more than many words could do.

(4) Sometimes the soul is in a sinful condition. She would desire to approach, but she is ashamed, does not dare to come, and hides herself. She crawls, so to speak, to the throne of grace, having no courage to speak. She then lets herself be heard by quiet sighs, which at times are accompanied with quiet tears -- this being a delightful manifestation of a penitent soul.

Even though the supplicant may use various addresses in prayer, there is none so sweet, so soul-stirring, and so beneficial as saying "Father," "my Father," and "our Father." When the supplicant, by faith, engages himself in meditation upon the word "Father," and views it from God's perspective, his own perspective, and all that is comprehended in that relationship, this can then bring the soul into ecstasy and cause her to lose herself in adoration. The supplicant sees himself as a worm and, moreover, as one who is so sinful within and without, so despicable, hateful, and damnable that no one could even cast an eye of pity upon him. It is thus due to the wondrous longsuffering of God that he has not long since been cast into hell already. To think that he has been delivered from the eternal destruction in which the majority of men, who are no worse than he is, sink away! And beyond that, to think that he has been adopted as a child of God -- adopted to be an heir of God and a fellow-heir of Christ in eternal glory! That transcends all the comprehension of both angels and men. To think that he may address God by the name "Father," and "my Father"! When the supplicant focuses upon God, whom he may call Father, and considers God in His majesty, glory, holiness, and fullness of perfection; when he considers furthermore that God, in all that He is, is there for him so that he might be filled, satisfied, and be made joyful in the only blessed God; and when he finally considers that he is a partaker of all felicity -- this cannot be comprehended to all eternity. This is able to bring the supplicant into such ecstasy, that body and soul are not capable of enduring the wondrous goodness of God; the soul would be overwhelmed due to astonishment and joy, and the spirit would succumb. When the supplicant reflects upon the relationship in which he is to God, and God to him, he must exclaim, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalms 118:23). For, if God is his Father, then God has loved him with an eternal and fatherly love. Then God's omnipotent, faithful, and fatherly eye is upon him to protect him against all evil, to provide for him in all the needs of body and soul, and to cause all things to work for good for him. Likewise, God's fatherly tenderness and

mercy are engaged toward him to have pity upon him when he comes into circumstances of misery, need, and death. God thus makes him an heir of all the benefits of the covenant of grace. God will therefore hear him as his Father when he calls upon Him. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him" (Matthew 7:11). If the Lord does not immediately give what we desire, He will do it at a time which is best for us and He will give that which is to our benefit. It is fatherly love when He gives and it is fatherly love when He withholds. And you -- entrust everything fully to your Father without fear and concern. As a child, honor your Father: fear Him, love Him, and obey and serve Him with a willing soul.

Behold, all this -- and more than we are able to express -- is included in this address. Therefore, attentively make use of this in faith, and thus proceed to the matters you are to pray for as comprehended in the following six petitions. THE FIRST PETITION Hallowed Be Thy Name The goal stimulates the worker, defines what means he will use, and renders the use of grievous means easy. The irrational animals, even though they are not acquainted with the goal, are driven by a natural instinct toward the goal set for them by God, and know which means to use unto that end. Rational man, however, prior to undertaking something, has something in mind which he desires to have. This becomes the goal he wishes to attain. In proportion to how necessary, beneficial, and desirable the attainment of that goal is to him, so intense will his use of the means be. As true as this is in the natural realm, so true is it in the spiritual realm. In proportion to someone's acquaintance with and love for spiritual matters, so slothful or zealous he will be. In accordance with this he will either not be able to separate himself from the world, or it will be easy for him to forsake the world and to make a wholehearted resolution to only seek the Lord Jesus unto justification and sanctification, as well as that He might be his life and joy. Our ultimate goal is primary in our considerations and comes last in the execution of our plans. At first a person has a particular matter in view. This he pursues; he focuses upon it; he has nothing in mind beyond that. The means which he uses to obtain such a matter in and of themselves are not related to the various goals which he pursues. However, his use of the means is not the end of the matter; rather he uses that which he has attained to attain something else. In turn, he uses this again to attain something else. He thus proceeds until he can enjoy the matter he originally had in view; at that point his activity terminates. This is also applicable in the spiritual realm. This will enable you to determine how sincere or insincere you are in the pursuit of your objective, as well as how and for what reasons the means are used. The Objective of This Petition In this prayer the Lord Jesus teaches what the ultimate goal must be which we are to hold before us, what our primary desire must be, and the end we must desire and present in the other petitions.

Question: It is a certainty that our ultimate goal is the primary objective of our pursuit, and that the Lord Jesus in the first petition establishes the glorification of God's name as the goal as to why we are to desire the other petitions. Is the desire for, and the seeking after, our deliverance and salvation (that is, of conversion, faith, and holiness, without being motivated to that end purely and alone by the love for and having as objective the glorification of God's name) not sinful self-love, and therefore must be neglected until we have first received a love for the glorification of God? Ought not that love and that objective alone motivate us to seek for our deliverance and salvation?

Answer #1: If someone has eternal salvation as his objective -- without having any further objective -- and in order to attain this seeks the Lord Jesus unto justification and sanctification by a

variety of means such as heartfelt prayer and supplications to God, the exercise of faith, an active opposing of sin, and the exercise of godliness, then his activity is governed by the ground rule mentioned above. Salvation is the primary objective of his pursuit, and he uses means to obtain this -- this being his ultimate goal.

Answer #2: This prayer is perfect as far as substance and order are concerned. In order for someone to pray this perfectly, he must be perfect himself. In this life no one is perfect, however, and therefore no one is able to pray perfectly. What then is to be done? Must he then, in order not to sin, refrain from praying because his prayer and actions are deficient and polluted with sin? Absolutely not, for otherwise all religion would cease. However, it is true that his prayer and works cannot be placed on the register of perfect virtues. He can thereby neither approach unto God, exist before Him, nor obligate God to hear his prayer. The uprightness of his objective, and his activity issuing forth from this objective in pursuing this ultimate goal, are pleasing to God, for he pursues this goal and is active with Christ in view; and his activity is spiritual and has spiritual vitality. God will hear this deficient prayer, not because of the virtues to be found in it, but according to His fatherly goodness and promise rooted in the satisfaction of Christ.

Thirdly, if someone is as yet not acquainted with this ultimate purpose, that is, the glorification of God's Name, and is not motivated out of love for this but only has his salvation and eternal security in view, then he has something in view which God commands. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Php 2:12); "What must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30). Salvation was the objective and the apostle directed him to the means whereby this is to be obtained: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (vs. 31). A person who is likewise seeking to be saved, and to that end endeavors to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus, is not active in an entirely correct sense, but neither is his activity wrong. It is God's will that he endeavor to be saved and that he enter upon the way of believing in Christ. When he does this, he pleases the Lord and He promises to grant salvation to such persons.

Answer #4: God does not lead His children in such a way that they will first have a love for the glorification of God's Name and that nothing but love and the pursuance of this goal engages them to seek their salvation unto repentance and faith. I repeat, God does not lead His children in this way. Never have the prophets or the apostles guided their pupils in such a direction. He who teaches such a way and wishes to lead others into that way, reveals that he himself is but in the state of nature and that the way of salvation is hidden for him. As a blind guide he misleads the souls which come under his care, for in that way they will never be saved. Never will anyone attain the highest level of holiness if he does not begin at the lowest level. We do not begin with the highest step and then descend to the lowest step; instead, we begin with the lowest and ascend to the highest.

Answer #5: A spiritual and wise father, who is going to teach his child to read and write, will not endeavor first to cause his child to be acquainted with and delight in the glorification of God's Name in order that he would thereby be motivated to learn how to read. He knows that such is beyond the reach of the intellect of a child. Likewise God leads His children in accordance with their comprehension. First He puts them on the lowest rung in order to lead them higher step by step. A beginner in grace, even though he is not motivated by a desire for the glorification of God's Name, is nevertheless not opposed to this. Rather, he approves of this in accordance with the

measure in which this is presented to him and can be comprehended by him. Yes, time and again he ends in this when he thanks God for that which he has enjoyed. When we pray, "Hallowed be Thy Name," then we must not imagine that we are praying on behalf of the Lord, as if we could contribute anything to him, and as if by hallowing His Name we could increase His glory. To do so would be to dishonor God, for He is perfect and all-sufficient. "Neither is (He) worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing" (Acts 17:25); "My goodness extendeth not to Thee" (Psalms 16:2); "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him, that thou makest thy ways perfect" (Job 22:3). It is not God's felicity, but rather man's that he knows, loves, serves, and praises God. It is a grace that he may do so, and it will be the highest purpose and felicity of his life if he is permitted to do so and in actuality does this. The following is to be noted in the words of the first petition: 1) the object: Thy Name and 2) the desired activity: be hallowed. The Object of this Petition The object is "Thy Name." A name is a word whereby we distinguish one thing from something else when we speak of it. Every person has his own name. The word "name" sometimes signifies a person. "The number of names (■νομ■των) together were about an hundred and twenty" (Acts 1:15). Each person has his own name and thus there are as many names as there are persons. Therefore the name of God signifies God Himself. "And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed" (Leviticus 24:11); "What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell" (Proverbs 30:4). This refers to God's essence, and His existence is incomprehensible and inexpressible for you. This is also evident from such passages in which the name of God is said to be active (Psalms 20:1), men are said to trust in God's name (Isaiah 50:10), worship His name (Zephaniah 3:9), and fear that name (Malachi 4:2). Sometimes the name of God is understood to refer to the names by which God calls Himself or allows Himself to be called -- such as Jehovah: "I am the Lord (Jehovah): that is My name" (Isaiah 42:8). The name of God is also understood to refer to God's reputation -- just as we say of a man that he has a good name, that is, testimony, esteem, reputation. This is also signified relative to God. "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name" (Joshua 7:9). Here the name of God signifies God Himself, His essence, His perfections, and in some respects, also His reputation. The Mandated Activity The deed or activity we are required to perform relative to God's Name is that it be hallowed. Since various motions are comprehended in the word "to hallow," there is confusion among those who have but little knowledge as to what is to be understood by the hallowing of God's Name. In order to have a more discerning knowledge it needs to be noted that "to hallow" is to be understood differently when it refers to a person or a matter than when it has God as its object. When man or something else is its object, it signifies:

- (1) To be separated from all others and to stand alone.
- (2) To be devoted to God, to appropriate to God, and to surrender to His lordship and service.
- (3) To prepare and qualify for the service of God. It thus means to illuminate, regenerate, restore the image of God in man, to render holy and virtuous, and to render someone radiant and glorious due to holiness.
- (4) To be holily engaged in the service of God -- in a task commanded by God. Occasionally, this is attributed to God and sometimes to man.

If it is attributed to God, then it signifies:

(1) The separation of a people or a person in order to penalize them for their sins. "Prepare [Note: The Statenvertaling reads as follows: "Heilig ze tot den dag der dooding," that is, "Sanctify them for the day of slaughter."] them for the day of slaughter" (Jeremiah 12:3).

(2) The separation, preparation, and qualification of nations to execute His judgments over others: "And I will prepare [Note: Ibid.] destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons" (Jeremiah 22:7).

(3) To set apart a matter or day for His service: "I have hallowed this house" (1 Kings 9:3); "Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11).

(4) To separate a nation or a person from others to be His property and for His service: "I hallowed unto Me all the firstborn in Israel" (Numbers 3:13); "I am the Lord which sanctify you" (Leviticus 20:8). It also signifies a rendering fit for His service; that is, to change, make holy, and render spiritual. "Sanctify them through Thy truth" (John 17:17); "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). In this manner God has also set apart the Lord Jesus to be a Surety and a Mediator, qualifying Him by the union of the two natures and the extraordinary infusion of the Holy Spirit. "...Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world ..." (John 10:36); "For it became Him ... to make the captain of their salvation perfect [Note: The Statenvertaling uses the word "heiligen," that is, "to sanctify" where the KJV uses "to make perfect."] through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10). When "hallowing" is attributed to men, it signifies:

(1) To set apart -- upon God's command -- a day, matter, or person for the service of God. There is the hallowing of a day: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). There is the hallowing of a matter: "So they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days" (2 Chronicles 29:17). There is a hallowing of persons: "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn" (Exodus 13:2).

(2) To separate ourselves, to consecrate ourselves to God, or to prepare ourselves for the service of God. "Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow" (Joshua 7:13); "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

All these meanings of the word "to hallow" are not applicable here. However, we have pointed them out since you need to be acquainted with them in order to be free from any confusion in this respect, and to be all the more capable of understanding the meaning of the word "to hallow." This is a hallowing which has as its object neither man nor anything else. The reference here is to a hallowing which has God as its object. Sometimes this is attributed to God and sometimes to man.

God Hallows Himself

God hallows Himself: "And I will sanctify My great name" (Ezekiel 36:23). God hallows Himself both in the works of nature and of grace, revealing to man what manner of God He is.

He hallows Himself in the works of nature.

(1) He does this when He reveals Himself as being the only God. "I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; ... beside Me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:24; Isaiah 44:6). Man can discern this from creation: "... being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20).

(2) He does so when He reveals His goodness by means of temporal blessings. "Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven" (Acts 14:17); "The earth is full of Thy riches" (Psalms 104:24).

(3) He does so when He demonstrates His justice in punishing sinners. Even the heathen perceive this, for one of them states, "I have long been in doubt as to whether God rules over everything or whether everything comes about by chance. However, the punishment of Rufinus at last terminated this train of thought and vindicated God. They (the ungodly) are exalted in order that they will be crushed all the more severely." This is frequently mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. Such is true in these two texts: "Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her" (Ezekiel 28:22); "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten Me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen" (Exodus 14:18).

(4) This occurs when the Lord reveals His irresistible omnipotence in His works: "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Exodus 9:16). Consider also Daniel 4:34-35, "I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

However, God hallows Himself in a special sense in the work of grace wherein He reveals Himself as:

(1) A righteous God, who cannot allow sin to go unpunished, and who cannot be reconciled to the sinner except the committed sins be fully punished. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness" (Romans 3:25).

(2) A good God: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared. ... He saved us" (Titus 3:4-5).

(3) A wise God: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10).

(4) A faithful God: "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

(5) A truthful God: "But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay" (2 Corinthians 1:18).

(6) An immutable God. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath" (Hebrews 6:17). Therefore the Lord says, "But My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed" (Isaiah 54:10). In these ways God reveals His perfections and hallows His Name. The Manner in Which Man Hallows Man is also said to hallow, either himself, other people, or a variety of matters. It then signifies:

(1) The separation of ordinary things for religious purposes: "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn" (Exodus 13:2); "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 13:2).

(2) To devote to, to consecrate to God, to surrender to the service of the Lord, or to sacrifice: "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). The following passages refer to this: "But first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Corinthians 8:5); "And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel" (Isaiah 44:5).

(3) To prepare for the service of the Lord: "Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice" (1 Samuel 16:5).

(4) To be involved in a holy manner in the work of the Lord. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). To this also belongs a being godly and holy in the totality of our life and deeds. "Ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44).

Man is also said to hallow God. Such hallowing, however, does not signify all that which we enumerated, for God is perfect, and nothing can either be taken away or added to Him.

However, the hallowing of God's Name consists, first of all, in knowing and attentively observing where and in what manner God hallows His Name -- in His works as well as in grace, as has been discussed above. He who will hallow God's Name, must take note wherein God reveals Himself, and which perfections of God manifest themselves in this. "Come, behold the works of the Lord" (Psalms 46:8); "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Psalms 107:43).

Secondly, there must be a recognition and a joyful approbation that God is such a God. "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments" (Revelation 16:7).

Thirdly, God's Name as such must be glorified, exalted, and praised. "O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people. For His merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever" (Psalms 117:1-2).

(1) Such occurs with the heart: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Psalms 103:1); "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" (1 Peter 3:15);

(2) with the mouth: "I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works" (Psalms 145:5); (3) with our life and our deeds: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). Fourthly, we must show to others how glorious a God our God is. From the Holy Scriptures and His works, both His common and extraordinary providence, we must point out which perfections of God manifest themselves in a given situation, and thereby we must lead them to the knowledge, acknowledgment, love, and glorification of God. Everywhere in the Psalms David exhorts everyone to do so -- also in Psalms 148:1-14, where he addresses angels, hosts, kings, princes, judges, young men, maidens, and old men. He stirs them all up to praise God and to behold the glory of the Lord in all His works of creation, preservation, government, and redemption of His people. He concludes in verses 13-14 by saying, "Let them praise the name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people

near unto Him. Praise ye the Lord." The psalmist also makes mention of animals, birds, fish, the sun, and trees. This does not mean that they are able to do this, but that they render man reasons to glorify God; and he ends the book of Psalms with: "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord"! The Implication of Praying, "Hallowed be Thy Name"

Thus far we have demonstrated how and whereby God's Name is hallowed. It now remains to demonstrate what it means to pray, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

First of all, it consists of an expression of strong love and a desire that God's Name be glorified and praised. "Let such as love Thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified" (Psalms 70:4).

Secondly, it includes an acknowledgment that we and all other men are not worthy that God would manifest Himself to us even in the very least, that we should rejoice in this revelation, and that we should put the praises of God in our mouths. When the holy angels glorified God and thrice exclaimed "Holy," they covered their countenances (Isaiah 6:1-13). Abraham said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27). Thereby we acknowledge that it would be God's incomprehensible grace and goodness if the Lord were to permit and enable us to glorify Him. For this grace we then pray.

Thirdly, it implies an admission of impotence to do this, for he who delights in the hallowing of God's Name finds himself perplexed from all sides. His understanding is too darkened, his will too inert, and his affections too lethargic. He is neither able to begin, nor to proceed, and if he does anything it is more the work of his head than his heart and he is therefore inclined to desist. He thus perceives that it must be given him out of grace, and therefore he says, "O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise" (Psalms 51:15).

Fourthly, it is indicative of faith that God is able to do it, is also willing to give it -- and indeed does give it. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise" (Isaiah 43:21); "That they might be called ... the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified" (Isaiah 61:3). The Lord Jesus would not put these words in our mouth if it were not the Lord's intent to grant this to the suppliant.

Fifthly, it consists of a heartfelt entreaty:

(1) That God would reveal Himself as He is, and that He is the One who rules everything from the least to the greatest, He being the One who punishes and blesses, and who gives both victory and defeat in war. "O Shepherd of Israel ... shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up Thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine" (Psalms 80:1-3); "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth ... show Thyself" (Psalms 94:1).

(2) That both the suppliant and others would see and acknowledge God as He reveals Himself in His Word and in His works by His Spirit -- as God is indeed pleased to do. "... the wicked ... will not behold the majesty of the Lord" (Isaiah 26:10); "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. ... So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Psalms 58:10-11); "Then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it" (Ezekiel 37:14).

(3) That both the supplicants and others -- by reason of knowing the Lord as being such a majestic, holy, glorious, good, and omnipotent Lord -- would, in all that He does, love, fear, obey,

and praise Him; and by reason of that disposition and desire they initiate everything, are active as such, end in this, and in very deed exclaim, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Romans 11:36). All this is included in the prayer, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

Having a strong love that God will be glorified among men, in view of his unworthiness to be permitted to do so, and due to his inability to do so, the supplicant presents himself in faith to the Lord as a child, coming to God as his Father in Christ, and prays, "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children" (Psalms 90:16); "Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise and with Thy honour all the day" (Psalms 71:8). The Vain Use of this Petition

How far man is removed from conducting himself as such, however! The heathen neither know, desire, nor glorify God, and are without God. Christians are indeed obligated to glorify God, but in some respects they behave themselves worse than the heathen, for instead of glorifying God, they dishonor Him -- yes, they mock with God in an intolerable manner. However, you may say, "How do they mock with God?" They do so by daily taking these words in their mouths: "Hallowed be Thy Name," for they daily recite this prayer and are of the opinion that they would commit a great sin if they had not prayed this -- if the Lord's Prayer had not been the conclusion of their prayer. However, in the meantime they have no knowledge of what this means: "Hallowed be Thy Name." They do not desire this, nor are they motivated to pray this by reason of such a desire. It does not even occur to them, and they just rattle it off. Is not this mockery? Would you dare to address a king or a man of distinction in this manner? Do you think that he would give you your request upon such irreverent babbling? Acknowledge therefore what an abomination it is to be prattling in this manner in the presence of God, while yet being of the opinion that you had prayed to God. Such persons have no interest in the means whereby God's Name is hallowed: the coming of God's kingdom and the petitions which follow. Consequently, this means that they themselves also have no desire for the glorification of God's Name, and yet they insist on daily reciting this petition ignorantly, doing so without a desire for the matter -- and irreverently. Is this not to be guilty of mocking with the great God? It would be less sinful not to pray at all than to rattle something off mockingly in God's presence. The Grave Consequences of Not Hallowing God's Name

Therefore, give ear, you ignorant ones, who neither have knowledge of God nor of the contents of this petition, and who have no desires relative to this petition; hear, you who rattle off your prayers, who pray routinely, who mock with God, who tear God's laws to shreds and trample upon them, who abuse the holy name of God, who with your ungodly walk cause the name of God to be slandered; hear and take the following to heart:

First, God will not permit Himself to be mocked and despised. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7); "Surely He scorneth the scorners" (Proverbs 3:34). Oh, how dreadful it will be when you will thus be scorned!

Secondly, as long as you live in such a condition, God does not wish to be worshiped by you. "When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isaiah 1:12; Isaiah 1:15). What a wretched condition it is not to be permitted to pray -- yes, then even their religion is an abomination before God! "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 15:8). God even forbids them to speak of

divine things: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth" (Psalms 50:16). Oh, God is so holy that we may not approach unto Him except in the way of holiness.

Thirdly, if we do not hallow God's Name; if we but say with our mouth, "Hallowed be Thy Name," while neither understanding what we are saying nor having a heartfelt desire that such would occur, then God will sanctify Himself by punishing you, in order that everyone would perceive how very much God ought to be feared and how reverent we ought to be in our approach unto Him. When Nadab and Abihu came before the Lord with strange fire, "there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them" (Leviticus 10:3). In response to this Moses said, "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me" (Leviticus 10:3). Even though God does not always do this immediately, the Lord will nevertheless do this at His time and in His manner, and they will be aware of the fulfillment of this threat: "Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from me ... therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:13-14). Therefore, also give heed as to how you pray; be acquainted with and desirous for that which you declare before God: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God" (Ecclesiastes 5:2). This is intended for those who pray in an evil manner. The Godly Rebuked for Their Deficient Use of This Petition

Also the godly are very deficient in praying this petition, and therefore are in need of rebuke. Many dwell too much upon themselves and are too intent upon a feeling sense of the forgiveness of sins, the assurance of their state, and victory over their sins, holiness, and virtuousness. The latter is a good desire, but it is not sufficient. We ought much more to accustom ourselves to have knowledge of, love for, and focus upon the highest goal in all things: the glorification of God's Name. This we must heartily supplicate for in our prayer, rather than desist in discouragement by saying, "I cannot glorify God; I am too ignorant and I do not know how to begin; I am too sinful, and the power of my corruptions troubles my soul; my cross presses me down and I am surrounded by sorrows; I find it difficult to believe that God is my God. How then can I glorify His Name? And even if I undertake this, then I must immediately desist. I am without subject matter for my prayer, I find no sweetness in it, and it is but the work of my intellect."

You are indeed to be rebuked. To refrain from this causes you to remain spiritually immature. You desire to immediately have a view of the glory of God in a high measure, as well as having a feeling and vehement sense of love. Instead, you must begin in a humble condition of soul and reflect upon the suitableness of God being hallowed by all creatures, the blessedness of those who do so with desire and love, as well as your own desire to that end. You must thus train yourself continually to have this objective in view in order to become accustomed to it. In so doing, your propensity in this regard will improve.

Therefore, stir up your soul to hallow God's Name and to pray for this continually, for:

- (1) God is worthy of this (Revelation 4:11), and it behooves you (Isaiah 42:21).
- (2) God is pleased with it (Psalms 22:4), and this is all your delight (Psalms 71:8).

(3) It is the delightful activity of the birds, the heavens (Psalms 19:1), the angels (Isaiah 6:3), and the saints upon earth (Psalms 92:2; Psalms 69:31). Would you then be silent?

(4) this will cause your work to be more genuine (John 3:21), and is a great privilege for you (Psalms 99:3; Psalms 99:6). God glorifies all who glorify Him (1 Samuel 2:30), and it is the sweetest task (Psalms 147:1). Yes, it is felicity itself and it will be the eternal activity of glory (Revelation 5:9-12). Therefore, take pleasure in this, undertake it, take conscious notice of the manner in which God reveals His perfections, and praise the Lord. Begin with this objective and end in it. "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord" (Psalms 150:6). These matters have been enlarged upon and recommended in chapter 56x Add this chapter to it for it belongs to it. If I had not dealt with it extensively there, I would have been obligated to do so here. Since, however, we did so at that time, I have said less of it here.

1 This statement, and the paragraphs that follow, are based on the rendering of the Statenvertaling, which reads as follows: "Die Gij zijt in de hemelen," that is, "Which art in the heavens."

2 The Statenvertaling reads as follows: "Heilig ze tot den dag der dooding," that is, "Sanctify them for the day of slaughter."

3 Ibid.

4 The Statenvertaling uses the word "heiligen," that is, "to sanctify" where the KJV uses "to make perfect."

075. Chapter 70: The Second Petition: Thy Kingdom Come

----- CHAPTER SEVENTY ----- The Second Petition: Thy Kingdom Come

God has conjoined both the end and the means to obtain that end with an unbreakable bond. He who does not use the means should not expect to attain the end. This is common knowledge to everyone. Sometimes the means -- such as heavy labor and perilous circumstances -- are unattractive and we would not avail ourselves of them if it were not for the fact that we would thus attain the desired end. Sometimes the means in and of themselves are attractive. We would make use of them without any further objective in view -- as is true for delectable food and drink. In the spiritual realm all is sweet -- the end and the means which we use and avail ourselves of in order to attain the end (I am not referring to suffering here). They are sweet in view of the end to be attained, and they are inherently sweet as well. How amiable and desirable the ultimate of all objectives is -- the hallowing of God's Name -- we have demonstrated in the preceding petition. The five subsequent petitions are the means to that end -- each individual petition being very precious and giving cause for rejoicing to the truly spiritual person. The means which most preeminently promotes the glorification of God's Name is the coming of God's kingdom. Its nature, glory, advantages, and desirability we shall now explain. In the second petition reference is made to a kingdom, relative to which the prayer is uttered that it might come. The Word "Kingdom" Defined and Expounded

Let us consider the word "kingdom." A kingdom consists of a populace united under one leader. There have always been many kingdoms in the world, and it is still divided into many. Among them there have been four empires; that is, eras when the entire world was subjected to one ruling head. These are the empires of Babylon, of the Medes and Persians, of the Greeks, and of the Romans. There is yet a fifth empire of an entirely different nature: the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, of which we are now speaking. This is otherwise referred to as the congregation of God and of Christ, and we denominate it with a word not found in Scripture: the church. [Note: This statement is only applicable to the Statenvertaling.]

Let us furthermore consider the word "Thy." In this prayer God the Father is addressed, and thus the reference here is to the kingdom of the Father, for all things are out of Him and through Him. The Father gathers, rules, and preserves this kingdom by His Son Jesus Christ. This is therefore conjoined in the following passage: "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ" (Revelation 12:10). God is King in and of Himself. He is the original cause of all things; He inherently has the preeminence, is exalted, has all majesty and glory, and all power and dominion from all eternity. This was true before there were any creatures, and now that creatures do exist, they are all subject to God in consequence of His nature. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11). The Lord is great -- yes, He alone is King: "I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and My name is dreadful among the heathen" (Malachi 1:14). The kingdom

of God is distinguished between 1) the kingdom of His power, 2) the kingdom of His glory, and 3) the kingdom of His grace. The kingdom of His power has all creatures as its subjects: good and evil angels, good and evil men, all living animals, and all inanimate objects in the heavens and upon earth. Everything is so fully in His hand that they cannot move without Him. Furthermore, they immediately stand ready at His bidding and execute His will. The Lord is therefore generally referred to in Scripture as the Lord of hosts. David speaks as follows: "They continue this day according to Thine ordinances: for all are Thy servants" (Psalms 119:91); "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all" (Psalms 103:19). Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged this by saying, "Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou" (Daniel 4:34-35). The kingdom of His glory has as its subjects the holy angels and the glorified elect in the third heaven -- that is, paradise or the house of the Father. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). "God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12), that is, to His glorious kingdom. The kingdom of His grace is also denominated as "the Church of God." First, the subjects of this kingdom are all true believers and converted persons. "... the Lamb shall overcome them ... and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14).

Secondly, God separates them from the world, all nations, all communities, and all kingdoms, and causes them to dwell alone. "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23:9); "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Thirdly, there is a very intimate interrelationship among them -- a most intimate and spiritual bond -- so that together they form one whole. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). This union exists:

(1) As a result of true doctrine: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20); "One Lord, one faith" (Ephesians 4:5). The apostle therefore exhorts: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house" (2 John 1:10).

(2) Due to being united by the same Spirit who dwells in all of them and by whom they all live: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14); "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:18).

(3) By love: "Their hearts ... being knit together in love" (Colossians 2:2); "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

(4) By that selfsame faith, by which they are united to Christ and in Christ to each other. "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (John 17:21).

Fourthly, this kingdom has the Lord Jesus as its King. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Psalms 2:6). Even though only true believers are the actual subjects of this King -- they being God, knowledge the only members who truly constitute the church, being united to the Lord

Jesus with a spiritual bond, and in Him to each other -- the Lord Jesus is nevertheless King of the entire church as she manifests herself in the world, which includes many unconverted members. Just as an earthly king rules over strangers, residents, hidden enemies, and traitors, likewise Christ also rules over the unconverted in His kingdom. For they acknowledge Him to be their King, subject themselves to Him, have sworn allegiance to Him, and confess Him, even though they do it but in an external sense and with an unchanged heart. Kingdom of God, church Fifthly, God designates this kingdom as the object of His goodness and all manner of blessings. In that kingdom:

(1) God dwells with His gracious presence: "God is in the midst of her" (Psalms 46:5); "In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion" (Psalms 76:2). Jesus is their King "who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Revelation 2:1).

(2) There is safety: "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isaiah 27:3); "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zechariah 2:5). Therefore all who know the Lord take refuge there: "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it" (Isaiah 14:32).

(3) There is light: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee ... but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:1-3).

(4) There is spirituality, life, and holiness. "But ye are ... an holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9). (5) There is peace and joy: "For the kingdom of God is ... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"

(Romans 14:17). (6) There is comfort and refreshment for an oppressed soul: "All My springs are in Thee" (Psalms 87:7). (7) The elect are converted and are gathered in: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her"

(Psalms 87:5); "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Such glorious things are said of the city of God -- of the kingdom of Christ. The Origin and Nature of the Kingdom This kingdom has its origin in the first gospel declaration to Adam, and will continue without fail until the end of the world. From Adam to Abraham it was gathered from various nations, but the particular focus was upon the holy lineage. From Abraham to Christ it consisted in the seed of Abraham, although many other individuals joined themselves to it. "He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation" (Psalms 147:19-20). After the coming of Christ, all distinction among nations has been removed, and whoever believes in and fears the Lord is pleasing to Him, regardless of what nation he belongs to. "Thou ... hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9). This kingdom is the kingdom of heaven, being denominated as such in contrast to all earthly kingdoms. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). It originates in heaven, is of a heavenly nature, functions in a heavenly manner, and culminates in heaven. It is therefore called the kingdom of heaven. Since this kingdom has always been the same, being identical in nature from Adam to Christ, it thus has been in all ages a heavenly kingdom. However, it is especially the New Testament church which is denominated as such, all the externals of the shadow ministry of the Old Testament having been removed. The church is presently not an external kingdom; that is, it is not governed by kings and princes and

furnished with external weapons -- as was true in the Old Testament. Instead, she is now fully and entirely removed from all earthly externals, and is only heavenly in nature -- also in its external manifestation. Thus, the church of the New Testament is in a special sense the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist denominates it as such: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The Lord Jesus generally denominates it as such in the gospels and requires His apostles to do likewise. "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 10:7).

It is a kingdom by virtue of its being ruled by a king, namely, Jesus Christ, who gathers, protects, and governs this kingdom. We refer to it as the kingdom of heaven since:

(1) It has its origin in heaven and is therefore frequently denominated the kingdom of God. By means of the gospel God reveals the Mediator and the way to salvation. God converts and adds to the church those regarding whom it pleases Him to do so. He sends forth ministers to that end, and the gospel call is therefore referred to as a heavenly calling. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1).

(2) Its subjects have heavenly natures. "Which were born ... of God" (John 1:13), are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), "... are led by the Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14), and "are spiritual" (Galatians 6:1).

(3) The benefits of this kingdom are heavenly: God Himself is their portion (Lamentations 3:24), and the Lord Jesus is their "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). All the benefits of the covenant of grace are theirs. They are "the heirs of promise" (Hebrews 6:17).

(4) The activity of its subjects is of a heavenly nature: they pray, believe, love, and exercise virtue.

(5) They are without carnal weapons and are defenseless, even though the entire world is at enmity with them. Their battle is of a spiritual nature, however, and their weapons are spiritual. The apostle describes this armor from head to toe in Ephesians 6:13-18. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Corinthians 10:4).

(6) It culminates in heaven: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:9); "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4). These are all the reasons why this kingdom is denominated the kingdom of heaven. This Kingdom Redounds to the Glorification of God The existence of this kingdom redounds to the glorification of God in consequence of what God works in its subjects, what God does relative to them, and by what the church does relative to God.

(1) God's perfections shine forth in the ingathering of the church and the conversion of souls solely by the instrumentality of the Word; in the uniting of believers to Christ, justifying them by His ransom and righteousness; and by sanctifying, leading, and comforting them. In all this God reveals His wisdom, goodness, omnipotence, and faithfulness. He is thus "glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

(2) God is also glorified by what He does relative to His church. When He chastises the church for her sins, then God's holiness is manifested as not being able to endure sin even in His children and thus visits them with the rod. He is glorified when He preserves His church in the midst of

wolves, so that she remains standing in all the assaults of the enemy -- assaults which, humanly speaking, could easily undo her. He is glorified when He causes the church to be manifest again in a glorious fashion after having been in very humble circumstances. God thus reveals in all this His omnipotence and faithfulness, showing that they are His people and that He will avenge Himself upon the oppressors of the church (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

(3) God is also glorified by the church when she, with her deeds, shows "forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise" (Isaiah 43:21). Thus, this kingdom is the preeminent means whereby God's Name is hallowed. The Lord Jesus therefore teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come."

It is relative to this kingdom that we pray that it may come.

Question When does this kingdom come? The kingdom of heaven, as far as its New Testament manifestation is concerned, had not yet come at the time when the Lord Jesus prescribed this prayer, for the Lord Jesus had neither paid the ransom nor had yet been glorified. The Holy Spirit had not as yet been poured out in that extraordinary manner and the gospel had not yet been conveyed to the heathen, even though that moment was near. They could thus pray that it would come; it did not exist as yet, but was near. However, how can we now pray that such would come about, since all this has transpired?

Answer: Even though this great change initially took place, its progression occurs daily, and will not cease to occur until the Lord Jesus returns for judgment. When we therefore presently pray, "Thy Kingdom come," then this pertains to individuals in particular and to the condition of the church in general. This Petition as It Relates to Individuals This petition pertains to individual persons. As a house is built by adding stone to stone, and as a kingdom exists and is enlarged by uniting more and more subjects, likewise this kingdom prospers by the translation of individuals from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ. This takes place when God, by means of the Word of the kingdom, illuminates their understanding. He will thereby cause them to see, while being inwardly stirred, their sinful and damnable condition, the way of salvation, and the preciousness of the state of the redeemed. This kingdom comes when God removes their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh; when He gives them a submissive, attentive, and pliable heart; when He grants them faith whereby they accept Christ as their righteousness and ransom; when He regenerates them and grants them spiritual life, adding them as living stones to this spiritual building and incorporating them as faithful subjects into this heavenly kingdom.

And, the more they increase in light and holiness, the more God's kingdom is within them. This Petition as It Relates to the Church in Its Condition This kingdom comes relative to the condition of the church in general.

(1) This kingdom comes when the light emanated by the church is pure and holy; when she eliminates the foul odor of error and heresy; when she excels in holiness, and she "looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Song of Solomon 6:10); when she glitters with "beauties of holiness" (Psalms 110:3), which "becometh thine house" (Psalms 93:5), and when she is thus "a praise in the earth" (Isaiah 62:7) and "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isaiah 62:3). This

kingdom comes when the church radiates such glory that others do not dare to join her and magnify her instead (Acts 5:13).

(2) This kingdom comes when the church is multiplied and when multitudes join her in those localities where the church exists. It furthermore comes when the gospel is brought to other locales, nations, and kingdoms, and when the gospel is readily received there according to the promise: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matthew 24:14).

(3) This kingdom comes when the Lord delivers the church from overwhelming oppression which had caused her to flee into the wilderness, and when He causes her to reappear more gloriously. Such was the case when the Lord, at the time of Constantine the Great, delivered the church from the persecution of the heathen emperors; and when He delivered her from the oppression of the antichrist at the time of the Reformation. It will come when God will destroy the throne of the beast, Rome, and annihilate the pope of Rome. For as the antichrist is reduced, the church will proportionally increase.

(4) This kingdom will come when the Jews will come to the Messiah, Jesus Christ; when they will acknowledge Him, believe in Him, repent toward the Lord, unite themselves with believers among the Gentiles, and together will form one church. This will be according to the promise found in Romans 11:25-26 : "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery ...that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob"; "What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead" (Romans 11:15).

(5) This kingdom will come when that which is recorded in Revelation 20:2; Revelation 20:4 will come to pass: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." The glory of the church during the millennium will consist in the annihilation of the antichrist and the Mohammedans -- the two chief enemies of the church; the binding of Satan and his incarceration in hell; the conversion of the Jews; the manifestation of great zeal among the heathen and all manner of nations; the presence of extraordinary light, holiness, and peace; the extraordinary indwelling of God among them; and a wondrous revelation of the Lord Jesus as King -- not physically, but in the Spirit. God will then also make the earth extraordinarily fruitful. Oh, what a glorious time that will be! Who does not long for this time? All these things constitute the coming of God's kingdom. The Lord Jesus mandates that we must pray for the coming of this kingdom. Such was the practice of the Old Testament saints: "Prayer also shall be made for Him continually" (Psalms 72:15). This pertains to the kingdom of which Messiah is King -- and thus the church -- which is the spiritual body of Christ, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23). For the King's honor is in the multitude of people. No matter what David's perplexities were, the church was always bound upon his heart. He could not conclude his prayer for deliverance unless there was also a sigh for Zion: "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Psalms 51:18); "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles" (Psalms 25:22). He exhorts everyone to do likewise: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Psalms 122:6). Our Duty to Pray This Petition

It is thus also our duty to pray, "Thy kingdom come." This includes: Let Thy church radiate light and holiness; extend her to all nations; deliver her from her oppression and anguish; annihilate the antichrist and all the enemies of the church; convert the Jews; and let the promised, glorious state of the church come about.

Furthermore, bless all the means which are subservient to the growth of the church:

(1) Send forth faithful and capable servants, established in the truth, who are zealous and apt to teach: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38); that is, such as the Lord has promised: "I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness" (Isaiah 60:17).

(2) Let the Word and its preaching be blessed and fruitful: "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you" (2 Thessalonians 3:1); "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ" (Colossians 4:3).

(3) Let the institutions for learning -- for the children as well as for the sons of the prophets -- be blessed. Let the nurture of children be blessed so that the families become little churches. "And, ye fathers ... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

(4) Grant us a good government which, according to promise, will seek the welfare of the church: "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers" (Isaiah 49:23). The Requisites for Praying This Petition Aright In order to pray rightly for the coming of this kingdom there must be:

(1) knowledge of what constitutes the future and glory of this kingdom; how this petition relates to the first petition; or, how God's Name is hallowed by the coming of this kingdom -- both of which have been demonstrated above;

(2) love for the well-being of the church;

(3) an acknowledgment of the impotence of individuals to repent, to add themselves as a living member to the church, to live as members who bring glory to the church, as well as the impotence of the church in general to gather herself, remain intact, maintain purity in doctrine and sanctification, enlarge herself, and persevere during persecutions;

(4) faith that only God can do this, is willing to do it, has done so prior to this moment and still does, and has promised to hear the prayers of His children in this respect -- and will also do this in the future according to His promise that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). All this constitutes the contents of this prayer. The Vain and Sacrilegious Use of This Petition

How few are they who pray this petition in truth, and how many are they who rattle it off! They think that to neglect praying the Lord's Prayer every day is ungodly; however, they have no qualms as to whether this petition is prayed aright.

First, this is true for all those who neither know nor cherish this kingdom in its spiritual, glorious, and beneficial nature, and who neither honor nor fear its King. And yet they say, "Thy kingdom

come."

Secondly, there are those who do not manifest themselves as true members, but as subjects of the kingdom of Satan, as ungodly, worldly-minded. They are nothing but blots upon the church and a disgrace to her. And yet they pray, "Thy kingdom come."

Thirdly, there are those who are of the opinion that the well-being of the church consists in the quantity of members and the presence of peace -- even if the church is in an ignorant and sinful condition. They -- ministers, elders, deacons, common members, or authorities -- will do nothing for the upbuilding of the church, and do not concern themselves with whether it goes well or ill with the church. They allow everything to proceed as if it did not pertain to them and nevertheless they pray, "Thy kingdom come."

Fourthly, there are those who hate, oppress, and persecute the faithful subjects of this kingdom -- those who have received light and are godly. If someone comes forward who opposes errors, ungodliness, and the oppression of the saints and desires to seek the good of Jerusalem, he will have to fear that in all things he will be opposed with a bitter hatred. Nevertheless they pray "Thy kingdom come."

First of all, this is mockery with God. By reciting this petition they are declaring that they are praying to God that He do such a thing, expressly requesting Him to do so. In the meantime, however, they do not know what they are saying, and they request what they do not desire; on the contrary, they work against it. Do you think that God will permit Himself to be mocked?

Secondly, to hate, contend with, oppose, and oppress the church is to contend with the Lord Jesus, the King of the church Himself. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:4-5).

Thirdly, not only are you no partaker of all the heavenly benefits of the church -- and thus you will also not be glorified with her -- but all manner of dreadful judgments will come upon you: "But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me" (Luke 19:27); "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zechariah 2:8). Take note of the judgment which is threatened upon the oppressors of the church: "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed" (Revelation 11:5). When those who rattle off this petition -- thus those who mock with God, are blots upon the church, cause the church to be slandered by their walk, and are the oppressors of the church -- will come to judgment and observe the church standing in glory at the right hand of Christ; when they will observe that the Lord Jesus Himself, the King of the church, is the Judge and will look upon them in wrath; oh, how will they then be terrified and tremble! If they were then permitted to render Christ a service, how readily they would do so! They will not be deemed worthy of this, however, but will be cast into the fire.

Obligations in This Petition

However, for you who have some esteem for the Lord Jesus and His kingdom, there are several obligations incumbent upon you.

First, unite yourself to this kingdom and place yourself under the banner of King Jesus. Be as a champion among champions in contending for this kingdom and against its enemies. For outside of this kingdom there is nothing but enemy territory. Do you wish to sojourn in the territory of the enemy? There are but two kingdoms -- that of the Lord Jesus and that of the devil; there is no third. To be part of the kingdom of the devil, however, so that he has dominion over you as he does over all children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2), is indeed the most despicable and abominable thing imaginable. For it is to be at enmity against the Lord Jesus and at war with His kingdom. It is the most extreme form of slavery, for it is to be under the dominion of sin, and it is a most dreadful thing, for it will end in eternal damnation. Therefore, depart from it with utmost urgency and enter into the kingdom of the omnipotent, faithful, good, and blessed King Jesus. There you will find safety, peace, reconciliation with God, light, holiness, and comfort, and it will culminate in the kingdom of eternal glory. Therefore, depart and make a transfer, and join in honoring of Christ and the hallowing of God's Name.

Secondly, cherish this kingdom, and continually stir up your love to that end. Declare with your entire heart: "Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to Thee"; that is, I cannot make any contribution toward Thee, but I can do so "to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight" (Psalms 16:3). Have a heart for the church as David did: "They shall prosper that love thee. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good" (Psalms 122:6;Psalms 122:8-9). Let love prompt you to say with Israel, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Psalms 137:5-6). If your heart is capable of love, it must love the church, for God loves her. "But because the Lord loved you" (Deuteronomy 7:8); "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah ... for the Lord delighteth in thee" (Isaiah 62:7). The Lord Jesus has a heartfelt love for her. "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). The angels love her and all believers love her. She is most delightful from every perspective, for they are the elect, the children of God, the saints, and the excellent. The church is "a crown of glory" (Isaiah 62:7), "a praise in the earth" (Isaiah 62:7), and "the perfection of beauty" (Psalms 50:2). Therefore, love the church.

Thirdly, let both the well-being and the degenerate condition of the church be a matter of concern for you. Attentively inquire how the church in general is faring throughout the entire world. If you are informed that she is oppressed in certain places, that errors are surfacing and beginning to overwhelm her, that love is growing cold, that a worldly attitude is beginning to manifest itself, and that religious weeds are beginning to obscure the appearance of the church, then grieve over this and grieve "for the affliction of Joseph" (Amos 6:6). This is what Nehemiah did in chapter 1 and in chapter 2:3: "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city (Jerusalem, the city of God), lieth waste?" From Lamentations it can be observed how deeply Jeremiah -- and with him all the lovers of Zion -- grieved over the oppression of the church. How do both he and the church lament there! "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger" (Lamentations 1:12).

Furthermore, if you hear that the Lord here and there causes His church to lift up her head again, and visits His people with blessings, rejoice in this and thank the Lord for it. The church did this

formerly: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them" (Psalms 126:1-2); "O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me" (Isaiah 12:1); "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard ... we went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psalms 66:12).

Fourthly, pray and work for this kingdom. Even though it is not in man's power to extend, preserve, and sanctify this kingdom, this being God's doing, it is nevertheless His will that man, out of love, be motivated to promote its well-being, and to call upon God to that end: "Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach" (Joel 2:17); "O send out Thy light and Thy truth" (Psalms 43:3); "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion" (Psalms 51:18). The Duty of the Upright

He who prays in his heart, will and must actively promote the well-being of the church and strive to be a means in God's hand -- each in his place and according to his abilities.

(1) Ministers (the builders), in the demonstration of the Spirit and power, must preach the gospel from heart to heart, clearly and distinctly applying it individually to the ungodly, the godly, the weak, and the strong. They must convict, threaten, rebuke, comfort, and speak according to everyone's condition, doing so publicly as well as in the homes. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2); "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

(2) Elders must not only pray, "Thy kingdom come," but out of love for this cause must actively engage themselves, give heed to how the congregation functions, rebuke those who are disorderly, instruct the ignorant, and visit the sick. Furthermore, all that is a minister's duty in the private realm, is also their duty. Likewise the deacons must labor in their sphere.

(3) All individual members must not only continually persevere in praying for the well-being of the church, but also be active in their individual positions. It must be their objective to render the church glorious, separating themselves from all who are outside of her in order that the distinction be all the more visible. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:17). Everyone must endeavor to be an example to others. That which was Timothy's duty is applicable to every member of the church: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Maintain mutual peace (except if the truth and godliness be at stake), and "seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalms 34:14). Manifest a loving heart toward those who are within and without -- to the one with the love of delight and toward the other with a compassionate love: "And (add) to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Peter 1:7). Be your brother's keeper by instructing, exhorting, and comforting everyone -- each according to his own circumstances -- so that no one may backslide, but that all would unitedly go forward from strength to strength. "... warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:14). How the church would radiate the beauties of holiness and render Christ honor if everyone were to behave himself in this fashion!

Even though the work inherently is sufficiently rewarding, doing something for God and His church being the most glorious and sweetest task, let the following reasons also stir you up:

(1) God is extraordinarily pleased with this. "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Samuel 2:30).

(2) The Lord will preserve such in the day of evil: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble" (Psalms 41:1); "Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezekiel 9:4).

(3) Such will experience that they themselves will greatly increase in gifts and graces: "Every branch in Me ... beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2); "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance" (Matthew 13:12).

(4) Such a congregation will be richly blessed, "for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:3).

(5) The Lord will abundantly reward such faithful ones. "Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on Mine altar for nought" (Malachi 1:10); "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:46). Oh, how sweet it will be to be able to say, "Behold, here am I and the children which the Lord has given me." To them the Lord shall say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matthew 25:21). Happy is that people that is in such a case!

076. Chapter 71: The Third Petition: Thy Will Be Done on Earth as it Is in Heaven

----- CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE ----- The Third Petition: Thy Will Be Done on Earth as it Is in Heaven The eternal and only blessed God, out of sovereign goodness, has created heaven and earth and all their hosts. He preserves them in their essence and motions by His omnipotent, omniscient (as far as each creature is concerned), efficacious, and all-encompassing influence. "Who ... upholding all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3); "By Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17). Furthermore, He is also the lawgiver of His rational creatures -- men: "For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our lawgiver" (Isaiah 33:22).

Among all creatures upon earth, only man knows God as Creator, preserver, ruler, and lawgiver. When man was still in the state of rectitude, he joyously acknowledged the majesty, supremacy, and other perfections of the Lord. He beheld these perfections by reason of the immediate revelation of God to the soul, as well as by observing the creatures and God's operations in them. He was conscious of his dependency upon His Maker, submitted himself to Him as lawgiver, and with a joyful willingness did everything the Lord required from him. He knew of no other will but the Lord's will, for His law was imprinted in his nature -- not only as a rule, but it was natural to him, he being a law unto himself.

However, after the fall everything in man has been reversed and corrupted. Even though he may be conscious and knowledgeable of his obligations toward God, he nevertheless separates himself from God, rejects the law of his Lord, lives according to his own rule, allows himself to be guided by his lusts, and declares himself to be his own master. By his very conduct he declares: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice ... I know not the Lord" (Exodus 5:2); "Who is Lord over us" (Psalms 12:4). When God converts a person, however, his own will is most burdensome and grievous to himself. He hates it, strives against it, and would extract it by its very root if he were able to. He loves the will of God, and to do this will would be all his desire and delight. Yes, since he loves God, it is his desire that not only he, but that all men would acknowledge, honor, and fear God in His majesty and sovereign rule, and be obedient to Him. Since he knows that both he and all other men are unworthy, impotent, and incapable of this, and that such obedience is a gracious gift of God, he therefore avails himself of prayer and prays in humility, "Thy will be done," doing so in accordance with what the Lord Jesus has prescribed in the third petition. This petition consists of two parts. First, there is the matter requested: "Thy will be done." Secondly, there is the manner in which this will is to be done: "On earth as it is in heaven." The Subject of this Petition: The Revealed Will of God

Relative to the matter requested, there Isaiah 1:1-31) the subject: Thy will; and 2) the activity requested: be done. The address "Our Father," etc. is applicable to all petitions. The supplicant here maintains his childlike disposition and makes use of a childlike boldness to make his desire known to God as being His Father in Christ, and requesting its fulfillment. He does this, taking the lowest place, in deepest humility, and with the deepest reverence for the eminence and

awe-inspiring nature of the divine majesty. While being in such a frame, the suppliant will perceive at once that his request will not attribute anything to the Lord Himself. Rather, he perceives it to be a gracious gift to man that he is permitted to behold and delight in the majesty of his God and His worthiness to be obeyed; that he is privileged to submit to Him and with joyful willingness may do that which is pleasing to Him, thus executing His will and commandments with zeal and steadfastness. He therefore requests this in such a heartfelt manner. In regard to man, his will is a faculty of the soul which enables him to love or to hate, to be either pleased or displeased, to choose or reject -- all this in accordance with the manner in which the intellect views or judges a given matter as being desirable or undesirable. However, this is not true of the will of God. We puny human beings speak of it in human terms and are to understand it in a divine sense. We are acquainted with the matter as such, but for the "how" of this truth we must close our eyes; it is incomprehensible. We know that the will of God is the willing God Himself, and this is therefore not the matter to which our petition relates here. When we speak here of the will of God, we perceive this will as it relates to the creature. As such, it signifies that which pleases God -- God's good pleasure: "... according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:5). It can be that God Himself executes this: "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psalms 115:3), or that He requires this to be done by man: "... doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6).

God wills the execution of those things which He has purposed in His eternal counsel and which He has not made known to man in advance. This is denominated the will of His decree, or His secret will. We read of this will in the following passages: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10); "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deuteronomy 29:29). Even though this is not the actual subject of this petition, man is nevertheless involved with it.

Rather, the actual reference here is to those things which God has revealed to us, and not solely to those matters in which God finds pleasure, such as are recorded in the following passages: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3); "In these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:24). It particularly relates to the activity of men, however, which they engage in, due to it being the will of God: "Lo, I come ... to do Thy will" (Hebrews 10:7); "... doing the will of God" (Ephesians 6:6). This will is denominated: the revealed will of God, or the will of His command. "Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). This revealed will pertains to matters which God reveals in advance, but as yet have to come to pass. Such is true of the prophecies and the Revelation of John. Or else it refers to God's commands, the moral law, and thus to that which God requires from man. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly" (Micah 6:8); "... but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). So much for the subject of this petition.

It is this will concerning which the suppliant prays that it "be done," that is, that it be performed. Here the suppliant does not primarily and foremost focus upon man and his happiness and felicity in respect to holiness -- as consisting in the harmony of his intellect, will, words, and deeds with the revealed will of God. Rather, the suppliant is moved by the glorification of God in His majesty. This is realized when man submits himself to God, and when he lives according to God's will. He is moved to pray for this by his desire that God be acknowledged by men as He is, and as He

manifests Himself in the works of nature and grace. For man by nature does not perceive this, does not exalt God above all, nor does he glorify Him; he is furthermore not able to do this. He therefore prays that God would convert men, draw them out of darkness into His marvelous light, and translate them into the kingdom of His Son, so that they will be rendered capable of doing His will and be desirous to do it in very deed.

God creates His secret will, the will of His decree, irresistibly. This is thus not the matter we petition to be done. "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back" (Isaiah 14:27). This sovereignty of the Lord the supplicant acknowledges, and he exalts and honors Him as such. Nebuchadnezzar did so: "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou" (Daniel 4:35). Even though we are not praying that this will be done, we nevertheless acknowledge this will, acquiesce in it, and fully submit to it, while confessing: "Be it with me according to the Lord's good pleasure; let Him do with me as pleases Him; I do not wish the Lord's sovereign rule over me to be restricted by whether or not this pleases me. I am but clay, and let Him make, break, or shape me according to His good pleasure. =For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me: ... and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth' (Job 23:14; Job 23:13). Let Him do this and let Him be sovereign in doing so!" The revealed will of God -- that is, the will of His command, the manner in which we are to conduct ourselves in all respects and under all circumstances -- is the subject of our prayer. This does not pertain to the will of His command as it relates to God Himself, but as it relates to man. Thus, the petition is that man would do that which God wishes to command, doing so for the very reason that God commands it and is pleased with man for doing so -- for we observe daily that man does not do what God commands. Yes, he prays this due to being acquainted with man's wickedness, his own impotence, as well as with the fact that no one will, or is able to, obey God's commandment (and thus acknowledge God's majesty and rule) except God illuminates the understanding, changes the heart, and causes us to walk according to His institutions and to keep and observe His judgments. The Lord promises to do this in Ezekiel 36:26-27, as well as in Jeremiah 31:33 : "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Therefore the supplicant prays that God would manifest His omnipotence and goodness by granting the supplicant and others such a heart to know, love, fear, and obey Him in order that man would thereby show that God is the sole Lord, ruler, and lawgiver, who by His very nature obligates all creatures to obedience. David exemplifies this for us when he prays, "Teach me Thy statutes" (Psalms 119:36); "Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts" (Psalms 119:36); "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies" (Psalms 119:36); "Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments" (Psalms 119:35).

We are to emulate him in this, and thereby demonstrate our desire for the glorification of God's Name by the doing of His will, acknowledging our impotence due to the foolishness and wickedness of our heart. Moreover, we must thereby acknowledge that God is good in being willing to give this, has the ability to give it, and is faithful to fulfil His promises to the supplicant. So much for the first portion -- that is, the matter requested. The Manner in Which God's Will is to Be Done The second part of the petition relates to the manner in which we are to be willing to do God's will: "On earth as it is in heaven." It is neither contrary to the text, nor to the matter itself to acknowledge here a contrast between heaven and earth, or rather, a oneness of heaven and earth. Thus the petition is: "Thy will not only be done in heaven as the angels and the souls of the

just made perfect glorify Thee there by doing Thy will, but let also Thy will be done by men upon earth. May Thy Name thus be glorified in heaven as well as upon earth, and upon earth as well as in heaven. The devil and the reprobate upon earth are not deemed worthy by Thee of this, as they neither desire this nor will ever do so. However, Thou hast formed a people for Thyself in order that they would show forth Thy praise. Therefore, let Thy elect do so both in heaven -- which they do and about which Thy children upon earth rejoice -- and upon earth in Thy church, which is so imperfect and in order to do so is in need of a greater measure of grace and of the Spirit. Illuminate and sanctify them more and more in order that they may be equipped to do Thy will, and thus glorify Thy Name and that thus Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." From this perspective all the elect are viewed as one congregation who all join together in glorifying God by doing His good pleasure. Observe the unity of the residents of heaven and the congregation upon earth: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant" (Hebrews 12:22-24). They are one people who rejoice in each other's activity; that is, in their mutual glorification of God.

However, the comparison between heaven and earth can also be understood as referring to the manner in which the will of God is to be done -- namely, that men upon earth do the will of God as heartily, eagerly, earnestly, joyously, and continually as the angels and the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven. It is not suggested here that it is done as perfectly. A believer indeed strongly desires this, strives for this, and will not rest until his obedience will be perfect. However, he does not desire to limit the Holy One of Israel. It is a gracious gift to be privileged and be able to do the will of God, and one is therefore grateful for the smallest measure of this, even though he longs for more. He does not dare to put restrictions on the measure, however, knowing that God will not make His children perfect here. Rather, it is His will to lead His children to perfection and felicity by faith in the Mediator who is given unto daily justification and sanctification. Therefore, this is not prayed in the absolute sense of the word and with the designation that perfection be attained in the present time. Rather, one joins the citizens of heaven in their endeavor and is desirous to emulate them in their zeal, desire, and love -- praying therefore that he may have both grace and the Spirit to that end.

(1) The residents of heaven do the will of God with an unfathomable willingness. "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word" (Psalms 103:20). This is also the desire of true worshipers, and they endeavor to be thus engaged. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Psalms 110:3).

(2) In heaven the most sacred reverence and deepest humility is manifested in the presence of the Lord. The angels cover their faces when they declare the holiness and glory of God (Isaiah 6:2). The twenty-four elders cast their crowns before the throne and fall down before Him who sat upon the throne (Revelation 4:10). Likewise every believer desires to do the will of God in a very meek and humble disposition. God wills that it be so: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but ... to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). Such was David's practice: "In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple" (Psalms 5:7).

(3) The residents of heaven do God's will diligently and zealously: "Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire" (Psalms 104:4). The Lord also wills that His children upon earth do His will zealously: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11).

(4) In heaven there is nothing but joy. All that they do they do with an inexpressible joy. God wills that also upon earth His children likewise do His will with joy. "Serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalms 100:2). This is also their desire: "It is joy to the just to do judgment" (Proverbs 21:15).

(5) In heaven they never become weary, but they are always and steadfastly doing God's will: "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night" (Revelation 7:15). Likewise, God wills that His people upon earth also be steadfast in the doing of His will. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). The petition therefore is that we may do the will of God as willingly, humbly, diligently, zealously, joyously, and steadfastly as the residents of heaven do, even though we shall not attain their perfection until we shall join them in glory. From the nature of this petition, as declared above, everyone will be able to be convinced whether or not he prays this petition aright. The Vain Recitation of This Petition Many recite this petition daily; however, it is nothing more than a recital and thus not a prayer.

(1) This is true for all who are not acquainted with the Lord's majesty and worthiness to be obeyed, whereby all men -- and particularly each of you individually -- are obligated to submit to His will. They neither acknowledge nor love this will with inner approbation. They neither submit themselves to the Lord, offer their services to Him, nor willingly do His will, so that in all this they might glorify His Name, acknowledge Him as the only God, and exalt, magnify, and praise Him. You who are convinced that such is your disposition, what business do you have to pray and to say to God, "Thy will be done"? For you are neither sincere in this, nor desire this, nor are desirous to do so. It is therefore no more than a rattling off of this petition in the presence of the majestic, omniscient, and holy God. How do you dare! Do you not fear to be cast into hell with one blow?

(2) This is true for you who set God aside, let Him be for what He is, remove yourself far from Him, and live according to your own will, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Ephesians 2:3); "... that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12); "... serving divers lusts and pleasures" (Titus 3:3). You are a person who allows your own will to be the law and motive for your doings, declaring, "I will do this and I will not do that; period! Who has any say over me, and of whom do I need counsel? To whom do I need to give an account of my doings? It pleases me to conduct myself in this manner." No matter what God commands, you will not do it. If God forbids something, you refuse to desist, for your will must be done. Nevertheless you rattle off before God, "Thy will be done."

(3) Some are not even satisfied with doing their own will. Rather, they insist that all men and beasts -- and if they dared to say it, also God -- would stand ready to do their will. Any person who does not fulfil their wishes and does not behave according to their will, can expect to be penalized by them in as cruel a manner as possible. And if they were capable, they would cause everyone to do their will. They do whatever they are capable of, however, by showing aversion, hatred, wrath, vengefulness, and by verbal abuse and the infliction of injury. Even though they insist that others do their will, they nevertheless say to God, "Thy will be done." Attentively take note of these convicting remarks.

First, you who are such, and in such a frame pray, "Thy will be done" (which however is no prayer), ought indeed to be inwardly convinced that you are mocking with God. How do you dare to rattle something off before the most eminent and awe-inspiring Majesty, saying something to Him which you do not mean and will not do, whereas you intend, and actually do the very opposite! If you dare to proceed with mocking God, you will experience that "God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7). Surely, God will mock with you when He will cast you away from Himself. "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Proverbs 1:26); "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Proverbs 28:9).

Secondly, you nevertheless wish to be known as a Christian and would be offended if people called you a heathen or an atheist -- which those being referred to above truly are. Be assured that you are neither a partaker of Christ, nor of the benefits of the covenant of grace, for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24). Those who are Christ's have yet remaining lusts which surface daily. However, these lusts are subdued, controlled, and opposed in order that they may be rooted out. Such persons hate their own will and grieve when it manifests itself. On the contrary, it is your pleasure, delight, and your very activity to do your will. You are therefore without Christ, without God, and without hope. Will you then yet proceed in this way with delight?

Thirdly, you who live, as has been said, according to your own will, and then still say, "Thy will be done," are not only mocking with God and are without Christ and without hope, but eternal condemnation hangs above your head; eternal damnation will be your end. Hear what God says concerning you and to you: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Romans 8:13) -- not only temporal death which all men have in common, but also eternal death, that is, damnation. "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Php 3:19). And do you ask what eternal damnation is? Consider 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, where we read, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." The apostle speaks likewise to you: "But unto them that ... do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Romans 2:8-9). Consider also other texts in which eternal damnation is described. Question your own conscience and give heed if it will not cause you to perceive all this in some measure so that you may be alarmed by it. Therefore, do not go on in this way; either desist from praying, or pray this petition reverently in the presence of God, earnestly desiring and humbly requesting the same. The Godly Rebuked and Exhorted The godly do indeed have light, life, and truth within themselves. It is all still so feeble, however, and the residual corruption of nature still has so much strength. They have to strive against the lusts of the flesh which war against the soul. Even though their own will does not have dominion over them, it nevertheless frequently manifests itself, and readily meddles with all things. Frequently they are also not conscious of their own will, do not detect it quickly enough, and do not strive against it sufficiently. Too often they are too irreverent and careless when they pray, "Thy will be done," for the perfect intention to turn from and strive against their own will is not present in an express and lively sense. They must therefore humble themselves about their deficient prayers, seek forgiveness in the blood of Christ, pray for strength to oppose their own will, and henceforth be more earnest in denouncing their own will. With a sincere intent they must strive against their own will and come to

God, saying, "Thy will be done."

Therefore renounce your own will; that is, treat it as a stranger whom you do not know. Do not consult it, esteem it as your enemy, hate it, reject it, thrust it away from you, and do not heed it -- however delightful and flattering it may be -- for everything would be defiled if your will would but find residence in your smallest finger. Therefore, renounce your own will.

For, first of all, what are you -- you, who are but a worm and an insignificant, vain, sinful, and hateful monstrosity, that you should have a will which is contrary to the will of God, who is your Lord, lawgiver, and Judge? Who are you that your own will would be to you as a lord, law, and rule -- yes, that you insist upon others also conforming to your will? Something more unbecoming, despicable, and contemptible is not imaginable. Abhor yourself, be ashamed, and hide yourself so that neither God, angels, nor men will see you. Do you dare to maintain your own will in opposition to the holy will of the sovereign God? Shame on you! Hasten to thrust out and mortify your will, for this is not becoming to one who is but an ant and a monstrosity; it is intolerable. I cannot find the words to give expression to the hatefulness and intolerable nature of all this. Hasten to thrust your own will from you as far as possible.

Secondly, what is it that your own will desires? Does it desire something which is beautiful, glorious, honest, and beneficial? No, but it desires that which is impure, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. It desires to be honored by a worm -- yes, by one who is bound for hell -- and thus you desire to be loved by those who are hateful. Your desires relate to a splendid piece of real estate, that which is vanity, things which perish, things which pollute the soul, and things which at best are of no benefit. They are things which are prohibited by God, and will lead soul and body to hell. Will these things be more glorious and delightful to you than God, His will, and the things in which God delights? Shall your will be in direct opposition to the will of God? If God says, "I hate these things, and you will neither desire, seek, nor focus upon them," will you then say, "I wish to covet, seek, and have them"? Will that which is inferior prevail over that which is superior; that which is defiled over that which is holy; and that which is harmful over that which is beneficial? Therefore, renounce your own will if you wish to pray, "Thy will be done."

Thirdly, believing supplicants, you have certainly not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is from God. Doesn't this Spirit compel you to renounce the world and to desire and seek after that which is divine? You are indeed a partaker of the heavenly calling, and by this you have been drawn out of this present evil world. Would you wish to return to it again and reinstate the earthly will which you have renounced as being lord over you? That precious gospel by which you have been called teaches us that we should renounce ungodliness and the lusts of this world. How then, being subject to the light of the gospel, could you follow your own sinful, and worldly will? Since you have been born of God and have been made a partaker of the divine nature, then as a child you love God as your Father and have received an obedient heart to do the will of your Father and to delight in the law of God after the inward man. What business do you therefore have with your own sinful will, which is hostile to the will of God? Cause it therefore to be silent, trample it under foot when it asserts itself, strive against it, do not yield to it in the least, cast it out, and oppose it by praying, "Not my, but Thy will be done."

Fourthly, the doing of your own will engenders nothing but sorrow for you. It wounds, defiles, and deforms the soul; it causes sorrow as well as a loss of freedom and peace. God, who is all your

light and desire, hides Himself and lets you mourn alone. While standing from afar, you are vulnerable to drifting away further and further by the smallest breeze of lust. Should you then allow yourself to be a safe harbor for your enemy? No, you must expel him and chase him away as you would a thief and a murderer from your home. On the contrary, the renouncing of your own will shall yield much blessing for you as it will give you free access to the Father through Christ. It will engender much peace, result in great personal freedom, and give you boldness to discharge your duty toward others. You will find yourself to be delivered from desires for earthly things and there is thus nothing to lose nor fear. Yes, the Lord will abundantly requite the loss of honor, love, possessions and pleasure with spiritual blessings and occasionally also with temporal blessings -- be it in abundance or as much as is needful or beneficial for you.

Compliance with God's Will During Seasons of Affliction When you pray with your heart, "Thy will be done," then you are acknowledging the Lord's majesty, claim, and authority over you. Then you will acknowledge with delight and joy that He alone is sovereign and is Lord, and you are thus fully submitting yourself to Him and His will. You thereby request that He deal with you in full accordance with His will and pleasure, thus acquiescing in the fact that you will have nothing to say in the matter. You are thereby leaving everything in His hands, since you know you are neither able nor willing to act contrary to Him, knowing that He will deal with you in a fatherly manner and, being reconciled with Him in Christ, all things will work together for good for you.

If the Lord then afflicts you -- as He will most certainly do with all His children, not one excepted -- you are to reflect upon your petition and thus with all quietness subject yourself to the will (this chastising will) of your Father. This is not to imply that you would not be conscious of your cross, for that would be unnatural and an implicit despising of the God who chastises -- which provokes Him to wrath. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved" (Jeremiah 5:3). It is also not contrary to submission to the will of God if we desire to be delivered from those oppressing or threatening circumstances. You may indeed pray for deliverance and you may indeed use lawful means to be delivered from it. However, all this must be practiced while embracing the will of God, being much more desirous that God's will be done toward us than that we be delivered from the cross. Rather, you would be opposing the Lord's will if you were fretful. "Neither be weary of his correction" (Proverbs 3:11). Such occurs when you thereby become discouraged, reject your spiritual state, and view all this as proceeding from the avenging justice and wrath of God; when you harbor hard thoughts toward God and entertain doubts about the providence of God: "Thou art become cruel to me: with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me" (Job 30:21); "Lest I ... take the name of my God in vain" (Proverbs 30:9); or when you wish for death and, with Judas, entertain thoughts to hang yourself: "So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life" (Job 7:15). It occurs if you become envious of the prosperity of the wicked: "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning" (Psalms 73:3; Psalms 73:14); and if you begin to doubt as to whether God truly rules all things -- whether this evil proceeds from the Lord, whether He sees those who are destitute, and whether He hears their cry or helps them indeed. To do so is to contend with the Almighty (Job 40:2), and is a hardening of ourselves: "Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered" (Job 9:4). When such or similar thoughts, dispositions, and inner motions manifest themselves, you oppose the Lord, not being submissive to the will of God. Then you bring a threefold cross upon yourself as well as a chastisement which you will not

be able to avoid. You will increasingly be afflicted with grief, and not bearing the cross well will be more grievous than the chastisement itself. The cross will also be made heavier and be of longer duration, for God will prevail: "That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Romans 3:4). You would cause the Lord to withdraw Himself from you: "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from thee" (Jeremiah 6:8). Have you then gained the upper hand? Therefore, in all quietness submit yourself to the chastising hand of the Lord, and say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Micah 7:9). Learn from a king to bring your soul into submission unto the Lord. He said in Psalms 39:9, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it." And should it not behoove you to conduct yourself likewise? First, is not the Lord the sovereign God? May not He do with His own as pleases Him? Do you have a right to demand from Him why His dealings are thus? Would you indeed desire that the Lord be obligated to you and be required to do your will? Certainly not; you rejoice that He is God, is sovereign, and is exalted above all. Why then, as you acknowledge His majesty, would you not willingly submit yourself to Him -- even if it were with tears in your eyes due to the grief you must endure?

Secondly, believers, is not He your reconciled Father in Christ? Does not He act in love -- even if it is due to paternal displeasure with your deeds? "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19). Should you then render opposition to love and be fretful over the manifestation of love? This is where the problem lies. You think: "If only I knew that God loves me, I would quietly and willingly endure the affliction." It is that which begets your fretfulness. Overcome this and humbly submit yourself to the chastising hand of the Lord and you will better perceive the grace which the Lord has bestowed in you. During temptation you are not able to ascertain your spiritual state by way of the marks of grace. Rather, you must deem this to be a fact, and exercise faith instead. This will bring you closer to God and cause you to look unto Jesus; all that leads to the Lord Jesus, and through Him to God, cannot be counterfeit. Therefore, consider that the cross is a consequence of God's displeasure over your sinful behavior, but you must at the same time esteem it as proceeding from a paternal heart in order to thereby sanctify you and draw you away from sin. With this in mind, submit yourself unto the Lord. "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9).

Thirdly, the chastisement, when you bear it well and embrace the will of God in it, will be greatly beneficial to you. This is God's very objective: "He (chastises) for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:10-11).

Even if you do not perceive the beneficial nature of the chastisement, then do not be surprised by this, for the fruit will come afterwards. Therefore, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5), and you will experience what David experienced and say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes. I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word" (Psalms 119:71; Psalms 119:75; Psalms 119:67). The Holy Obligation to Do God's Will

Believing supplicants, it does not suffice to renounce your own will and to be submissive to the Lord's will in affliction. Rather, you who pray, "Thy will be done," must know that it is also your duty to do the will of God by living according to His precepts; for whatever a believer prays, he is also willing to do. Therefore, acknowledge the obligation which is upon you with your whole heart -- not only due to being God's creature, but also in view of His relationship to you as being your Father in Christ. Submit yourself as such to the Lord and say, "I am Thy servant -- yes, I am Thy servant." Offer yourself to the Lord by reason of that relationship and say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Neither do anything carelessly, nor because it seems good to you, but ask the Lord for counsel: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Do not ask this with the desire that the Lord would answer you according to your wishes, but as with a sense of holy indifference that it be as it pleases the Lord, seeking for His will in your every deed. God has revealed His will in His Word and we therefore are neither in need of nor should expect, desire, or request immediate revelations each time. Rather, we must come to the Lord by way of His Word which is a lamp for our feet and a light upon our path. Then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all the Lord's commandments. Do not only pray, but listen with readiness and desire for an answer. Be ready to hear what the Lord will speak to you, desiring that He would not only direct you by His Word as to what His will toward you is, but also that He would enliven your soul and kindle it with love toward His will, and cause you to subscribe to His will with willing obedience and maintain such a disposition in you. Therefore, let compliance with God's revealed will be your only duty, and say with David, "I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes alway, even unto the end" (Psalms 119:30;Psalms 119:111-112). Do not only resolve to do so with resolute determination, but carry it out and engage yourself with delight. Reverently seek to be pleasing to the Lord in all your deeds. Do not hesitate and neither consult your own will nor consider your own interests, but subscribe to the doing of God's will with a ready mind. Hasten and do not delay to observe the Lord's commandment. Whatever you do in the Lord's service, do it with a zealous spirit and with fervent earnestness, such being your pleasure and delight. God is not pleased when we perceive our service to Him as troublesome and burdensome. Therefore, greatly delight yourself in the Lord's commandments, and let it be a joy to you if you may do something which will be pleasing to the Lord. Conquer all external and internal hindrances and opposition. Persevere courageously in all circumstances and be as the horse of the Lord's majesty in battle, while being "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Final Exhortation

Therefore, children of God, since you pray, "Thy will be done," and are desirous to do the Lord's will in the place assigned to you, stir up your soul to that end so that you may execute it in a lively manner. For no matter where you turn, you are surrounded by those who cry out to you, "Oh, do the Lord's will."

First, when you focus upon God, you will perceive that He is worthy of this for He is the majestic and exalted One. He is your Maker, and you exist by His powerful influences. If He were to withdraw this but for a moment, you would no longer exist. Apart from His infusion of power you would not be able to see, hear, or move. He who is in such a position and is so dependent upon

the exalted, glorious, holy, and omnipotent God -- would such a person not be engaged with his entire soul and all its faculties to do His will? Children of God, the Lord loves you. Motivated by love He has given you His Son to be a Surety and Savior. He has redeemed you, granted you spiritual life, adopted you to be His children, and ordained you for eternal glory. When considering that, should you then not receive wings to embrace, love, and do the will of God with a burning heart, solely because He is the Lord and your Father? The church of old boasted in this: "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king" (Isaiah 33:22).

Secondly, when you focus upon the will of God, you will perceive it to be delightful; all that He requires from us is delightful. "And ... that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). All that God commands is pure and holy. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalms 19:7-8). How can someone who knows the Lord refrain from embracing the will of his Lord and from observing His commandments with joy? "It is joy to the just to do judgment" (Proverbs 21:15).

Thirdly, to do the will of God is to glorify God. It is the delight, pleasure, and joy of a child of God that God be known, feared, and glorified, and that none but He be Lord, the Most High, the Holy One, and the lawgiver. This we do by ourselves and with others when we do His will. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8).

Fourthly, our Lord is so good that He will reciprocate to the doer of His will all that he does in His service out of love, with filial fear, and willingly. If we do the Lord's pleasure -- oh wonder -- then He will in turn do our pleasure. "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him" (Psalms 145:19). He will reward them richly: "In keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalms 19:11). All restlessness of the soul is the consequence of doing our own will; but in the doing of God's will there is nothing but peace: "Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalms 119:165). Spiritual life is but feeble in believers and it grieves them that they do not make more progress. Therefore, begin to do the Lord's will sincerely, according to your feeble strength -- as a child -- and the Lord will give you increase. "Every branch in Me that beareth ... fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2). The hiding of God's countenance is most bitter for a child of God; however, His revelation of Himself to him constitutes all his joy. The Lord grants this privilege to all that do His will: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways" (Isaiah 64:5). Therefore, enter upon this way which leads to salvation. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Psalms 84:5; Psalms 84:7).

077. Chapter 72: The Fourth Petition: Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

----- CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO ----- The Fourth Petition: Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

There is a Christian proverb as expressed by a pagan: "Orandum est, ut sit mens sana in corpore sano," which means: "One ought to pray that there be a healthy soul in a healthy body." This is in agreement with John's wish expressed to Gaius: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 1:2). How delightful is this testimony addressed to Gaius! In general we must now reverse this and say, "I wish that your soul may prosper as your body prospers." For we observe in this that we also are to care for the body, for if we are to hallow God's Name, edify the congregation, and do the will of God, we are in need of a soul and a body which are both in health. If the one is not healthy, the other will be hindered and the entire man cannot function properly. The Relationship Between Soul and Body The soul influences the body. A healthy soul benefits the body, whereas a troubled soul has an ill effect upon the body. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 17:22). The body also influences the soul and is irritated by ill health. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12). This is also evident in the following passage: "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:23). The apocryphal book Wisdom has a splendid proverb in chapter 9:15: "For the corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that nurseth upon many things." Therefore, we must take care that both soul and body are brought and kept in good health in order to be fit for the service of the Lord. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20). If the health of both is to be maintained, they are in need of nourishment. The soul, being an immortal spirit, has no need of anything for the maintenance of its existence except the preserving influence of God. However, for its spiritual wellbeing it is in need of spiritual food in this life -- which is the Word of God applied by faith. The Word of God is the incorruptible seed of her regeneration (1 Peter 1:23). The Word of God is her nourishment, resulting in the growth of her spiritual life. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). The body is also in need of food. It has its origin in the earth and its nourishment proceeds from the earth, whereby both its essence and motions are maintained. Unconverted men, who have nothing in view but earthly things, are very desirous for that which is earthly, wishing to gratify and entertain themselves therewith. In this respect, they almost resemble the irrational animals, for it is as if they live in order to eat, whereas they ought to eat in order to live. "From men which are Thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure" (Psalms 17:14). A believer does not wish to have earthly things as his portion -- they are beneath him. He does not desire earthly things for their own sake, but as a means unto something else: to maintain the body in a fit condition in order to serve the Lord. He

knows that it is only the Lord who causes bread to come forth out of the earth -- that "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry" (Psalms 147:9); also giving man his food and raiment: "The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season" (Psalms 145:15). He knows that the Lord must also render the food efficacious to be nourishing, and therefore a believer looks unto the Lord and prays, "Feed me with food convenient for me" (Proverbs 30:8). It is this which the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray in the fourth petition. The Position of This Petition

Many have investigated why the Lord Jesus places the petition concerning the maintenance of the body in the fourth place and wills that there be prayer for the welfare of the soul in the fifth and sixth petition. It cannot be easily ascertained who has most closely approximated the reason for this. All agree that this prayer is perfect -- not only in regard to the matters it contains, but also as far as the order is concerned. In applying this to this petition some say that the Lord Jesus adjusts Himself to human weakness, which causes man to be very concerned about food and raiment for the body. He would therefore teach us first to pray for the body, so that we, being freed from anxiety concerning the body, would have that much more freedom to pray for the welfare of the soul. Others insist that the Lord Jesus wishes to guide us step by step from the physical to the spiritual. Others divide the petitions into two divisions, maintaining that the first four petitions are requests for that which is good, whereas the last two petitions are invocations for the averting of evil. They then divide these benefits into heavenly (which precede in the first three petitions) and temporal benefits which, being least important, follow in the fourth petition, upon which the invocations follow. Again, others divide the petitions as follows: In the first three petitions God is the immediate object of the requests; the most eminent petition has the primary position. In the last three petitions, however, man is the immediate object, and that which is least important is listed first; one has to exist before he can be well. However, who shall be able to advance an infallible argument regarding the order which will be satisfactory so as not to be subject to counter-argumentation?

We shall now proceed to consider the petition itself. In this petition we must consider individually 1) the matter which is requested: our daily bread; 2) for whom we pray: us; and 3) the manner in which we request the receipt of bread: not by way of purchase, but as a gift; and not once and for all, but every day. "Give us this day." The Matter Requested The matter requested is bread, which is further defined as our and daily bread. The word "bread" here does not refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, who calls Himself the Bread of Life (John 6:35) because He is the spiritual life of God's children and the maintainer of that life. The reference here is not to the bread of the Lord's Supper as it relates to the body of Christ -- as is the case in 1 Corinthians 10:16. Rather, it refers to the common nourishment for the human body. "... that He may bring forth food out of the earth ... and bread which strengtheneth man's heart" (Psalms 104:14-15). In a general sense it refers to all manner of food and all necessities which are subservient to man's support. Jacob prepared a great meal and invited his brethren "to eat bread: and they did eat bread" (Genesis 31:54). Thus, the Hebrew word *lechem* signifies bread, that is, all manner of food. "Who giveth food to all flesh" (Psalms 136:25); "I ate no pleasant bread" (Daniel 10:3). Since the maintenance of the body is here requested, the word "bread" is also understood to refer to drink as well as clothing -- all of which the body needs. Jacob expressed this: "If God ... will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on" (Genesis 28:20), and the apostle says, "And having food and raiment let us be therewith

content" (1 Timothy 6:8).

All manner of livelihood -- particularly food -- is expressed here by the word "bread," this being the preeminent and most nourishing food. "... bread which strengtheneth man's heart" (Psalms 104:15). It is the most essential food, for without bread one cannot live well; however, it is possible to live without meat or fish, these being referred to as supplementary foods (John 21:5). [Note: The Statenvertaling uses the word "toespijze" here, that is, "supplementary foods." The KJV simply uses the word "meat."] It is the most pleasant of all foods: bread always tastes pleasant when we are hungry; we never tire of it. It is the most common of all foods, for people of all ranks -- high and low -- make use of it. It is the food most used in moderation, for we desire no more of it than we need for the satisfaction of our hunger. The Bread Referred to as Our Bread This bread is designated as our bread. Something is referred to as being ours when we either have need of it for our existence, or if we are the owners of it. By nature we do not own anything before God, since by reason of sin we have lost a right to all that Adam had. The earth is cursed due to sin: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:17). And the sinner is cursed in all that he lays his hands on: "Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep" (Deuteronomy 28:17-18).

Everything in the heavens -- the sun and moon -- and here below serves the sinner unwillingly and reluctantly, and groans contrary to him (Romans 8:20-22). Nevertheless, it is the Lord's goodness that He grants food and raiment to sinners in whom He has no pleasure -- sometimes more abundantly than to the godly who are not intended to have more of this so that they may know that God is good. However, the bread -- all that the godly enjoy, and all that they pray for -- belongs to them; they have a right to it.

First, they have a right to it through Christ. The Lord Jesus has purchased it with His blood and, they being His favorites, has given it to them. "For all things are yours; ... things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's" (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

Secondly, they have a right to it from man's perspective, since that which they possess has rightfully become theirs either by way of inheritance, business transactions, or their labor. This is in contrast to unrighteousness, laziness, and wasteful spending which causes one to be reduced to poverty and he must then live from the generosity of others. The apostle confirms this: "... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:12). If, however, someone has applied himself and has been thrifty, and yet is unable to make any progress, requiring the support of others, this is not unrighteous. Rather, it is his bread which the Lord has given him -- even though "it is more blessed (more blissful, honest, and delightful) to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). The ungodly, as far as man is concerned -- even though they have no right to anything in reference to God -- nevertheless, have a right to all that they possess lawfully. When we pray for bread, we are also praying against poverty. "Give me neither poverty nor riches" (Proverbs 30:8). This Bread Referred to as Daily Bread

We pray here for bread -- for our bread, and for daily bread. Since the word "daily," as recorded here in the original text, is nowhere else to be found in the New Testament, there are several sentiments regarding the origin of this word. Yet there is no implicit absurdity in this matter. The exception here is that the papists, by deriving the word from *eipi* and *ousia*, translate it as

supernatural essence. They understand this to refer to the bread of the mass, and since in their opinion the bread vanishes and changes into Christ, they thus understand it to refer to Christ, who is repeatedly referred to as "bread" in John 6:1-71. Aside from the fact that transubstantiation is nothing but a fabrication, the word does not imply this -- even if it were derived from *epi ousia*, for the word *ousia* never signifies essence in the New Testament. Rather, in Luke 15:12-13 (there being no other references) it signifies possessions -- temporal possessions. "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me ... and there wasted his substance." And even if this had been imported from pagan philosophers and understood to refer to the extra-essential, it would not signify supernatural, spiritual bread -- that is not implied by the word at all. Rather, extra-essential would mean that we are in need of bread outside of our essential existence in order to support and maintain our essential existence. Such is the interpretation of this word by many Reformed.

Others maintain that it is a derivative of the word *epeimi*, that is, "to follow," "to come in the place of." As a second aorist active participle we have *epioon*, *epiousa*, from which is derived *epiousios*, that is, "following," "that which follows." As such it is understood in Acts 7:26 : ■πιο■σ■ ■μ■ρ■, the following day. In this sense (albeit with a different word) it is used in James 2:15 : "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food." And in Luke 11:3 the phrase day by day is added to this petition. On the basis of this, the above word can correctly be translated as daily, or bread which follows day by day-- for it is the will of God that man would exist by the use of daily nourishment, rather than receiving everything all at once. This concludes the first portion: the matter requested. For Whom this Request Is Made The second portion pertains to the persons for whom we request bodily sustenance: "Give us." The pronoun "us" refers to:

First, the supplicants themselves, for people are most closely involved with themselves. Love must begin with ourselves, for we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Love must therefore begin in ourselves, but must not end in ourselves; rather it is to extend to our neighbor.

Secondly, we pray for all God's children who, together with us, address God as our Father, and we thus pray for the entire church of God, as if we say: "Thy children -- Thy church is defenseless. They are neither able nor willing to govern their own affairs nor to make ends meet with either legitimate or illegitimate means. Such is the practice of the world which has as its objective to harm Thy children and church as much as possible. Therefore, care Thou for them and provide food and raiment for them, so that they may be able to live, and that the world may see that Thou art their God and Father who protects and cares for them."

Thirdly, their love, and thus also their compassion, goes yet beyond that. The godly pray for all men who have been created in identical fashion as we were, and share the same existence with us. Since they need food and raiment as we do, they pray that the Lord who has granted them life may also preserve their life through nourishment. For believers are of the same nature as their heavenly Father, who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45); "The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psalms 145:9). Herein they rejoice and praise God for it, and they are thus moved to request that which is good for themselves. The Manner of Their Request The third portion relates to the manner in which the godly pray. They neither demand it as if they had a claim to it, nor do they desire to bargain for it. Rather, they request it as a gift: "Out of unmerited goodness, give." They do not even request this for their entire lifetime, but repeatedly ask it for today. When we

pray, "Give," then we acknowledge thereby: (1) that we cannot exist in and of ourselves; (2) that we are neither capable of producing nourishment, nor of rendering to food the efficacy to be nourishing; (3) that we have not merited it, but by our sins have made ourselves unworthy of the same; (4) that it is the Lord who renders the earth fruitful, bringing "forth food out of the earth" (Psalms 104:14). It is the

Lord who gives to each his portion; He renders food efficacious for nourishment. Neither our care, our labor, nor the food itself will be to our benefit apart from the Lord's blessing. Such is the case when "the Lord...doth take away...the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water," which is what He threatens to do in Isaiah 3:1; that is, when "ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6). On the contrary, however, when the Lord bestows His blessing then everything prospers: "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn" (Psalms 65:11;Psalms 65:13). Then our food will satisfy us and our raiment will warm us: "...to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing" (Isaiah 23:18). Thus, as children we are to pray to the Lord as our Father, asking Him that He would give us food to eat and clothing to wear; that He would grant us health to partake of our food; and that He would render our food efficacious unto nourishment, since in all things we are dependent upon the Lord and are to expect all things from Him.

We are to pray that God would give us our bread today. "Today" implies repeated prayer -- as much as we need it. We are in need of bread each day, and each day is today. Thus, we do not pray to receive it once and for all, but rather, that we would receive it each day by renewal. This is not to suggest that we should consume it all each day, for God in one day generally gives a portion for many days. Rather, we acknowledge each day that what we have is from the Lord; that it has been preserved by the Lord and that He has permitted us to keep it; and that also upon this day we are permitted to eat to the satisfaction of our hunger and to the maintenance of our strength. For, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). If we have nothing in supply, we are to petition God that He would give us on this day as He is pleased and able to give us -- even if we cannot perceive where it will come from. "The eyes of all wait on Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season" (Psalms 145:15). Oh, how sweet it is to live out of the hand of God and to have confidence free from any apprehension! The Lessons this Petition Teaches This petition provides us with many essential and beneficial lessons. When we pray for bread we are reminded that we are not to be a gourmand [Note: à Brakel describes a gourmand as someone who is "lekker." His use of this word is archaic as far as modern Dutch is concerned. The use of the word "gourmand" here is appropriate when considering Webster's definition: "One who is excessively fond of eating and drinking."], for then we do not pray in a pleasing manner. The apostle speaks of this in James 4:3 : "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." To be a gourmand does not relate to the ability to taste the distinction between foods, preferring the one over the other; or if, upon being ill, we reflect about what we have an appetite for; or if occasionally we enjoy delicious foods, eat the fat things, drink that which is sweet, and send portions to the poor (Nehemiah 8:11). One is a gourmand:

(1) if, being healthy, he reflects upon that which is delectable, and how it will be prepared in the most delectable manner;

(2) if he has a continual longing for something delectable, for dining engagements, and thinks of exotic spreads in his imagination;

(3) when he is occupied with gourmet foods to such a degree that it appears to be the very essence of enjoyment, and if this is frequently the subject of conversation;

(4) if he pursues such delicacies at any cost, even if he would have to borrow from others and never pay them back;

(5) if he is in a bad humor when he is deprived of something delectable, and if he complains, grumbles, frets, and is angry if food is not properly prepared, and commonly quarrels with the cook;

(6) if he enjoys a delectable meal either at his own or someone else's table, and then overindulges to such an extent that he is not fit for anything else but sleep.

First, you who are a gourmand -- how can you pray for bread if you have had enough bread and your soul abhors it as being lowly and distasteful food, and you only make use of it to render other foods all the more delicious? Bread is the basic food, and all other foods are dainties. You reverse this, however, by making bread a dainty; you do not pray this petition sincerely, but you mock with God by your inattentive and irreverent prattling. And even if in some measure you are conscious of what you are praying for, you are ultimately not interested in bread, but rather in delicacies.

Secondly, you can thus readily convince yourself that you serve your belly more than you serve God. Be ashamed, you who commit idolatry with your abominable idol. The apostle speaks of such: "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame" (Php 3:19).

Thirdly, due to your fondness for gourmet foods you are depriving your children, so that they would be poor when they become adults. They could have been well-to-do if you had been frugal, and you yourself may come to great poverty, so that you will have to be supported by the deacons. Solomon forewarns you about this: "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty" (Proverbs 23:20-21). He who always wishes to drink that which is sweet and eat that which is delectable will accumulate neither possessions for himself nor treasures for his children. "He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich" (Proverbs 21:17).

Fourthly, if we are accustomed to a gourmet spread upon our tables, and we begin to lack funds, we shall pursue sinful avenues to continue this. We shall either buy on credit, take out a loan, lie and deceive, at last flirt with bankruptcy, and allow widows and orphans, whom one has robbed, to eat the bread of tears.

Fifthly, gourmands are generally merciless toward the poor. They have abundance upon their tables, but there is nothing left for a poor Lazarus. They must thus look forward to a merciless judgment.

Sixthly, if you remain so rich that you can live as a gourmand until your death -- what then? Will you go to heaven? No, but you will experience what the elegant rich man -- who was also a gourmand -- experienced. After his death he found himself in hell and he was not permitted to have one drop of water for his relief (Luke 16:22 ff). Hear how the Lord threatens you: "Woe to them that are at ease. ... That ... stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive ... therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein" (Amos 6:1;Amos 6:4;Amos 6:7-8). Impress the word of the apostle upon your heart: "Weep and howl. ... Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter" (James 5:1;James 5:5).

Diligence Taught in This Petition

We do not only pray for bread, but for our bread. This teaches that we are to be diligent, since we desire to receive it in the way in which it pleases God to give it. It is, however, God's will to give by means of our labor, and we must therefore labor in the station and the calling to which God has appointed us. If one has an adequate supply, he must nevertheless neither be idle nor fatten himself as a swine. Rather, he must be occupied in some measure for the sake of being occupied, to benefit himself and to give other people an opportunity to work, as well as be able to give to the poor all the more abundantly.

First, what else -- as the proverb goes -- is an idle person, but a pillow for the devil? He is the object of the devil's operations who is most successful in leading idle persons to the commission of various sins. An idle and lazy person is a breeding ground for all manner of vain and sinful thoughts, and of the deeds which proceed from them -- yes, he is capable of such deeds as one would otherwise never have imagined.

Secondly, if we pray this and are not desirous to work, we are tempting God. Then we insist that God do miracles for our sake and depart from His normal way of providence. This is a sin which provokes God and is expressly forbidden by Him. "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 6:16). We can read in the accounts of the journeys of the children of Israel in the wilderness how Israel fared when they tempted God. This is also recorded in the following passages: "They waited not for His counsel: but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalms 106:13-15); "And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague" (Numbers 11:33). Such are the results of tempting God. This is what those who pray for bread but are not willing to work and do not wish to avail themselves of God's common means must expect.

Thirdly, a sluggard: (1) is an abomination to God; God wanted no part of a useless ass (Exodus 13:13);

(2) is a burden to others and despised by everyone; no one has compassion for him (Proverbs 10:26);

(3) furthermore, wastes away, for he does not know how he will spend his time, is a burden to himself, and is reduced to extreme poverty. "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so

shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" (Proverbs 6:9-11); "Drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags" (Proverbs 23:21).

Therefore, he who prays for our bread must be diligent in an honest calling and must use the means to which God obligates him when He promises bread to him. His labor is not the cause, but only the means whereby he lawfully receives what God grants him.

(1) He will then eat his bread in the presence of God and man. "... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:12).

(2) When he prays in faith and labors obediently, it will all be blessed -- be it that one has much or little, or that it is lean or fat. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (Psalms 37:16). He eats it with freedom as being his own; a piece of bread is delicious to him since he receives it from his heavenly Father, it having been purchased by Christ's blood. The curse has been removed, a blessing rests upon it, and the little that he has satisfies and strengthens him. The Lord grants him the blessing for which Moses prayed: "Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it" (Psalms 90:17). He receives the promise made to the godly: "For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands" (Psalms 128:2). Therefore, Ora et Labora, that is, pray and work. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Concerning Anxiety for the Future When we pray that God would give us our daily bread from day to day, we are exhorted not to be careful -- that is, we are not to be concerned how we shall fare all the days of our life; whether we shall sufficiently be supplied for our entire life; whether we shall be reduced to poverty and shall suffer want with our children of that which our children and grandchildren will live from. For if our desires and concerns relate to the quantity of bread and to our entire life -- yes, to our descendants, then we can indeed not pray for bread for this day. Therefore, if we are to pray this prayer with a true heart, we must be satisfied with the present and not be concerned about the day of tomorrow. Rather, we should be as children who, when they are hungry, request food from their parents and are not concerned about the future. God's children have all the more reason to live out of the hand of their heavenly Father and to trust Him that He will care for them.

First, apprehension torments man and we thereby bring much grief upon ourselves. Such anxiety saps the vitality of the soul and the body. We shall tremble about the future, be doubtful about the providence of God, or view God as being wrathful, merciless, and unyielding. We then reject our spiritual state, are vulnerable to many foolish and harmful lusts, and lie open for the assaults of the devil.

Secondly, what have you ever gained with all your anxiety? You will indeed have to answer: nothing. Why then do you engage in that which is of no benefit to you and causes you harm instead? "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature" (Matthew 6:27); "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows" (Psalms 127:2).

Thirdly, to do so is to live in sin continually, for to be anxious is a clear sign that we wish to put our trust in our possessions. If we had as much as we desired, we would not be concerned about the future. Why not? Because you then would have in your pocket what you need to live. Then you do not trust in God but in your possessions. However, whatever you put your trust in is your god, and

thus being anxious is nothing but idolatry. Believers, would you then turn away from your God, esteeming and trusting your money more than God? Therefore, be fearful of that abomination which brings many into hell. "But ... idolaters ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Revelation 21:8).

Furthermore, fretful anxiety constitutes a continual dishonoring of God. You thereby demonstrate that God is not all-sufficient for you and that something besides God is your portion, delight, and the rock of your heart. This was entirely different with Asaph (Psalms 73:25-26). You give an evil impression of God to others, implying that He neglects and does not care for His children. Would it not be to the dishonor of a rich father if his children were to turn to other persons and were to beg for a piece of bread? Would you thus dishonor God, your heavenly Father? Far be it from you! Therefore, neither be anxious, nor let the unsettledness of your countenance convey that you mistrust God.

Fourthly, anxiety prevents many from being converted. Such occasionally are under conviction and make a resolution: "I shall now arise and also seek God." However, the cares of life again draw them into the world. The cares of life are the thorns which choke the seed. "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22). As anxiety keeps many from conversion, it likewise impedes growth in the converted. How much progress many would make; how mature they would become had anxiety not prevented them! Therefore, you who are godly, elevate yourself above this world; it is too insignificant, polluted, and harmful than that you should concern yourself with and yearn for it.

Fifthly, time here is short, and there is nothing which is able to satisfy you anyway. Why are you then so anxious about that which is insignificant? Truly, you are still too much involved with the world and not enough with heaven.

Sixthly, is not God your portion? Is He not your Father? Did He not grant you His own Son? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Romans 8:32).

Therefore, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on" (Matthew 6:25); "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7); "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5); "Be content with such things as ye have" (Hebrews 13:5). You will thus be able to pray with a childlike heart, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Satisfaction with the Portion the Lord Allots us When we pray, "Give us ...," then we do not only pray for ourselves, but also for others. We may therefore not be envious when another person receives something -- yes, more than we do. For:

(1) We have asked for this on his behalf if we have prayed aright. And if we become envious when he receives something or much upon our prayer, then this is indicative that we either regret that we have prayed, or that we did not mean it and thus have mocked with God.

(2) Who are you to be envious of someone else's fortune? Do you not know that you are neither worthy of a piece of bread in your mouth nor a thread upon your skin; that it is only due to the

longsuffering of God that you are not already in hell; that it is a great mercy of God that you are permitted to be among people and that you might be a servant or a slave of the least of them? And should you then be envious? Or do you think that you are so important that you are worthy of it? Be silent!

(3) Is it not the Lord who gives unto others? God is sovereign, is He not, and may He not do with His own as pleases Him? Or must He ask you how much He should give to such and such a person? Is your eye evil because the Lord is good? Be therefore ashamed before God and man that an envious thought arises within you. This Petition Exhorts to Generosity

You who pray, "Give us ...," it behooves you and you are obligated by this petition toward generosity. For when many make a request together and it is given to one, it must be divided among all on whose behalf it was requested. When many poor outcasts are begging at a given door, and if one receives a gift and keeps it for himself, he deprives the others of what also had been given for them. However, you do not pray, "Give me ...," but "Give us ..."; thus, others must share in this. This does not mean that as soon as you receive something, you must immediately begin to hand it out, for you have received it as a steward to disperse it upon command. If therefore there are those in need who request something from you, or if it comes to your knowledge that there is someone in need elsewhere, then this must stir up your compassion and your hand must be ready to give. You must, however, do it in such a manner that you may continue to be able to give and that the welfare of your family and children is preserved. Extraordinary seasons and occasions also demand something extraordinary. Therefore, see to it that in truth and with liberty you may pray, "Give us ..."

First, take as an example the generosity of the man Job, and of a woman named Dorcas. Job's generosity is described as follows: "I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor" (Job 29:15-16); "If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering," etc. (Job 31:16-17; Job 31:19). Of Dorcas it is written, "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. ... All the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made" (Acts 9:36; Acts 9:39). Happy is he or she who follows such examples!

Secondly, the following passages convey how highly generosity is recommended: "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates. ... Thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, " (Deuteronomy 15:7-8). To obey in this is pleasing to God. "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16). Indeed, impress upon your heart the great word of the apostle: "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7); "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). Add to these the following: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again" (Proverbs 19:17). If you then desire to pray in truth and to be heard, be joyously generous. If you do not do so, then you are an unrighteous possessor of that which you have, and you must see to it that a curse will

not rest upon it.

God Acknowledged as the Giver

Since you pray to God for daily bread, it is thus essential for you to believe that all good gifts and the blessing upon that which you have, come from God, and that you acknowledge God as being the origin of all good things. Such He truly is: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). All that exists is God's; whatever anyone possesses he has received from God. "I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, ... my corn ... my wine ... my wool and my flax" (Hosea 2:8-9). Man is but a naked entity and all that he has does not proceed from himself. All that he has proceeds from another source -- he has received it from God alone. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive" (1 Corinthians 4:7). The Lord causes food to come forth from the earth; the Lord grants to each his peculiar portion; the Lord renders the food efficacious unto nourishment; the Lord maintains man and beast; He even provides the cattle with their food and the young ravens when they cry to Him. Since all is the Lord's and He communicates to everyone that which is His, one must invoke the Lord for all that we stand in need of and acknowledge Him as the origin and giver. We must not do so, however, with the disposition of a creature, but as a reconciled child in Christ and with a childlike heart. If we receive something, we must receive it as out of the hand of God as being our Father. We must be satisfied with that which the Father gives -- be it much or little, it will be enough. Therefore we ought not to waste it, but with a joyful heart make use of it. We must then always lift up our heart on high to the Giver, doing so with a grateful heart and with a mouth filled with the praises of the Lord. "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. For He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; He hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat" (Psalms 147:12-14). God requires and expects this, and is pleased with it. "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 8:10-11).

1 The Statenvertaling uses the word "toespijze" here, that is, "supplementary foods." The KJV simply uses the word "meat."

2 à Brakel describes a gourmand as someone who is "lekker." His use of this word is archaic as far as modern Dutch is concerned. The use of the word "gourmand" here is appropriate when considering Webster's definition: "One who is excessively fond of eating and drinking."

078. Chapter 73: The Fifth Petition: Forgive us our Debts as we Forgive our Debtors

----- CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE ----- The Fifth Petition: Forgive us our Debts as we Forgive our Debtors

Man is in need of bread in order that he may live. Therefore the Lord has taught us to pray for bread. Bread is not the most essential matter, however, for man has a rational, immortal soul which innately knows God and cannot be satisfied except with God Himself. A natural man is indeed satisfied with earthly things -- if he is able to acquire them. This is recorded in Psalms 17:14, where we read: "Men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure." And God will not permit them to depart from this life without having done them good: "Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). That is the extent of God's dealings with them. However, God has laid away something greater for His own. Furthermore, He has also given them a heart which is not satisfied with earthly things, but they desire the Lord and choose Him as their portion. With their whole heart they make the words of Asaph their own: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:25-26; Psalms 73:28). With their entire heart they offer themselves to the service of God; however, at the same time they understand that God does not wish to be served by the ungodly who are His enemies. God says to them: "What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth" (Psalms 50:16). The godly perceive that sin, which makes a separation between God and man, must be removed in order for God to reveal Himself to them, and for them to approach unto God with boldness and with a peaceful heart. Therefore they are very desirous to be reconciled with God, praying time and again for the forgiveness of sins. This the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray in the fifth petition: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This petition consists first of all in a request: "Forgive ...". Secondly, the disposition of the supplicant is added: "As we forgive our debtors." In this petition we are to note the object: "Debts -- our debts," and the requested action toward these debts: "Forgive us." The Object of this Petition: Our Debts

Let us consider the word "debts" (in Luke 11:4 we read "sins"). Sin incurs debt, and in order to know what debt is, we must take note of three matters:

First, man is entirely and in every respect bound to God as Creator. Thus, his being, life, spiritual faculties, and physical strength are from God. This must not be understood as a singular act once performed, man thereafter being his own master as well as self-existent. Rather, he exists and moves by the continual influence and preserving power of God. It is for this reason that man is obligated to exist for God with his entire being -- not only as a matter of gratitude, but on account of an obligation which is more binding than we can imagine. He is also obligated to God by virtue

of the covenant of works, established with the human race in Adam, whereby salvation was promised upon condition of obedience -- a covenant to which man has fully committed himself. Thus, there is an obligation upon man to be submissively obedient. He is also bound to God as being his lawgiver, who has power to command, and to whom man is inherently obligated to render obedience (Luke 17:10). Man approves of this obligation, and irrespective of whether he breaks those bonds, there is nevertheless no one who would dare to say, or who will say, that he is not under obligation to God.

Secondly, this binding relationship, however much it may have been approved of, has been broken by man and he still breaks it daily by withdrawing himself from obedience to God and by continually resisting this obligation. The Holy Scriptures refer to this as:

(1) sinning: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalms 51:4);

(2) transgressing against the Lord: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me" (Isaiah 1:2);

(3) the transgression of the law: "Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law" (Daniel 9:11);

(4) the transgression of the covenant: "But they like men have transgressed the covenant" (Hosea 6:7);

(5) the rending asunder of God's laws: "These have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds" (Jeremiah 5:5);

(6) the forsaking of God, His law, and His covenant: "They have forsaken the Lord" (Isaiah 1:4); "... because they have forsaken my law" (Jeremiah 9:13); "They have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God" (Jeremiah 22:9);

(7) being disobedient: "But unto them that ... do not obey the truth" (Romans 2:8). Sin is all the more serious in light of the majesty of God and man's dependence upon Him -- as well as its voluntary and deliberate nature, and its continuance and frequency. Furthermore, the greater the measure of light and the livelier the conscience, the greater the sin will be.

Thirdly, due to man's breach of obligation, he incurs debt; that is, he is worthy of punishment. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy" (Hebrews 10:29); "... receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet" (Romans 1:27). Sin begets debt and places us under bondage of eternal condemnation: "... for the judgment was by one to condemnation" (Romans 5:16). Through sin man has come under the curse which is expressed as follows: "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them" (Deuteronomy 27:26). He is therefore at enmity with God, worthy to be cast away and to endure eternally the unbearable wrath of God. "Neither shall evil dwell with Thee" (Psalms 5:4); "... indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Romans 2:8-9); "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Such is the nature of the debt, and this debt is acknowledged by all men. It is acknowledged by the heathen: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of

death" (Romans 1:32). This is acknowledged by all who live under the ministry of the Word: "And all the people shall say, Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:20). Believers acquiesce in this: "... that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Psalms 51:4); "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Micah 7:9). Sincere prayer for the forgiveness of sins necessitates that a person know his guilt, be grievously sensible of it, acknowledge himself to be worthy of this punishment, and justify God in executing judgment upon him. The Focus of This Petition: The Forgiveness of Guilt

We pray for the forgiveness of our debts (or guilt). [Note: The literal translation of the Dutch rendering of this petition is: "Forgive us our guilt."] No one has imposed this debt upon us. God did not do so for He created man holy and perfect. The devil did not do so -- he may suggest sin, but he can neither compel nor cause us to sin. The world has not done so. It may threaten and entice, but it is beyond its reach to incline one's will. Rather, it is man himself who is the cause of his deeds. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (James 1:14-15); "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee" (Jeremiah 2:19); "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter" (Jeremiah 4:18); "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins" (Lamentations 3:39). This suppliant does not only acknowledge that he has sinned, but also that he is a debtor -- having an exceedingly great debt. He furthermore acknowledges that he is thereby marred, abominable, hateful, intolerable, and condemnable. Being thus grievously affected by his sins, he humbles himself before the Lord and supplicates His Judge to be gracious unto him -- yes, he approaches to his Father with shame, for he can neither leave his Father alone nor can he endure the alienation and displeasure of his heavenly Father. He would rather be chastised and by renewal be reconciled with his Father than to continue unreconciled without chastisement. He therefore approaches with sorrow and perplexity, and prays, "Forgive me my sins and take away my debt from me." The Requested Action: Forgiveness The petition relative to these debts is: "Forgive; forgive us ..." Forgiveness comes about either by way of annulment or satisfaction. A father forgives his child either by not punishing him, or, if he punishes him, the forgiveness is still needful in order that the child may be at peace. Such is the practice among men. However, God cannot forgive debt except that punishment has been meted out for it. This is to be taken to heart, for many people, not knowing this, imagine forgiveness when there is no forgiveness. Since they do not seek forgiveness in the right manner, they continue to be deprived of it and will become subject to everlasting judgment. They imagine that God functions as man does. They deem a man to be good and merciful if he forgives someone who has wronged him, and who, confessing his guilt, humbles himself deeply and prays for forgiveness. If someone would then not be willing to forgive, such conduct would be esteemed evil in everyone's eyes and he would be despised as a cruel person. They therefore reason as follows: "God is more merciful than man and God is good. He will therefore surely forgive those who ask Him to be gracious." Furthermore, if from henceforth such a person does his best to lead a godly life, he is at peace. It does not matter whether he has spent his life in ungodliness; as long as he prays upon his deathbed, "Oh God, be merciful to me, a poor sinner!" He is forgiving to others who have done him wrong; he regrets his sinful life, and in this frame he dies. Such a person is most certainly deemed to be saved. Poor man! Awake, for this is the way whereby thousands of people go to hell. Do not proceed in this manner; rather, be acquainted with the way whereby God forgives sin. Enter upon this way before it is too late, so that you may yet be

saved.

I thus maintain that God neither can nor will permit sin to go unpunished. God punishes sin both temporally and eternally. In order to fully convince you of this, you must note that God is not only Lord and lawgiver, but He is also the Judge of all men. Abraham states, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Genesis 18:25). David acknowledged God as such: "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psalms 7:11).

Every man will come before God in judgment. "For God shall bring every work into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 12:14); "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). Not only does every man, upon death, appear before God as Judge, to be either ushered to hell or taken into glory -- for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27) -- but all men will appear simultaneously before God in the great judgment, where everything will transpire according to righteousness. "Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). Enoch -- the seventh from Adam -- knew, acknowledged, and preached this: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all ... that are ungodly" (Jude 1:14-15). I the writer, and you who read or hear this read, shall come before that judgment. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Let us consider this judgment from every perspective. All men will appear there and will be divided into two groups. The one group will be condemned for no other reason but sin. God is the Judge and a righteous Judge. Does not justice consist in the rendering to everyone his just desert, and is not a righteous judge someone who either punishes or acquits in harmony with the condition in which one is found? It is common knowledge that a judge must do right: A guilty person must be declared guilty and an innocent person must be acquitted. Mercy may not move him to acquit the guilty one. As good-natured and compassionate a person a judge may be, he must not allow a murderer to go free. He must condemn him to death since justice requires this. However, is God not more righteous than man? Thus, His righteousness requires that He condemn the sinner. Here goodness is not the issue, but justice. This is confirmed by the expressions God makes concerning Himself: "... and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:7). Tell me: "Why does God condemn those who will be at His left hand? Is He not infinitely merciful? Why then is He not gracious to them?" There must therefore be another reason for bringing about the condemnation of the sinner. What is this? There can be no other reason than the righteousness and veracity of God. Would not the Judge of the whole earth do right? Is God's judgment not according to truth? "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth" (Romans 2:2). Since sinners are not delivered from hell by the mercy of God, and God is a righteous Judge whose judgment is according to truth and who can by no means clear the guilty, God cannot allow sin to go unpunished, and thus the sinner cannot expect forgiveness by way of annulment.

What counsel is there then for the sinner? Must they all perish? There is no solution with man himself, for he cannot exhaustively bear the punishment due to sin. He cannot transcend his punishment for he cannot give God his ransom; he must eternally remain subject to it. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matthew 16:26). Sin is a reality which man cannot deny. All his suffering in this world cannot render satisfaction. All his good works -- aside from the fact that

they are not pure before God and are but as filthy rags -- cannot erase sins which have previously been committed. He retains a sinful heart, and all manner of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds continue to proceed therefrom. The soul, upon departing from the body, remains sinful; and as long as sin continues, so long will the punishment continue -- that is, eternally.

Man's Need of a Surety In order for man to be delivered from guilt and punishment and be exonerated in the righteous judgment of God, he must have a Surety who, on his behalf, satisfies the justice of God, bears the punishment which the sinner deserves, and perfectly fulfills the law. This payment and obedience must be reckoned to the account of the sinner by divine imputation, God permitting the intervention of a Surety. Man, in turn, must acquiesce in being delivered by a Surety and must receive His ransom and righteousness as his own in order to come unto God thereby. This way is hidden from all the heathen and God also conceals it from all the unconverted who live under the gospel -- although some can explain this in an external sense and can speak of this as such. However, God reveals this way to His own and leads them in that way. The Lord Jesus, being very God and man, has been given of God Himself to be a Surety. "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" (Hebrews 7:22). He has made payment for the elect on their behalf: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Thereby believers are reconciled with God. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10). Hereby peace with God has been merited. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). He who has Jesus as a Surety is complete in Him. "And ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10); "... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is the way in which forgiveness of sin is to be obtained; apart from this way there is no forgiveness.

Question: How can there be forgiveness if payment has been made?

Answer: If we were to have endured all punishment in person, and if we in person had perfectly fulfilled the law of God, there would be a more valid reason for this question. However, since all this occurs by way of a Surety; there is a need for the imputation of the ransom and righteousness of the Surety. It is needful for man to receive this believingly and when the sinner thus comes to God he will receive forgiveness. In this there is a simultaneous manifestation of the justice of God as Judge and of His goodness as a reconciled Father, for the same nature which has sinned must make restitution. The Surety has become surety with the approbation of the Judge, and the Father is satisfied with the Surety. Since He is satisfied with the execution of the suretyship, both its application and forgiveness are therefore righteous. Man has contributed nothing to this; he is guilty in and of himself and thus forgiveness is entirely gracious as far as he is concerned. Thus, payment and forgiveness harmonize very well, whereas forgiveness and application remain distinct acts. When praying for forgiveness here, we do not do so in a different sense from what believers did in the Old Testament. They also obtained forgiveness as well as we. We find the word *aphes* here. Its usage here is not unique to the New Testament and does not stand in contradistinction to *paresis*-- as if this were unique to the Old Testament only and that Old Testament believers only knew of an overlooking of sin while we have actual forgiveness. For forgiveness is denominated *aphesis* in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). At that particular moment the Old Testament was still in full force; nevertheless

the Lord Jesus caused His disciples to pray: aches. This Petition: The Believer's Prayer for Paternal Forgiveness In praying for forgiveness here, the supplicant does not view himself as unconverted and unreconciled, and as desirous to be delivered from the state of wrath (believers being children of wrath by nature as all others); rather, he views himself as being a child of God, for he prays, "Our Father, forgive us." God deals with His children in human fashion. As a father shows his displeasure over the misbehavior of his children, God likewise shows His displeasure to His children when they have sinned. He withdraws Himself from intimate fellowship with them, hides His countenance, lets them feel His fatherly wrath, and punishes them with a remorseful, restless, and anxious conscience. Inner peace has departed, and a lack of freedom overcomes them within and without. Such a condition causes the believer to be very perplexed, and he goes to his Father, confesses his misdeeds, takes refuge to the blood of the Lord Jesus, and prays, "Forgive." To such the Lord will manifest Himself and He will forgive them time and again.

Forgiveness Implied The following is implied in forgiveness: First, there is the absence of punishment: "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure" (Psalms 6:1), and there is no imputation of sin; that is, he is not dealt with as a sinner: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Psalms 32:2).

Secondly, upon forgiveness God neither hides His countenance -- which alone is the life of the soul of a child of God -- nor withdraws His presence, nor conceals Himself as with a cloud so that no prayer can penetrate, nor does He hold Himself as a stranger. "And enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psalms 143:2); "Hear me speedily, O Lord...hide not Thy face from me" (Psalms 143:7).

Thirdly, there is the assurance of forgiveness; that is, a frame of heart is granted in which there is freedom from the burden of debt and a sense of the forgiveness of sin. "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (Psalms 32:5); "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isaiah 38:17). David prayed for this: "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Psalms 35:3). This was stated to Isaiah: "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (Isaiah 6:7).

Fourthly, peace is bestowed upon the soul. Sin wounds the soul -- makes her restless, fearful, and anxious. When God forgives sin, however, there comes sweet quietude and inexpressible peace. Such was David's desire: "Blot out my transgressions...purge me...wash me...make me to hear joy and gladness" (Psalms 51:1;Psalms 51:7-8). God promises this: "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned" (Isaiah 40:1-2). Such has been the experience of the church: "O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me" (Isaiah 12:1).

Fifthly, it results in free access to God as being a reconciled Father: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Hebrews 10:19;Hebrews 10:22).

Sixthly, forgiveness implies restoration of fellowship with God -- which was discontinued due to sin -- in which God embraces the soul intimately. "Thou hast in love to my soul [Note: The Statenvertaling differs from the KJV here. The phrase, "Thou hast in love to my soul," reads as

follows: "Gij hebt mijne ziel liefelijk omhelsd," that is, "Thou hast in love embraced my soul.]" delivered it ... Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isaiah 38:17). The soul in turn meets God with filial joy and delight. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isaiah 33:24). She joyfully gives thanks to the Lord: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Psalms 103:2-3).

All this constitutes forgiveness. It is this which the suppliant requests in this petition, and it is this which God grants to believing supplicants. He indeed forgives whenever and as often as His children confess their sins, receive the Lord Jesus as their ransom and righteousness, and pray for forgiveness. However, the Lord does not always grant them all the matters mentioned. He also does not always grant it in the measure that they desire; at times God permits them to run after Him for a long period of time. They are frequently slack in their seeking, listless in prayer, unbelieving, discouraged, not fully emptied of sinful lusts, and thus not fit to enjoy these sweet experiences. Therefore there comes darkness at times when they anticipate light, and fearfulness instead of healing. However, the Lord will ultimately "regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Psalms 102:17). Therefore, persevere in prayer and do not only pray for yourself, but also for the church and all believers, for they are all burdened by sin and many go bent down because of it. There is no peace in their soul due to their sin; they are grieved and they long for forgiveness, so that with more freedom of heart they may praise Him, fear Him filially, and sweetly progress in the ways of the Lord. This is the first portion of this petition: "Forgive us our debts." The Disposition of the Suppliant The second portion conveys the disposition of the suppliant: "As we forgive our debtors." There are a great variety of opinions about this addition. One thing is certain, these words are not a meritorious cause of God's forgiveness, for then it would have to read, "... because we forgive." Instead, the word « (hoos) (= as) is used. If that were true then it would not be a petition, but a demand for that which is ours. Furthermore, forgiveness is granted on the basis of grace. "Being justified freely by His grace" (Romans 3:24). It is equally evident that this does not imply that our forgiveness is on an equal par with God's forgiveness. God forgives as Judge and as Father; we forgive our equals. God forgives perfectly, and we deficiently. It is also not a condition in the literal sense of the word, for then it would come about by way of contract with God. Rather, it is a humble supplication for grace; it is a *conditio sine qua non*, or an indispensable or essential condition; that is, a required disposition for being a suitable object to request and receive forgiveness. For if someone is enraged against his neighbor and lashes out in anger in order to avenge himself, then it can be understood by all that such a person is not in a condition to pray, "Forgive ..." At that moment he will be able to obtain neither forgiveness and its resultant comfort, nor all that is implied in forgiveness (as stated above). This also applies when there is hatred and vengeance in the heart, for a greater or lesser measure of sin does not change the nature of the sin. If anyone is to pray, then his heart must not condemn him. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:20-21). When a person perceives that he harbors a grudge, hatred, and aversion toward his neighbor who has done him wrong, he (if he has spiritual life) will not dare to pray for forgiveness. He must condemn himself; he neither dares nor can expect any forgiveness. This is also true when he becomes aware that he is guilty of wrongdoing toward someone else with whom he is not yet reconciled (Matthew 5:23-24). When he is reconciled with his neighbor, however, and forgives whomever has offended

him, he can approach boldly in prayer, and in faith request and expect forgiveness. The Lord Jesus conveys this when He restates this petition: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). He will then neither grant you the comforting sense of the forgiveness of sins nor will He say to you, "Be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee; I am thy salvation." He will neither grant you free access to Himself nor permit you to have communion in peace with Him. This is signified by the phrase "... as we forgive ..."

Debtors are not those persons who are indebted to us as far as money or possessions are concerned. It is not implied here that we are not permitted to demand payment according to the rule of justice -- even though such is not to be done with sharpness and cruelty toward an impotent debtor. Rather, debtors are those who have done wrong toward us in word or deed.

Human Forgiveness vs. Divine Forgiveness To forgive is not to forgive as God forgives, that is, with authority and majesty. It also does not relate to the measure in which one has done wrong toward God and is punishable for at God's bar. This is solely God's doing. Such human forgiveness would have no value before God. No one should comfort himself in the hour of death with the fact that he will now be saved since he has forgiven others and has been forgiven by his adversary -- and is thus reconciled with his neighbor. Rather, this forgiveness is only applicable to those wrongdoings which have been committed against each other. This does not mean that by the wrongdoing of our neighbor we have become his judge or have the authority to punish him; most certainly not. Rather, forgiveness occurs between equals who, even though they have been wronged, may not punish. Yes, no one is permitted to be wrathful toward the offender, allow the inclination toward vengeance to arise in the heart, nor have a grudge against, hate, or have an aversion toward him. It is thus not a virtue if you put aside anger, wrath, and hatred toward your neighbor. To be thus disposed is not a voluntary matter as if it were a matter of choice whether or not we would be thus minded. Instead, it is but a desisting from sin. Therefore, we are not to be of the opinion that we have done something significant toward our neighbor if we are no longer angry at him and neither punish nor intend to punish him. Forgiveness is a declaration to the offender proceeding from the heart of a offended party that he entertains neither hatred, aversion, nor wrath in his heart toward him, and that he will not inflict evil upon him due to his offense, but rather is inclined to live in peace and love with him. Such an expression of the disposition of the heart does not always occur; rather it only occurs when the offender confesses his guilt and seeks forgiveness and reconciliation. This is evident in Luke 17:3-4 : "If he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." To say, "I forgive you" when such is not warranted is a triumphant boasting of your kindness and will harden the offender in his sin.

All of this is implied when we pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." The Lord Jesus has suffered once and for all for the sins of all who are His. This He did once when He sacrificed Himself, "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14), and thus obtained eternal redemption for them. Even though forgiveness by virtue of the death of Christ is indeed a reality, man himself is nevertheless nothing but sin within and without, dead in sins, and is thus by nature a child of wrath as all other men. He is condemnable and in a condition in which a holy God cannot find delight. Instead, God hates the state of sin and divine justice should execute judgment upon it. In such a condition he is not an

object of forgiveness. However, the Lord grants His elect spiritual light and life -- each at his own time. He then begins to perceive in what state he is by nature, is fearful, and is perplexed about his sinful and condemnable state. He perceives that his salvation consists in being in a reconciled state with God, in having peace with God, in approaching boldly unto God as being reconciled with Him, and in walking humbly with God as his Father in filial obedience and love. He is very desirous to be delivered from the one and to obtain the other. He looks unto the Surety, receives Him, and supplicates for forgiveness. The Lord, in response to this, grants him this, applies the atonement to him, and causes him to taste the fruits of atonement and forgiveness. For the one this is more clear and for the other more obscure. Since the believer daily offends in many things, his faith in the forgiveness of sins is weakened -- it generally being very feeble anyway -- and fear and anxiety resurface. The desire for that state which gives peace again returns, and thus he resumes the exercise of faith and his praying for forgiveness. Observe this in the example of the holy man David, the man after God's own heart: "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Psalms 19:12); "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions ... for Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great" (Psalms 25:7; Psalms 25:11); "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalms 51:1-2). A Serious Warning Addressed to the Unconverted The unconverted cannot pray this petition. When they rattle it off -- as they do daily -- they are mocking with God, for they are not sincere in their heart and will, except they repent, experience to their terror that God will not allow Himself to be mocked, and that they are also not able to deceive Him.

Therefore, 1) you who are still insensitive about your sinful state -- about your sinful thoughts, words, and deeds -- who do not fear the wrath of God and carelessly go on your way; 2) you who have no intention to depart from all, I repeat, all sin (What do I say? You are not acquainted with sin except for three or four grievous ones, and how would you thus depart from them); 3) you who do not know what it means to be reconciled with God, to have peace with God, to freely make use of access to God, to have fellowship with God in a filial disposition, and who are neither restless about your defect nor desirous for this delightful experience; and 4) you who live in envy, hatred, and are continually permeated with a desire for vengeance, this desire manifesting itself whenever there is an opportunity; oh, that you would be conscious of this your disposition!

First, be assured that as often as you recite this petition (for it cannot be called prayer) you are provoking God, indeed defying God to punish you. When God's longsuffering toward you will have come to an end, you will know what it means to have recited this petition without the heart and under the pretense of prayer.

Secondly, you are living and continue to live in an unreconciled state, laden with guilt and subject to the unbearable wrath of God. When this will once be poured out upon you, where will you then flee? Then it will be fearful for you to fall into the hands of the living God.

Thirdly, you will not avoid the punishment, for if God has punished His own Son for the sins of His elect, what must you expect? Therefore, repent and seek to be delivered from your guilt and punishment through the blood of Jesus Christ, and with an upright heart pray for forgiveness.

Counsel for Those Who Desire to Be Reconciled and Be at Peace with God

You who desire to live continually in a state of reconciliation and peace and experience that your faith in the forgiveness of sins is faint and feeble -- who have but little assurance, who rarely or never have a sense of forgiveness, and whose conscience is repeatedly troubled by committed sins, which inhibit you in your approach unto God, make you discouraged, and therefore obstruct you in your seeking to be in a reconciled state -- come, earnestly endeavor to have a grievous sense of your sins, to become a partaker of forgiveness, and to live in a state of peace. The Lord Jesus has afforded us the means by teaching us to pray, "Forgive us our debts." We may indeed be at liberty to pray for that which the Lord puts in our mouth.

First, our need must compel us to do so -- for how dreadful it is to be subject to the wrath of God, to be accursed, to be under the power of the devil, to be under the dominion of sin, and to be subject to the punishment of eternal condemnation! How unbearable it is when God gives man but a glimpse of this! Such is the state in which all the unconverted are. Oh, that they would take it to heart and believe it; that the terror of the Lord would persuade them to seek earnestly for the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God by the blood of the Lord Jesus! Therefore in a heartfelt manner pray, "Forgive!" Even though the converted are reconciled with God, if they presently do not know this, it is for them personally as if they had no forgiveness; then it seems to them as if they are still subject to the judgments mentioned. This must therefore stir them (since they are much easier to be persuaded) to seek forgiveness. What a mournful and anxious life it is to live always in fear of death and condemnation, always to live with an anxious conscience, time and again to be troubled when thinking upon God, and always to be a prisoner to the power of corruption, for the one is contingent upon the other! Then each perplexing circumstance is perceived as a sign of God's wrath, whatever we undertake is considered to be accursed, and no delight can be found in either our food and drink, family and home, the starry sky, the delightful countenance of the earth, or friends. All this is a consequence of sin. Therefore, seek the forgiveness of sins and it shall all be removed.

Secondly, neither allow the magnitude of your sins, nor the fact that you sin repeatedly discourage you from praying for the forgiveness of sins. Do not say with Cain: "My sin is greater than that it should be forgiven. My prayer is but mockery with God, for upon having earnestly prayed for the forgiveness of sins, I immediately sin again; I no longer dare to pray for forgiveness." Where then do you wish to turn? Do you wish to remain in this wretched condition? Do you know of a different way? You must have forgiveness, and therefore you must pray for it. It does not help you to say, "I do not dare." Therefore, turn to the Lord against whom you have sinned. Confess your sins before Him, humble yourself before Him, and pray for forgiveness, for our God is not harsh and unyielding. Rather, He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6). The Lord delights in doing well, forgiving sin, and answering prayer. Let the following text afford you boldness: "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee" (Psalms 86:5). Add to this Jeremiah 32:41 : "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good." Yes, the Lord yearns to see if someone comes to Him who is desirous for grace: "And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you" (Isaiah 30:18). Are your sins many? There is also much forgiveness with the Lord: "He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). Do you sin each day again? Then consider Lamentations 3:22-23 : "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness." Who would then not have freedom to go to such a good God and to supplicate Him to be gracious? Since the Lord

Jesus has satisfied the justice of God, is a merciful and compassionate High Priest to apply His merits to all who come to Him to become partakers of His atonement, and to pray for them, there is all the more reason to do so. Therefore, you who are perplexed, at your wits' end, sorrowful, and overwhelmed -- receive this Surety, and through Him and with His merits go to the Father, praying, "Forgive our debts."

Thirdly, it is a most delightful condition to have the forgiveness of sins. Believers, however feeble you may be and however far you may have strayed away, you have not yet forgotten what it was like to be freed from all debt and all punishment -- what it was like to have free access to God and to say with a filial heart, "My Father" -- what it was like to have a quiet soul, to taste peace with God which passes all understanding, to rejoice in the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, to be a partaker of Christ's ransom and righteousness and to be clothed with it. Do you not remember how your heart was enlarged and that it seemed as if all that is in heaven and upon earth was reconciled with you when the Lord said to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; I am thy God and thou art Mine"? You are indeed acquainted with this condition, be it sensibly or by faith. Your soul is troubled when you are not in such a condition, and it is the intense desire of your heart to be in such a state and to be led further and further in the enjoyment of such a frame. Would this not move you to seek forgiveness with God if you are without it, and to flee to the Lord Jesus if you have lost it, and thus be restored in a disposition where you are at peace? And you who are in such a state, preserve it most carefully, for it is so readily disturbed by either a serious falling into sin or a reckless yielding to sin. Furthermore, this will be the case when you fail to make continual use of the Lord Jesus, when you fail to arise and wash yourself by renewal in Christ's blood after you fall, and by renewal to walk humbly before the countenance of God, thus acquainting yourself with the Lord. Then, I say that you will readily lose this sweet frame. Therefore, pray daily, "Forgive!"

Fourthly, if there is but the least principle of faith and life in you, you will be desirous for sanctification. It will be your intention to be on guard against a given sin, to do such and such, and you will make an effort to do so. Yet, there is no progress, for you fall again and your expectation is shattered. You will deny your spiritual state, for such a life cannot coexist with grace. In one word, you will become discouraged and will despair, and you would desist in this endeavor if the Lord would not time and again intervene. Then a renewed effort will be made; however, the outcome will be the same. You will thus live in anxiety, and if any progress is made in this manner, it is at best but natural work and the conscience remains restless.

If, however, you desire to be more holy, you must begin with the forgiveness of sins. If, by faith, you may receive the Surety Jesus Christ, and as such come to God and receive the forgiveness of all your sins, then the separation between God and the soul is removed and you will exercise communion with God. The soul will love God and will find such delight in fellowship with God that she would not readily like to lose this. Since she knows that this fellowship is disrupted by sin, she will be all the more on her guard against it. Since the forgiveness of sins stirs up love in her, this love will cause her to fear and obey God in a filial manner, and do whatever is pleasing to the Lord. Thus, the forgiveness of sins engenders sanctification. This is indicated by the following passages: "... purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9); "... faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6); "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Psalms 130:4). By way of the forgiveness of sins the wounded soul is healed and this causes the believer to proceed with

courage. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isaiah 33:24). All these texts give expression to the necessity, sweetness, and efficacy of the forgiveness of sins. Therefore seek it with all your heart, for it can be obtained. Having obtained this, you will be enabled to sanctify the name of the Lord and, with David, to give thanks: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases," etc. (Psalms 103:2-3).

079. Chapter 74: The Sixth Petition: And Lead us not into Temptation, but Deliver us from Evil

----- CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR ----- The Sixth Petition: And Lead us not into Temptation, but Deliver us from Evil A Christian desires to perform all that he prays for; that is, if it pertains to matters where his activity is appropriate. To pray without a desire to be active is mocking with God. To be active without prayer does not yield good results, since we are not capable of doing anything spiritual in and of ourselves. In the first three petitions the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray for three great matters: that God's Name be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done. As supplicants ourselves, we are involved in the execution of these matters. Therefore we cannot pray for them unless we are willing to effect them in our station in life. In order to be a means in effecting these matters, however, we must be in a condition in which we are fit according to soul and body to effect them. Since we ourselves are neither fit for this nor are able to acquire these qualifications in and of ourselves -- God alone being able and willing to grant them -- the Lord Jesus teaches us in the last three petitions, having presented in the first three petitions the matters which are to be effected, to pray for the qualifications which are needed for the execution of these matters. To that end it is requisite that our bodies function and be in good condition -- food and raiment being needful for that purpose. This we request in the fourth petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." Furthermore, in order that the first three matters be effected it is also requisite that we be in a reconciled state with God and be at peace with Him, for God does not deem His enemies worthy of effecting such great matters. Moreover, man can neither approach unto God in an unreconciled state, have fellowship with Him, nor do anything for the Lord. His consciousness of sin would cause him to be fearful of God and prompt him to flee from Him. Therefore, the Lord Jesus taught in the fifth petition to pray to be in a state of reconciliation and peace with God: "Forgive us our debts." Since spiritual life is feeble, faith is weak, and the soul has but little strength; since it has pleased the Lord, to a greater or lesser degree, to give his enemies free reign against him; and since those enemies are shrewd, evil, tireless, and powerful, a believer is in fear that the enemies would hinder him in the execution of those matters which he so greatly delights in, and render his heart incapable of doing anything spiritual -- yes, lead him into sin. Therefore the supplicant flees to the Lord for help in order that he might be preserved in a state of holiness and thus be fit to effect these three great matters. The Lord Jesus teaches us to pray for this in the sixth petition: "Lead us not into temptation," etc. The Twofold Nature of This Petition In these words we do not find two petitions, but only one. There is but one subject with which we are exercised here and about which we utter a twofold petition. First of all, there is a petition for the preservation from evil, and secondly, a petition to be delivered from evil. The petition to be kept from evil is expressed in these words: "And lead us not into temptation." First of all we have the subject, temptation, and secondly the invocation, lead us not into it. The last three petitions are all connected with the conjunction "and," for a Christian is in need of all three dispositions in order both to pray the first three petitions as well as to effect them. If one of these dispositions is lacking, he will not be fit to do so. All three must always coalesce.

The Subject of This Petition: Temptation The subject is temptation. The Greek word *peirazein* signifies trial. "And this He said to prove him" (John 6:6); "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles" (Revelation 2:2). It also signifies "to examine": "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Most often it signifies "to tempt": "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). From this word the word *peirasmos* (= temptation) is derived, which is used here. Temptation can originate with 1) God, 2) Man 1:3) the world, and 4) the devil.

God Tempts

God is said to tempt or prove man. God tempted Abraham when He commanded him to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22:1); He proved Israel with the manna (Exodus 16:4); and He tried David (2 Samuel 24:1) and Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 32:31). It is not as if God would thus become acquainted with certain matters or outcomes, for all things are naked and opened before Him and He knows man's thoughts from afar. Rather, He does so to make matters known to either the person himself or to others -- thus conveying what good or evil is to be found in man. It was thus that Job's patience, Abraham's obedience, David's weakness, and Hezekiah's pride became manifest, to their humiliation, the comfort of others, and to prompt others to caution. God proves His own by either temporal prosperity or adversity in order to ascertain whether He is all-sufficient to them and their only confidence; whether they believe the providence of God in each individual matter; whether they love His will; or whether they have the courage to put their trust in His promises. The Lord also tries His own with spiritual temptations by the withdrawal of His Spirit, light, comfort, and opportunities, in order to cause them to live by faith alone -- in reliance upon His Word -- and continually receive Him as their strength.

Man the Tempter Man tempts God, other men, and himself.

(1) Man tempts God if we limit Him as far as time, manner, and measure are concerned, dictating to Him how and in what manner matters are to transpire: "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalms 78:41). We limit Him when we are not satisfied with His common way of providence, but instead require a miracle from God, something extraordinary, above and beyond the course of nature. "Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness" (Psalms 78:19); "The children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat" (Numbers 11:4). Thus, the Jews tempted Christ: "Master, we would see a sign from Thee. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Matthew 12:38-39). This also occurs when we set up certain conditions before we shall believe -- if we insist on a certain measure of contrition, illumination, sanctification, or assurance. Thomas did this: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). This is a dreadful sin. "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 6:16); "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents" (1 Corinthians 10:9). This does not apply to a meditating upon the wonders which God has done of old in order to strengthen us in great distress by reflecting upon God's omnipotence and faithful care for His own, and thus in a more lively sense to submit to that which pleases the Lord.

(2) Man proves other men by convincing them of their sinful state and thus to lead them to conversion and to Christ. In this respect the elders prove the members: "Do not ye judge them that

are within" (1 Corinthians 5:12). Or, we can tempt other men to commit evil by leading them into situations in order to cause them to fall, and bring them to sin and shame. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink ... and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" (Habakkuk 2:15). We furthermore do so when we draw our neighbor out in order to get him to speak so that we may thus catch him in his words. "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life" (Luke 10:25); "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk. Tell us therefore, What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not" (Matthew 22:15; Matthew 22:17). Such will praise a person, show him great friendship, or urge him to be valiant -- all of this, however, to cause him to stumble.

(3) Man proves himself positively when he considers whether or not he possesses grace in truth. The apostle commands this: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Such, in order not to deceive themselves, pray that the Lord would uncover them: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24). Man can also tempt himself toward evil when he carelessly brings himself into circumstances which could have been avoided, and of which we know that they have generally caused us to sin; when we yield to minor sins; when we entertain idle thoughts; when we postpone the performance of a specific duty; and when we debate about a sin as to whether or not we are permitted to do this, or whether such and such is indeed a great sin. James speaks of this tempting of self: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). The World as Tempter The world tempts converted and unconverted alike to commit sin. It does so by holding before them all manner of entertainment; by promising advantage and profit, as well as friendship, love, esteem, and honor. If that does not succeed, it will threaten with evil, harm, shame, persecution, etc. Even though one worldly person will tempt another worldly person to sin, the church in general, and each believer individually, are its primary focus. The latter are to view themselves as sheep among the wolves. They are therefore not to trust anyone, but must always be on their guard when they are among worldly people. The Lord Jesus foretold them that they have nothing but evil to expect from the world and worldly people. "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). The Lord Jesus also teaches them that they are to be on their guard: "But beware of men" (Matthew 10:17). We read furthermore: "Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Peter 3:17). To that end the Lord Jesus gave this golden counsel: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). The Devil as Tempter The devil also tempts man. The unconverted are in his power; he rules over them and they are captive under him at his will. He exerts all his power to cause believers to fall by way of temptations, however, and he consequently also bears the name of tempter (Matthew 4:3), the enemy (Matthew 13:39), the adversary (1 Peter 5:8), and the devil (James 4:7). His temptations are most subtle, and they are therefore referred to as "the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). He searches out where and when the believer is weak, and he adjusts himself accordingly to present his temptations, then in this and then in that manner. To advance all his temptations at once would not be possible and would not be effective with many. He knows the constitution of the body as well as its vulnerability; he knows the sin most likely to be committed, and he knows in what circumstances we must at all times be to do so. Along with this he interjects thoughts and mental

images in our imagination whereby he endeavors to make us think about such thoughts, stimulating our lusts by such reflections. As much as he is permitted, he will create situations in which he knows that we have frequently fallen. Then when the soul is troubled about falling into sin, he tries to seduce her from one sin to the next. He knows how to camouflage sin in such a subtle manner, or presents it as being so desirable that our lusts are stirred up. At the very outset he stirs man up and urges him to make haste -- to make haste so that man will not have time to direct one thought toward God. Once the sin has been committed, he tries to bring this person to despair, by suggesting: "Such a life cannot coexist with grace; you are not born again; you do not have true faith; for you there is no grace; your sin is too great; you have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost." Subsequent to this he will terrify them in a variety of ways. For a more comprehensive treatment of the temptations of the devil we refer you to a later section in this chapter entitled: "The assaults of the devil." This we must know, however: the devil can neither compel nor cause man to sin. All he can do is to suggest, entice, and create situations. Thus, man himself is the cause of those sins which he commits, and may therefore not blame the devil. Furthermore, the devil is not always the instigator; rather, man himself is generally the initiator.

The Request Relative to Temptation

Thus far we have seen what temptation is. Now we are to consider what activity is being requested relative to this subject, namely, temptation: "Lead us not into temptation." We hereby supplicate that God our Father would not do so. God leads His children, to and in the way of salvation -- without which they would never obtain salvation. "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known" (Isaiah 42:16); "I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go" (Isaiah 48:17). The Lord Jesus is called their captain (Hebrews 2:10; Hebrews 12:2). Believers pray that they may be led by the Lord: "Lead me in Thy truth" (Psalms 25:5); "Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalms 143:10). For on the one side they know their weakness, and the deviousness, wickedness, and violence of the enemies; and on the other side they know the Lord's power and goodness. They pray that the Lord would illuminate them, continually show them the way, exhort and stir them up to enter upon that way, support and govern them by His power, and not forsake them until they have reached their goal. They pray that they may be led in such a way. However, the invocation relates to not being led into temptation. The Lord our God is holy and whatever He does is holy: "His work is honourable and glorious" (Psalms 111:3). All that He executes is righteous: "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments" (Revelation 16:7). All that is unrighteous is far removed from God. There is no unrighteousness in Him. Let no one accuse God when he is tempted to evil and falls as a result of this. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13). God Himself does neither tempt anyone with evil nor to commit evil. When God tempts someone, this always occurs in an incomprehensible and holy manner -- with holy purposes or thereby to manifest His righteousness and goodness, and thus to the glory of His Name, before angels and men, they being witnesses of those deeds.

Trials Sent by God are of a holy Nature God tries both the ungodly and godly in a holy manner. He tries the ungodly:

(1) When He withdraws His gifts which have been abused, such as common illumination, conviction, and His restraining influence. "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (1 Samuel

16:14).

(2) When He, as righteous Judge, gives man -- who is nothing but sin, desires to do nothing but sin, and cannot do anything but sin -- over to himself, the consequence of being unwilling to hear Him. "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels" (Psalms 81:12).

(3) When He gives a man over to the devil so that he governs this man according to his will: "... who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:26).

(4) When man -- while being subject to these judgments and due to continual sinning and a continual going against his conscience -- is hardened so that he becomes insensitive to sin and a fear for punishment. This judgment God executed upon Pharaoh: "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (Exodus 7:3). A man who is in such a condition and in whom God permits all manner of inclinations to arise, will fall into every sin until the righteous wrath of God destroys him.

God tries His children with a holy objective and in a holy manner. This occurs:

(1) When the Lord gives free reign to the tempters -- be it the devil, the world, or the flesh -- to assault His children in various ways. It was thus that God gave the devil free reign with Job (even though there were limitations) (Job 12:1-25), as well as with David (2 Samuel 24:1).

(2) When God withholds His gracious influence and sustaining power -- of which the church complained: "O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our heart from Thy fear" (Isaiah 63:17). When a child of God is thus deprived of God's help, and is thus assaulted by his enemies -- and if both grace and spiritual life are but feeble -- he is in danger indeed!

(3) When God permits certain situations to arise in which he should have remained standing, and he is then not on his guard. If his emotions and lusts are stirred up, and he then departs from the fear of God, obedience, and the love of God, he will be tossed about as a top, and be led about by his flesh, being swept along from the one sin to the next (even to sins toward which he had no natural inclination beforehand). What a tragic situation this is! What would be the end if God were not to deal with him again and restore him? A child of God must be fearful of such a condition and pray against it.

What is Implied When the Godly Pray: "Lead Us Not into Temptation" When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we are not praying for the averting of all temptations or trials resulting from a spiritual or physical cross, or from all circumstances in which we would be able to fall. This is God's way with all His children whereby He humbles them, exercises them in the battle against the enemies, and sanctifies them. Rather, the petition is as follows: "Neither let the temptation get a hold of nor have power over us; do not withdraw Thy Holy Spirit from us; do not give us over to ourselves when opportunities for sin manifest themselves. When the enemies assault us and seek to toss us to and fro and sift us as wheat, let us then not be overpowered by the temptation. Do not let us be ensnared so that unrighteousness would gain the upper hand; neither give us over to evil inclinations nor to the lusts of our corrupt heart. For where would this not bring us? If, however, it pleases Thee to let situations arise and that snares are laid for us everywhere, and if devils and worldly people in a subtle or evil way scheme to catch us, keep us from falling and lead us by Thy Spirit. Give us strength to remain standing, so that by our fall our own soul be not mortally

wounded, the godly be neither grieved nor offended, and Thy Name and true godliness be not blasphemed." Such was David's prayer: "O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in Thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on Thee" (Psalms 25:20-21); "O forsake me not utterly" (Psalms 119:8); "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek Thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel" (Psalms 69:6).

Thus, the petition not to be led into temptation is indicative of:

(1) a knowledge and an acknowledgment of the sinfulness of our heart and our weakness to resist temptations;

(2) a hatred and an aversion for sin and a fear for falling into sin;

(3) a love for communion with God, which is affected and obscured by a falling into sin; as well as a love for the honor of God's Name, the reputation of godliness, and the joy of the godly;

(4) faith in God's care for His own, and in God's omnipotence to give them strength to subdue the enemies in their assaults; as well as faith in the goodness of God as rendering Him willing to do this, and His veracity that He will do it, having promised to hear and answer prayer.

The Second Part of the Petition: But Deliver us from Evil

The first portion of this petition having been dealt with, the preservation from evil, we shall now consider the second part, the deliverance from evil. The first part relates to the future, whereas the second part relates to the present. These two portions of the petitions are conjoined by the adversative "but." From this it is evident that the latter differs from the first, but nevertheless is related to the first. The manner in which there is a distinction and relationship is contingent upon the interpretation of the word "evil" -- that is, how this is to be understood. "Evil" (poneros) signifies the devil: "... then cometh the wicked one ... the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Matthew 13:19; Matthew 13:38). The world is referred to as evil: "... this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4), which is said to lie in wickedness, that is, to be entirely evil: "... and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). The heart of man is said to be evil: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:12). This evil heart is filled with wickedness: "An evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matthew 12:35). In the heart of the natural man there is nothing but wickedness: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Also, sin is referred to as that which is evil: "Abhor that which is evil" (Romans 12:9). Since these four -- the devil, the world, the heart of man, and sin -- are called evil, the question is who or what is to be understood by "evil" here. The Word "Evil" Defined

The supplicant is a child of God who addresses God as Father and greatly desires the glorification of God's Name, the well-being and extension of God's kingdom, and the doing of God's will. To that end he requests temporal support for himself and all the godly, so that, due to poverty, they would not be a reason for slander to the ungodly and they themselves would not be overcome by cares. He prays to continually be in a state of peace and reconciliation in order that they may run their course with joy and liberty before God and man. Furthermore he prays that they would not encounter any snares or stumbling blocks whereby they could be ensnared or over which they would fall. To that end he prays that they may be delivered from all that would hinder them in the way of godliness. It is all this which is here denominated as evil. By the word "evil" must primarily and preeminently be understood, not the devil, for then both portions of this petition would almost be identical, but our sinful nature, the sins

which easily beset us, the law of sin which is in our members, and sin with all its manifestations. Thus, both the contradistinction with and the relationship to the first portion of this petition is clear. As long as sin has much power in man, the least temptation causes him to fall; however, when the image of God has been more restored, Christ has been formed in the soul, and the heart has increased in desire, life, and holiness, man will remain standing in temptation that much better. Furthermore, what would it profit man if he would not encounter any temptations at all and would in the meantime continue in his sinful disposition? The supplicant abhors the monster of sin, cannot tolerate it, but requests to be delivered from it. Also, the

Greek word *rusai* yields further emphasis. The Greek have several words whereby they express deliverance, and the word which they use here means "to extract," or "to deliver by way of extraction." Sin must be extracted: "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee" (Matthew 18:9); "... in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh" (Colossians 2:11). (Extracting is implied here even though the vocabulary differs.) We thus pray: "Deliver us from the sinful disposition of heart and its sinful manifestations." This is not contradicted by the fact that there is an article here: *tou ponerou* -- as if this were to refer to a person and thus to the devil. For this article is also used with the word "sin": "The whole world lieth (*ἐν τῇ πονηρίᾳ*) in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). We consider the most correct view to be that *tou ponerou* is neuter rather than masculine, and that in this instance the word "evil" includes both sin and all that is evil. The meaning of this petition is therefore: Keep us in the future so that we shall not succumb to the power of temptation and be caused to fall thereby. Furthermore, deliver us from this present sinful disposition of soul and the sins which issue forth therefrom. An Unconverted Person Is not Able to Pray this Petition As an unconverted person cannot pray any petition since he has no desire for any of these, he likewise also cannot pray this petition. This is all the more true since he can be most clearly convinced that not only is he without desire for the matters comprehended in this petition, but that it is all his desire and delight to live in sin. He does not want sin to be extracted from him. Instead, he draws unrighteousness to himself with the cords of vanity, and sin as with heavy wagon ropes. He has no fear that he will fall into temptation; he even seeks it out and eagerly involves himself in it, for sinning is his delight -- as long as it does not result in harm or injury. When such a person therefore says to God. "Lead us not," etc. ..., then he lies in the presence of an omniscient God and mocks Him. For if he would truly express what is in his heart, he would say: "Grant me opportunities to engage in many delightful and expedient sins, for they are my delight." Such a person ought no longer to pray this petition to God, lest he tempt Him. Instead, he ought either to continue without prayer to his destruction, or else repent and then offer the petition, "Lead us not into temptation!" The Godly are Not Always in a Frame to Pray This Petition A godly person also is not always in a frame to pray this petition. In order to have liberty, he must always regain his composure and modify his behavior when he intends to pray. Thus he must specifically turn within before he prays this petition, and examine himself as to whether his heart cleaves to a given sin -- whether there is a sin which presently holds him captive, he is not forsaking, and he is not valiantly resisting so that he may desist from and strive against it. If someone is in such a condition, he will have no liberty to approach to God, for his heart condemns him. It is thus essential that we are fully opposed to sin in general as well as to such and such a specific sin which torments us most -- even though we have no strength against it and we are able to deduce from our disposition as well as from experience, that we can fall into this again unless we receive further strength from above. For then are we able to ask for help and pray, "Lead us

not into temptation." This Petition Must be Prayed in All Earnestness This petition therefore ought to be most earnestly prayed by us, for:

(1) If we are no partakers of this disposition and these matters, we are not even capable of praying the other petitions -- much less do them. However, upon having received what we petition for here, we shall be fit for everything. As the first petition is the objective of all things, so is this petition the disposition from which and whereby we must strive to attain that objective -- as well as render the use of the means profitable.

(2) Furthermore, how dreadful is sin! It is a breach of the binding obligation which the Lord has imposed upon man -- an obligation which man himself readily acknowledges. To sin is to be disobedient to the majestic Lord and to despise His awe-inspiring character, doing so in His presence and while He observes it. We commit sins from which we would be kept by the presence of a man -- yes, even a child. Indeed, it is an act of utter contempt toward God when we are neither concerned about His wrath nor His judgments. Is anything more dreadful imaginable?

(3) Sin deforms the soul, and makes her despicable, hateful, and abominable -- more than we can even think or express.

(4) And what sorrows it engenders! God withdraws Himself and leaves the person over to himself. His precious soul is tossed about day and night due to loss of freedom, instability, fear, anxiety, and restlessness.

(5) The one sin begets the other, and those in turn beget others -- and where would sinning end?

(6) Sinning does not merely consist in the committing of transitory evil thoughts, words, and deeds, but it injures spiritual life itself. It becomes more feeble and weaker, and a person becomes less fit to live godly and to turn from sin. You know all this, believers. Ought you therefore not to be fearful and anxious about sin, and knowing your impotence, ought it not to cause you to cry out to the Lord, "Deliver me from evil! Deliver me; wash me; sanctify me, oh sanctify me, for I must be holy as Thou art"? The Bitterness of Succumbing to the Power of Temptation To succumb to the power of temptation is the most bitter thing that can befall a godly person. When a godly person, who already has but little strength, succumbs to a sinful frame, yields to sin more than he commonly does, and is thoughtless, careless, and shoddy in his conduct, he is in a frame which renders him vulnerable to temptations. When the tempter is then permitted by God to assault such a person and employ his wickedness, subtleties, devices, and practices; when the opportunities are there for this person to be wrathful, proud, unrighteous, impure, and to deny his confession either due to fear, lust, or whatever else; and if God departs from him, deserts him, and leaves him over to himself, his lusts will become lively and vehement and toss him about as dust in a whirlwind. This cannot be resisted, for both intellect and judgment have no say in this; his burning lusts are in control. Even if spiritual life manifests itself in some measure and counsels and groans against this -- even then things nevertheless proceed as if he were without his senses. The running horses cannot be held back. What all can a man not be led into? It can lead him into things for which he had no desire his entire life -- yes, which he abhorred. When man falls due to temptation, it is frequently not limited to one fall. And even if he wishes to refrain and regain previous tenderness, there is no strength. God hides Himself, temptations are renewed, lusts stir by renewal, and he is overcome once more -- until the Lord visits him by renewal and draws him out of this. However,

the previous tenderness of heart, the enjoyment of peace, communion with God, and a shining forth with holiness are still far removed. Sorrow, tears, anxiety, prayer, wrestling, a following hard after the Lord, and a renewed stumbling are the order of the day. Who would not be fearful of such a condition? Therefore, pray continually, "Lead us not into temptation!" The Motivation for This Petition The praying of this petition issues forth from a hatred and aversion for sin, from the experience of our inability to remain standing, and out of love for a pure and unspotted life. If this motivates us to pray thus, it must also render us active to remain in that condition. Temptations, when they come, will have no effect upon such when they come. Such have a perfect heart which longs for nothing else but continual union and fellowship with God. The world, and all that appears to be attractive and delightful in the world, must be banished from the heart, and the Lord alone must be all-sufficient to us -- and must be the object of our joy, delight, love, and fear. Even if we cannot carry this out according to our wishes, we must always seek to preserve the choice, the intention, and the exercises. If we do not proceed in this from the heart, in all our doing no progress will be made; we shall be vulnerable to temptations and the most insignificant occasion will cause us to fall. If, however, the heart is perfect toward the Lord, and we conduct ourselves in the presence of God, then we will be strengthened against temptations. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18).

Prayer and Work Must Also be Combined

Prayer and work must be combined; a Christian desires to perform what he prays for, and endeavors to do as much as he is able. When he prays, "Lead us not into temptation," then he must refrain from leading himself into temptation. We lead ourselves into temptation,

(1) when we do not flee those circumstances in which we have frequently fallen, but rather seek them out, or, upon their occurrence consciously yield to them, there being neither need nor obligation to avail ourselves of them. Such circumstances can vary greatly and may either pertain to someone's disposition, calling or other situations. To some the company of given individuals is harmful, to others dining engagements, to others the use of ordinary means, and for others at times solitude. We must flee from these things that can be avoided, or else we lead ourselves into temptation. If we cannot avoid those situations in which we have frequently fallen, being under obligation by divine commandment, we must be very much on our guard to keep our hearts diligently by bridling our tongue, yielding in specific cases, standing firm for God's cause, and arming ourselves with sincerity and caution. When we conduct ourselves in this way, the temptation will have less effect upon us.

(2) when we use lawful and ordinary things too frequently and thoughtlessly.

(3) when we cherish vain thoughts and find our delight in them -- even if they pertain to natural matters.

(4) when upon having sinned, we do not immediately arise, but either through carelessness, discouragement, unbelief and rejection of our spiritual state -- or else due to finding delight in sin -- remain where we are, so that sin gains in strength.

(5) when we reflect upon thoughts which suddenly enter our mind -- be it concerning a sin in which we find delight, unbecoming thoughts of God and divine things, or dreadful interjections. We shall thereby lose a good spiritual frame, and in an evil spiritual frame we are susceptible to temptation.

Against all these a Christian must be watchful and strive, being active in faith: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41); "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Guarding Against Temptation Do you wish to be protected against temptation? First, give heed to your heart and the thoughts proceeding from it: "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23). Secondly, place a watch before your eyes: "I made a covenant with mine eyes" (Job 31:1), and pray: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity" (Psalms 119:37).

Thirdly, close your ears to vain talk and backbiting: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33); "Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken" (Ecclesiastes 7:21). Fourthly, give heed to your tongue; govern it carefully and circumspectly. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Psalms 39:1). Also pray: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3). If you do not give heed to your heart and your external senses, you will continually succumb to temptation. If, however, you are thus on your guard and if you walk carefully, then, while praying and striving, you will walk surely, conquer the enemies, and inherit the crown of life.

The Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer The third division of this prayer is its conclusion. "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen." The papists and some others omit this and contest it. However, the sacred text itself, the practice of the first church and of generations following, as well as similar expressions in other texts of the divine Scriptures ought to convince them and confirm us in our usage of them.

(1) We can view this conclusion as the basis upon which the suppliant has received liberty and upon which he leans; for God, his Father, has command over all creatures, is omnipotent to give the suppliant what he desires, and is glorious and majestic in His Being -- it being the suppliant's objective to magnify Him.

(2) We can view this conclusion as a motive toward prayer. It is common with prayers recorded in Scripture that motives are used whereby the suppliant quickens and spiritualizes his desires. He is thus supplicating God to grant him the matters which he desires -- since He is ruler over all and can do everything by His power -- and that the receipt of the desired matters would be to the glorification of His Name, He being worthy of this. Or: "We have prayed this for the church, the kingdom of grace; this is Thine and therein Thou dost desire to be glorified. Therefore hear our prayer!"

(3) It can also be viewed as an enlargement of and an urgent plea related to the last petition that God would not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for He has all authority and power over both the tempters and the ones being tempted. He is thus able to sustain the latter by His omnipotence, to restrain the tempters, and to grant the tempted one a steadfast and holy heart. However, this is not to be limited to the last petition only, but is applicable to this prayer in its entirety.

Thine is the kingdom. This is indicative of God's majesty, exousia, authority, and dominion over everything, all of which is immediately subject to Him. This is most gloriously expressed by king David: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the

majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might" (1 Chronicles 29:11-12). God has sovereign dominion over both the kingdom of power and of grace, and of glory.

"... and the power (dunamis)." God does not only have a just claim upon everything and authority over everything, but in the Lord there is also strength and power to rule over all that is His, protect His own, grant them their desires, punish the enemies, and execute whatever He wills. "I am the Almighty God" (Genesis 17:1). The godly acknowledge this: "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psalms 115:3); "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).

"... and the glory." God is glory and majesty in Himself -- even if there were neither heaven, nor earth, nor any creature. God's glory is revealed in all His works, both in nature as well as in grace. The angels and the souls of the just made perfect praise and glorify Him as they witness His glory. However, in His goodness God has also willed that He be glorified upon earth. The unconverted neither are acquainted with the glory of God, nor do they have any desire to witness, praise, or magnify it. However, God has formed His people in order that they would show forth His praise; He has drawn them out of the power of darkness in order that they would show forth His praises. In all their activity they have God's glory in view; it is their chief delight. "Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works" (Psalms 145:2-5). The supplicant says: "Thine is the kingdom; Thou art worthy that everything would glorify Thee." Since true supplicants have this in view, they pray, expecting that God will hear their prayer.

"... forever!" The kingdom, the power, and the glory are the Lord's from eternity to eternity; by Him there is neither change nor shadow of turning. He is always the same: always glorious, omnipotent, and majestic. The believers upon earth -- from Adam until Christ's coming to judgment, from generation to generation -- declare: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:13).
The Meaning of the Word "Amen"

"...Amen." This is a Hebrew word which means truth. Sometimes it is used singularly, and sometimes it is repeated: Amen and Amen. At times it is used singularly and at times with an addition: Amen, Hallelujah; Amen, Oh Lord; Amen, the Lord do thus.

(1) Sometimes it is an approbation and a subscribing to what has been said. "And all the people shall answer and say, Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:15); "And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands" (Nehemiah 8:6). This approbation indicates that we comprehend the matter, as well as that we wish and desire it. "Else ... how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest" (1 Corinthians 14:16).

(2) Sometimes it is expressive of a strong desire for a matter, and a desire that it be thus and come about as such: "That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers. ... Then

answered I, and said, So be it, O Lord" (Jeremiah 11:5).

(3) Sometimes it signifies veracity, certainty, and steadfastness -- upon which one can rely and trust in. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20). The believing suppliant who has prayed everything with both his understanding and his heart, acknowledges the veracity and certainty of God's promises, that He will hear prayer -- and particularly this prayer: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24); "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:14-15). The suppliant has prayed with his heart, knows that the matters he has prayed for are according to God's will, believes the goodness, omnipotence, and veracity of God, expects the fulfillment of his desire (subjecting himself to its time, manner, and measure), and longingly adds to this: "Amen, so be it; it shall most certainly be true." "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen" (Revelation 22:20).

080. Chapter 75: Fasting

----- CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE -----

Fasting To fast [Hebrew: ta'anith], is a derivative of the words to oppress, humiliate, torment, as well as to be distressed. Others translate this Hebrew word as "to fast": "And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness" (Ezra 9:5); "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul?" (Isaiah 58:5). Also the word tsoom means "to fast" (Isaiah 58:5). In Greek we have the word nesteia, which means not to eat. It is the latter which we wish to express by the verb "to fast."

Fasting is a special religious exercise in which a believer deprives himself for a day from all that invigorates the body, humbling himself in body and soul before God as a means to obtain what he desires.

Fasting is a religious exercise--an exercise in which one seeks after God. Fasting due to poverty, avarice, illness, for health reasons, or a being prevented from eating food due to business activities is not applicable here. Rather we speak here of fasting as a religious exercise; it is God-focused and its intent is to seek God thereby. Since all practice of religion is neither to be self-willed nor practiced according to human institutions, but only according to God's command and precept, this is also applicable for fasting. It does not consist of idleness, but is an activity which is a day-long engagement consisting of secret dealings with God.

It is a special exercise. It is not a daily activity such as prayer, reading, thanksgiving, and singing. Rather, it is practiced at special seasons of need, such as being threatened or oppressed by the danger of a plague, having to engage in a very weighty task, perplexity, or having to make a choice concerning a weighty matter. It can even relate to everyday matters such as seeking communion with God, the need for strength to oppose specific sins, and growth in grace.

Fasting: To be Deprived of All That Invigorates the Body

Fasting primarily consists in a depriving one's self of all that invigorates the body, being desirous to bring the body for that given day into a condition of withdrawal, distress, pliability, and weakness.

It consists, first of all, in a depriving ourselves of all food (being expressed by the word fasting), for he who partakes of any food has broken the fast. Observe this in Esther 4:16 : "... fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink." We do not fast by merely depriving ourselves of meat. In the Old Testament there was a distinction between foods and between clean and unclean; however, this is not related to fasting. Paul states, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine" (Romans 14:21). It is also not related to days of fasting; rather, this pertains to giving offense to a weaker brother. The latter occurred during that period when there were some who still made a distinction between foods as dictated by the law of the Old Testament. It is in reference to this that the apostle states: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world

standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Corinthians 8:13). That is, "I would rather deprive myself of this than that I should offend anyone." Some had freedom to eat animals which had been sacrificed to idols. The apostle declared that there was such freedom, since the idol was in reality nonexistent. Others, however, did not believe they had such freedom and were offended when they observed that others did so. Therefore, not only did the apostle refuse to eat the meat of sacrificed animals, but he wanted to eat no meat at all, if someone would be offended by it. Except for such occasions, however, he would eat meat. Thus, these texts cannot be used in support of papal fasting, at which time they deprive themselves of meat. Else, they should also deprive themselves of wine and ought not ever eat meat.

Secondly, on a day of fasting we are to deprive ourselves of all external ornamentation. In Old Testament times the people covered their bodies with a type of material which was of the most inferior kind. They would then draw this as tightly around the body as if they were putting goods into a bag in preparation for transport, for they normally wore wide garments (Isaiah 3:24). Furthermore, they made this sack, which they wrapped around themselves, dirty by sprinkling dirt and ashes upon it, so that they would display themselves before God and men in the most wretched and humblest circumstances, thereby declaring that they were unworthy of everything. "A day for a man ... to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?" (Isaiah 58:5); "My clothing was sackcloth" (Psalms 35:13); "Gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes" (Jeremiah 6:26); "No man did put on him his ornaments" (Exodus 33:4).

Thirdly, on a day of fasting we must deprive ourselves of all entertainment such as recreational games; taking a walk for the purpose of seeing gardens, ornamental works of art, or plantations; or going out by boat or horse and carriage merely for pleasure. "Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure" (Isaiah 58:3). One must even refrain from marital union (1 Corinthians 7:5).

Fourthly, we must also refrain from performing the labors of our calling. "And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest" Leviticus 23:30; Leviticus 23:32.

Fifthly, there must also be a refraining from sleep. On such a day we must arise early and retire no earlier than normal. On such a day we may also not slumber, for that would be entirely contrary to the objective of the day. Such slumber results in a loss of time, and it is as if we would bring a dead body before the Lord -- as if it were the body that was fasting. It is in conflict with a humbling of ourselves. Sleep invigorates a person, and the purpose of this day is the humbling of the soul as facilitated by the faintness and weakness of the body -- and thus to humble one's self deeply.

Sixthly, above all things we must carefully guard against the commission of sins. It would be the abomination of all abominations if upon a day that we wish to humble ourselves over our sins and desire to pray for forgiveness -- as well as to be spared from those plagues which we have made ourselves worthy of by way of sin -- that at the same time we were to tempt the Lord by the commission of sin. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness" (Isaiah 58:6).

Fasting: A Humbling of Ourselves The second aspect of fasting is a humbling of ourselves according to body and soul. Soul and body are so intimately united that the ill disposition of the one begets the ill disposition of the other. When the body, due to the withdrawal of all refreshment,

is rendered feeble, pliable, and is subdued, the soul will also be in such a disposition; and thus the natural disposition takes on a spiritual dimension. Fasting, in and of itself, is not a religious practice. It is only so when it is a seeking after God by way of fasting. He who has merely deprived himself of all refreshment has not partially observed a day of fasting, for fasting and a humbling of ourselves are not two separate duties. Fasting must be characterized by a humbling of ourselves, and the humbling of ourselves must be done by way of fasting. Fasting serves but one purpose: to facilitate the humbling of the soul; it has no significance beyond that. Since fasting facilitates this, however, the act as such is nevertheless required. It is an essential aspect of a day of fasting -- however, only in union with, and thus inseparable from, the humbling of ourselves. They do not function in a dual sense, but in unison.

When, on a given day of fasting, we humble ourselves by way of fasting, then, at the very outset of the day, there will be a greater appetite for food than normal -- already prior to the normal mealtime. This is not always due to the corruption of our nature -- a nature which always hankers for that which is forbidden. Rather, it issues forth from the relationship between fasting and the humbling of ourselves. Sorrow over the deficiency of the soul engenders sorrow about that which the body is lacking, and a deficiency in the body engenders sorrow over the deficiency of the soul. They are thus both subservient to the humbling of ourselves (Deuteronomy 10:12). "... and ye shall afflict your souls" (Leviticus 23:27). A humbling of one's self consists in:

(1) The confession of sin, accompanied with grief and shame: "Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting ... and confessed their sins" (Nehemiah 9:1-2); "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra 9:6).

(2) Declaring ourselves to be worthy of judgment and a subscribing to justice if the Lord were to execute those merited judgments upon us. "Howbeit Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly" (Nehemiah 9:33).

(3) A supplicating for grace, frequently accompanied with weeping. Concerning the day of a solemn assembly we read in Joel 2:17 : "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord." This is also to be observed on the day of fasting recorded in Nehemiah 9:1-38. Consider also the following passages: "I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom" (Psalms 35:13); "And when they had fasted and prayed ..." (Acts 13:3); "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21);

(4) A renewal of the covenant with the wholehearted intent to forsake former sins and to live a godly life: "And because of all this we make a sure covenant" (Nehemiah 9:38); "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness" (Isaiah 58:6);

(5) The giving of alms: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:6-7). The Duration of Fasting The duration of fasting is limited to a twenty-four hour period -- from evening to evening.

(1) Moses Deuteronomy 9:9, Elijah 1 Kings 19:8, and the Lord Jesus Christ Matthew 4:2 fasted for forty consecutive days, during which time the Lord preserved their lives in a miraculous manner. We are not commanded to imitate this; to do so is only superstition. Furthermore, no one can be without food for such a long period of time. We do not follow the Lord Jesus if we deprive ourselves of meat for such a period of time while yet eating something during the day. He did not eat at all during that period, nor did He designate His fasting to be an example to be followed by us. Many things He either did by virtue of His divinity or in regard to His mediatorial office, we are neither able nor permitted to imitate.

(2) We also read about seven days of fasting 1 Chronicles 10:12 and of three days (Esther 4:16). This is to be understood as a period during which something was eaten each evening. Or else, due to there being a warmer climate in those countries, they were able to be without food for a longer time, without doing harm to their health. However, the normal time period for fasting is one day -- from evening to evening Leviticus 23:1-44; (Isaiah 58:5).

Question: Are all men obligated to fast for an entire day? Would one then, upon becoming somewhat faint and thus unfit for prayer and other duties of that day, be able to eat something, such as a piece of bread or something similar?

Answer: In respect to certain persons the rule applies, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6). This applies to women who have given birth, the sick, nursing mothers, those who are exceptionally weak (even though not sick), nursing babies, as well as children who must be dealt with according to their age. Some are not to be deprived of anything, others are to be given as little as possible, and again others need to learn how to fast. However, the healthy must deprive themselves of everything for the entire time. To become somewhat faint is the objective of fasting, and one must not shrink back from that objective. The pretense of being unfit for prayer issues forth from the opinion that fasting is no more than an exercise to become more fit for prayer and similar exercises. Such believe that this faintness is not a part of fasting, thinking that it is only spiritual in nature. One will also experience that, rather than becoming unfit, this faintness will render one more fit to pray with increased humility, as well as cause one to call upon God with the disposition of one who is entirely destitute. Even if the manifestation of all this is not as vehement as is otherwise the case, toward the evening, prayer will become more earnest, and then at times a special blessing will follow. The Distinction Between Public and Private Fasting As far as the persons who fast are concerned, a distinction can be made between public and private fasting. First, public fasting occurs when:

(1) It is proclaimed by the government due to a general national need -- be it war, pestilence, famine, an insect plague, extraordinary drought, persistent rain, or similar occurrences. In such events, governments have the right to proclaim fast and prayer days. This does not mean that such a day of fasting is a commandment of men; no, the observance of days of fasting is commanded by God. Instead, governments do but designate the time as determined by God by way of extraordinary circumstances.

(2) A synod, classis, or elders of a particular congregation designate a day of fasting for the church under their supervision, doing so due to an extraordinary need in the church -- be it persecution of that church or churches in other lands, the manifestation of false doctrine, the need for reform due to decline, the calling of ministers or the election of consistories, or other specific circumstances.

This is also not a human institution, but the observance of a divine command.

Secondly, private fasting occurs when: (1) some individual bosom friends agree to set apart a day -- be it due to their own needs or the needs of others, or an exceptional desire to seek the Lord earnestly for a desired matter -- either for body or soul; (2) a father institutes a day of fasting for his family;

(3) an individual sets apart a day for himself. Everyone has personal freedom in doing this, be it that he sets apart a day for special occasions; that he schedules days of fasting which, in his judgment, are most suitable for him -- this having been the custom of eminently godly persons -- lest that by having to select a day anew each time the matter be neglected; or that he selects such a day each time anew. In so doing we will acquaint ourselves with the Lord; we will become more modest and holy, and the Lord generally grants more spiritual grace to such. In setting such a day apart, every one is free as to the extent to which he wishes to do so. It can be that he will desist from his labors if he is self-employed and if it is not to the disadvantage of his family; he can do this without anyone else noticing this. Or it can be that he sets this day apart while nevertheless intending to do his work -- this being required by his circumstances -- and to eat a limited amount of food, so as to conceal from others the fact that he is fasting that day. The latter must very much be his objective according to the instruction of Christ in Matthew 6:16-18 : "Moreover when ye fast (this applies to private rather than public fasting), be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance. ... But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head (dress yourself in an honorable manner, as you are accustomed to do), and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." If, however, you cannot conceal this from your family, then you must not allow this to detract you. But, if this would cause you to be ridiculed, you must fully conceal this and eat a little.

Exhortation to Fasting

It is sad -- a sign of great decay in the church -- that so little work is made of fasting, both in public as well as secretly. Therefore all who wish to lead a life of tender godliness and desire to see the good of Zion ought to stir themselves up to exercise this duty, for:

(1) Has not God has commanded this? (Leviticus 23:27; Joel 2:12);

(2) Have not the church and the saints of all ages practiced this and left us an example to be followed? Observe this in (Judges 20:26); 2 Chronicles 20:3 and Nehemiah 9:1. References to solitary fasting are to be found in Nehemiah 1:4 and Psalms 35:13. This was not only a duty and practice in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament (cf. Matthew 6:16-18; Matthew 9:15; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:3; Acts 14:23; 1 Corinthians 7:5). Therefore, as obedient children of God and followers of the saints, fast frequently. This was the practice of the original Christian church and of believers at the outset of the Reformation -- and even long thereafter. Do not allow this practice to die out.

If a public fast has been proclaimed, conduct yourself well in doing so. There are but few who fast well. If, therefore, there is perplexity in the land where the church resides, God's eye will be upon you in a special manner. It will be pleasing to Him when He observes your standing in the breach to turn away His anger from the land. Perhaps He would deliver the land upon your prayer; and even if the land were to be destroyed, the eye of the Lord and His mercy will be upon you and your

loved ones. You will then have peace in your conscience wherever you go, knowing that you have endeavored to uphold the pillars of both church and country.

If some of the godly have agreed to set apart a day, endeavor to join them, and stir up some other godly person to do likewise. The Lord will most certainly be among you; He will come to you and bless you. It will engender a sweet bond of mutual love, a holy mutual fellowship, and quicken both love and the performance of good works. When you make work of having solitary days of fasting, you will experience that the promise is true and will be fulfilled for you: "Thy Father ... shall reward thee" (Matthew 6:18). The Lord will manifest that this is pleasing to Him. He will increase your light, and strengthen your heart in faith; you will be nearer to God in your walk, and lead a life which is more sober and thoughtful; and your conscience will be more tender. You will have more strength against sin, and receive more comfort from the Lord. He who has exercised himself in this has never regretted that he has done so, and we wish to recommend it as an exceptional means unto spiritual growth. When you thus have determined to observe either a public or secret day of prayer, you must prepare yourself for this ahead of time by removing all obstacles, by being moderate in your intake of food and drink in the evening, and by getting a moderate amount of sleep at night. Confess your aversion for such a day of prayer as a sin before the Lord, and ask that you may be fit to conduct yourself well on this day of prayer. If you intend to observe this with others, pray that the others may be fit for this as well.

If the day of prayer is spent as described above, let your conduct also be appropriate subsequent to this. Rejoice in the evening that you have food to eat, since you are not worthy of one bite of bread. Thank the Lord that He gives it to you in His favor -- as having been purchased with the blood of Christ. Be moderate in your use of food as well as in sleeping. Preserve the impression of all that has transpired that day; that is, of all your initiatives toward God and of God's manifestations toward you. Give close attention as to how God responds to your day of prayer, for God will respond to it. In this way you will accustom yourself to this duty, and discover so much sweetness in it, that you will long to have such a day of prayer by renewal.

081. Chapter 76: Watchfulness

----- CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX -----

Watchfulness As fasting is conjoined to prayer, so is watchfulness conjoined to prayer: "Watch and pray" (Matthew 26:41); "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Ephesians 6:18); "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7). We must therefore also take this duty to heart -- a duty the Lord Jesus has so solemnly commanded us to perform. "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:37); "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:42).

There is a spiritual watchfulness and a physical watchfulness. Both are the duty of a Christian and we shall therefore speak of both.

Spiritual Watchfulness Defined

Spiritual watchfulness consists in watching over our soul in a careful and circumspect manner in order that no evil may befall her. Spiritual life is a precious and desirable treasure to the believer, far excelling the entire world and all that is in it. It has many enemies which lie in wait for it -- not to be a partaker of it, but to destroy it; they hate it. A Christian is therefore diligent in preserving this life. "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23). The believer knows the value of that life, is acquainted with his enemies and their activities, loves this life, is desirous to preserve and increase it, takes care that it is not injured, and is thus circumspect and always on guard if there is danger approaching from elsewhere. If he becomes aware of something, he is alert and stands ready with his weapons in hand to turn away the enemy, attacking all those who come too close.

Spiritual watchfulness is exercised with several objectives in view. First of all, it pertains to the spiritual influences of the Holy Spirit, such as light, comfort, and strength -- whereby the spiritual life of the soul is strengthened. A Christian prays for this, and during prayer, as well as immediately thereafter, waits to see whether the Lord will grant him something so that he may immediately receive it and seal it within his heart. "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up" (Psalms 5:3); "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors" (Proverbs 8:34); "Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation" (Micah 7:7).

Secondly, watchfulness pertains to all that issues forth from the soul, such as thoughts, words, and deeds, lest the soul be injured by any sin. Instead, there will be a striving that our entire conduct may be according to God's will, whereby spiritual life increases in strength. "But watch thou in all things" (2 Timothy 4:5). A Christian strives for this: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Psalms 39:1); "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me" (Psalms 119:59; Psalms 119:30). Since the Christian is conscious of his impotence, he cries to God for help. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3); "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O

Lord" (Psalms 19:14). The believer guards his heart jealously, and since he knows that there are snares everywhere, he proceeds very cautiously. He is watchful in his every deed and ponders the path of his feet (Proverbs 4:26). Time and again he seeks counsel and asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do" (Acts 9:6). He looks whether the way before him is safe and each time sets down his feet with caution lest he step into a snare. He walks, so to speak, on his toes. This can be ascertained from the word akribos: "See then that ye walk circumspectly" (Ephesians 5:15). Then, when he finds all to be smooth, he proceeds courageously. "The Lord of hosts ... hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle" (Zechariah 10:3; Zechariah 10:5).

Thirdly, the person who is spiritually watchful also keeps an eye out for all that enters the soul, so that no enemy will steal in to harm his spiritual life. He knows his enemies -- the devil, the world, and his flesh -- and he knows their wickedness and their tireless activity. He is on his guard for that very reason, and he thus "closes the doors and the windows." "I made a covenant with mine eyes" (Job 31:1); "He ... stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil" (Isaiah 33:15). In accordance with the exhortation of the apostle he is on guard against the devil. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8-9). The Christian is on guard against the world when it approaches him with either flattery, threats, or persecutions, conquering all this by faith (1 John 5:4). He is on guard against his flesh, indwelling corruption, and the sin which so easily besets him. The apostle exhorts him to do so: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

Believers Exhorted to Be Watchful

Therefore, Christians, stir up your desire to be watchful and make work of it with the courage of a man. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

(1) We are by nature very drowsy. Our spiritual life is feeble, weak, has but little vigor, and indwelling corruption will very readily befuddle our understanding. We shall therefore very readily slumber as the bride did: "I sleep, but my heart waketh" (Song of Solomon 5:2). Such was also the experience of the wise virgins: "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (Matthew 25:5).

(2) The enemies are wakeful and are tireless in the execution of their assaults. They never miss an opportunity to rob us of an advantage; and if we are not watchful, they will have the advantage.

(3) How scandalous it is if we are assaulted by the enemy due to our lethargy! If we are wounded while wielding the sword, those wounds will soon heal. If, however, we allow ourselves to be conquered due to lethargy, we must come into the presence of the Lord with shame, for we are then without excuse.

(4) The wounds inflicted by the enemy are very grievous; his arrows are poisonous and burrow in deeply. If the balm of Gilead, administered by the Great Physician, did not heal those wounds, they would be the cause of death. They would rob you of your precious treasure -- spiritual life -- and of all your valuable, spiritual ornaments. "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15).

(5) When we are watchful, however, we need not fear the enemy. How much more honor and praise will then be enjoyed in the presence of the Lord Jesus, who will crown the conqueror with glory! "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life" (Revelation 2:7); "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Revelation 2:11); "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne" (Revelation 3:21). Therefore, watch!

Guidance unto Watchfulness

If you therefore are desirous of being spiritually watchful, then use those means you also use to remain physically alert.

(1) He who excessively partakes of food and drink cannot be alert. Therefore, he who wishes to be alert will be moderate and sober. Such is also true here: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye therefore, and pray always" (Luke 21:34; Luke 21:36).

(2) He who wishes to be watchful seeks the company of those who are watchful with him. We must do likewise in the spiritual realm: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

(3) He who wishes to be watchful will request someone to awaken him if need be. Such is also true here. Since no one but the Lord is able to awaken us and to keep us watchful, we shall thus request of Him in prayer to do so. The Lord will answer this request and arouse us: "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isaiah 50:4).

(4) He who wishes to be watchful will set his alarm clock, which will arouse him at the appropriate time. This "alarm clock" is the fear of God. "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life" (Proverbs 14:27).

(5) He who wishes to be watchful will not easily and lazily lie down; rather, he will keep himself occupied. Such is also true here, for if we keep ourselves occupied with the reading of God's Word, prayer, singing, and engagement in the Lord's work with delight, then, even if we have but little strength, we shall be spiritually watchful. "Watch therefore: blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:42; Matthew 24:46).

Physical Watchfulness

Physical watchfulness consists in depriving one's self of sleep at a time which is designated for sleep. As God has ordained that man's life be preserved by means of food and drink, so also by way of sleep -- which is the refreshing dew of nature and, so to speak, moistens the brain, thereby refreshing it. If we spend too much time sleeping, we shall feed our vices, weaken our body, and it will be the cause of numerous ills and sicknesses. If we sleep too little, the body will become weak and we shall be unfit for work. Thus both -- too much or too little sleep -- will cause the mind to be dull and lethargic. The metabolism of the body is not the same in all men; the one needs more sleep than the other. Thus, one who performs heavy labor needs more sleep than one who leads a quiet and sedentary life. Every godly person ought to know himself in this respect, so that he will not harm his body either way and thus would commit sin. Wakefulness can sometimes be the result of illness, mental torment, anxiety, or an intense desire to commit such sins as gambling or

dancing, or the mental reflection upon things which one would indeed desire, and about which one builds castles in the sky. Sometimes we need to be wakeful, either because we are compelled to this by our calling, or because we are determined to complete a set amount of work -- doing this in our calling either manually or by way of study. We are not discussing such watchfulness here, but rather a watchfulness of a religious nature.

Physical Watchfulness for Religious Reasons To be watchful for religious reasons is a special religious exercise in which we deprive ourselves of sleep for the entire night or a portion of it. Such time is then used entirely for the purpose of engaging ourselves in prayer, reading, and meditation -- in order to crucify the flesh with its lusts and to grow spiritually.

All that we have said in our exposition of fasting is also applicable to our explanation concerning watchfulness. The one is a deprivation of food and the other of sleep. It is a religious exercise, for the objective is to seek God in this manner. The time is not spent in being quiet and inactive, but it consists of spiritual activity. It is a special exercise and thus we must not engage in it too often, nor make it a daily activity, for this would be injurious to the body, which soon would become unfit for anything.

It consists, first of all, in a depriving one's self of sleep. The time involved -- that is, when, how long, whether it is the entire night or some time during the night -- is entirely a matter of personal choice. It can be at the beginning of the night, in the morning, or in between these, one arising out of sleep and lying down again some time later. We shall then deprive ourselves of sleep; and if we become sleepy, we must fight against it -- doing so either with physical means such as getting up and walking around or by putting something tart or bitter in one's mouth; as well as by the use of spiritual means: prayer, crying for the Spirit, and mourning over our listlessness. This is not to suggest that the deprivation of sleep itself is religious in nature, but it merely belongs to the mode of this religious exercise. Watchfulness must be accompanied by spiritual exercises.

Secondly, it consists in a seeking after God by means of prayer, reading, meditation, or reflection. We are then not only watchful because we have the time for it, but rather that we might seek the countenance of God with a tender heart -- a tenderness engendered by watchfulness and spiritual wrestling. It is a watchful praying and a prayerful watchfulness; they mutually stimulate each other. This is not an obligation which devolves upon all men, for there can be physical unfitness, or it can be that due to either hard work during the day or their present circumstances, they are in need of strength. They who are either single, have a godly family, or have a godly partner can do this more readily. Others, however, would cause trouble by this, and would stir up more that is not edifying in their homes than that which would edify them during this time. Such can occasionally engage in this while remaining in bed. They are then wakeful in all quietness without anyone noticing that they quietly send up their secret prayers Godward. As much as possible our watchfulness is to be such that no one is aware of it. By way of prayerful watchfulness and watchful prayer, the body (which yields much opportunity for sin and stimulates us toward sin) is subdued and rendered more useful.

Watchfulness Commanded and Exemplified

(1) The Lord Jesus enjoins His disciples to be watchful in this manner: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41).

(2) The Lord Jesus has left us an example in this: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35); "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12).

(3) Such has been the practice of the saints. Jacob remained alone the entire night in order to pray (Genesis 32:24; Hosea 12:5). David testified of himself: "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments" (Psalms 119:62); "In the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life" (Psalms 42:8); "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried. ... Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Thy word" (Psalms 119:147-148). Asaph did likewise: "My sore ran in the night, and ceased not" (Psalms 77:2). The bride sought upon her bed at night, and arose during the night to seek out her precious Jesus (Song of Solomon 3:1-2; Song of Solomon 5:5). The Christians of the church of the first century endeavored to do likewise. Gradually, however, this changed into a superstition, just as popery still has its superstitious vigils, to which they attribute great holiness, and deem them to be very meritorious. It was also much more common during the initial time of the Reformation. If you wish to read a more comprehensive description of this, you ought to read *De Trappen des Geestelijken Levens* (The Steps of Spiritual Life) by my deceased father, Theodore à Brakel. From all this we observe what earnestness and zeal these holy men had; if we only had more zeal, we would emulate them more. However, alas! this earnestness and zeal is lacking in these days which are void of zeal, and therefore, why am I even speaking here of specific days of fasting and night-watches? However, the Lord can yet let this be a means so that it will not be entirely forgotten. May someone yet be stirred up by this -- or at least be convinced of his lack of zeal, being even too hasty in his morning and evening exercises. May he be convinced how far removed he is from a frame which would stir him to arise in the night or that would move him to set apart a portion of the beginning or end of the night to be watchful for the purpose of engaging in prayer.

082. Chapter 77: Solitude

----- CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN -----

Solitude

Solitude is a separation from all men for a period of time in order to be enabled to express one's self more earnestly and freely as one engages himself in seeking after God. We designate this as a separation from all fellowship with men, in order to distinguish it from that type of solitude of a few of the godly, who at times seek this out in order to communicate with more freedom. Sometimes they choose places of solitude other than those they normally frequent, in order to occupy themselves either with fasting and prayer or with thanksgiving.

Prayerful Solitude This is a seasonal separation and thus not lifelong as the Papists do in their monasteries, which are nothing more than places of filth, dens of murder, and impure Sodoms. Then there are also the hermits among them who permit themselves to be enclosed within four walls, or who make either the forest or the wilderness their residence. We abhor this manner of life -- even if it were void of all superstition and pollution. For, first of all, it is contrary to God's command who has created man as a social creature, saying, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Secondly, it is God's will that we let our light shine before men in order that they may see our good works and may glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:16); and that we would use our gifts to the advantage, conversion, and edification of other men. We have received our talents to that end, along with the command: "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). Thirdly, continual solitude prevents us from becoming acquainted with our corrupt heart, being humbled by this, and striving for its sanctification, there being no opportunity whereby this corruption would manifest itself. If the heart were good, and if sin would only be the result of circumstances external to the heart, one would be permitted to seek solitude. However, the residual corruption of the heart will be no less sinful in nature when there is no occasion to manifest this sinfulness. We cannot improve the inherent sinfulness of the heart. We learn this gradually as we stumble along. Since we cannot stir up others by our example and our words while in solitude, likewise we can neither be stirred up by the example and words of others, nor will we be able to exercise the communion of saints which we confess. Continual solitude will sooner render us a beast or a devil rather than an angel. "Two are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). Solitude must be but for a season -- be it a few hours or a few days.

Seasonal separation occurs in order that we might engage ourselves more earnestly and freely in those exercises whereby we seek after God. To seek solitude in order to be lazy or idle is the work of beasts; to do so in order to commit sin -- either alone or with someone else -- is an abomination. If, however, our objective is holy, we must also be occupied with holy things, that is, with prayer, reading, meditation, singing, and humble communion with God. "Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom" (Proverbs 18:1). It is immaterial where we seek such solitude. We can either take a walk, sit down in a deserted field, be

somewhere on the farm, or go into the garden. The Heart Must Strive for Solitude

We must always strive for a disposition of heart that is inclined toward solitude while surrounded by the turmoil of the world and as we interact with people. This means that we are to be loose and divorced from all that is of this world, such as the honor, love, riches, lusts, and pleasures of men. Furthermore, it means to be free from all creatures so that they will neither have dominion over us, conquer our hearts, confuse, nor trouble us. Rather, we are to make use of everything, to the extent that this may be subservient on our journey to eternity, as if we were lord and master, doing so similar to a stranger who is but travelling through. If a cross or tribulation comes our way, we are not to look for creature comfort or help, but in solitude look unto God: "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top" (Psalms 102:7); "Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog" (Psalms 22:20); "Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling [Note: The Statenvertaling uses the word "eenzame," that is, "lonely one."] from the lions" (Psalms 35:17). To this continual solitude also belongs a life with God. To be loose from the creature and to be united to God must go hand in hand. It is thus that Enoch (Genesis 5:22), Noah (Genesis 6:9), and David walked with God: "I have set the Lord always before me" (Psalms 16:8). Such was also true for Asaph: "But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:28). We are to be in such a solitary disposition when interacting with men; however, we are also to separate ourselves from men at our normal devotional time.

Special Times of Solitude

However, in addition to this habitual disposition of solitude and separation at the normal devotional time, it is an exceptional means for the increase in godliness if we occasionally designate a special time in which we fully separate ourselves from the company of men. This can be for some hours or some days. Everyone must proceed here, however, in a manner consistent with his physical or spiritual condition. The occupation of some will not permit this. If such persons were to take as much time for this as they would perhaps desire -- and which others are able to do -- they would do harm (perhaps ruin) to themselves and their families, and let their children run loose without supervision. Godliness would be slandered thereby. The Lord is not bound to the means, and if someone with a tender conscience cannot make use of this extraordinary means, the Lord frequently grants him increased manifestations of Himself -- more than he would have received in the other way. The spiritual condition of some is such that they should not engage in long seasons of solitude. Either they are still babes in grace who are not able to spend their time well; or they are subject to extraordinary trials and assaults which are frequently increased by seasons of solitude. Thus, their solitude would be spoiled. Those who are thus assaulted, we counsel as children not to neglect entirely the extraordinary exercise of prayerful solitude. Rather, they should use a shorter period of time (without straining themselves to do something great and extraordinary or to be stirred within in an extraordinary manner), quietly turn to God, and with an expectant frame seek to be alone for some time. If the Lord meets them there, they must yield to the resultant motions; if these motions readily subside, then, by renewal, they are to be expectant. The Lord will occasionally revisit them. If they notice that their thoughts wander toward sinful and vain things, or if the trials become too intense and overcome them, it is best to return homeward; the exercise will not be without fruit. The Lord, who will not be sought in vain, will as yet cause them to rejoice over the fact that they were desirous to seek the Lord, and there will be some measure of increase in their godly disposition. Those who do have more time and opportunity, however, also ought to take

more time for this. And even if at times all does not go well and they must return homeward wounded and defeated, they must resume this as soon as possible. The Lord takes note of our intention, and this is time and again pleasing to Him.

Exhortation to be in Solitude

Therefore, children of God, seek the face of your Father in secret. Take some time occasionally and seek out lonely places in order that there you might wrestle, pray, weep, call for, and wait upon the comforts of the Lord, for:

First, such was the practice of the Lord Jesus, and He has left us an example so that we would walk in His footsteps. At one time He would go to a solitary place (Mark 1:35); at another time He would ascend a mountain all by Himself (Matthew 14:23); and at other times He would use the Garden of Gethsemane as His normal place of prayer (Luke 22:39). This has also been the practice of the following saints: Abraham (Genesis 15:1-21), Isaac (Genesis 24:63), and Jacob (Genesis 32:1-32). Many of the godly have prospered exceptionally in doing so. Therefore, you ought to emulate them and do likewise. If you are singularly desirous, motivated by love, to follow Jesus in this, be assured that He will meet you in love and sweeten your efforts.

Secondly, it is time and again needful for us to recover from the ill disposition we acquire in the midst of the turmoil of the world. Worldly turmoil is very capable of disturbing intimate fellowship with God and of causing us to be estranged from Him. Here the eye sees something, and there the ear hears something, by which our lusts are stirred up, causing us to be drawn away to give attention to these matters. And thus our lusts are ignited, and those ignited lusts frequently engender sinful deeds which harm and defile the soul. The creature has an inherent ability to enchant us -- and thus imperceptibly steal our hearts. We frequently do not notice this until we have lost our heart. Everywhere there are snares and opportunities to either lust after honor, be envious, say vain words, lust after riches, boast, or have impure inner motions. Is it therefore not most needful to make a special effort to lift up our heads out of all our failures, seeking restoration of this sweet freedom and to be loose from all creatures? Solitude is a special means to that end, for in this way we may frequently meet God, and will return to our calling with a strengthened heart.

Thirdly, while engaged in our daily routine, we are frequently closed up within. The heart is hard, the eyes refuse to produce tears, and we become listless and dull. If, however, we then seek a place of solitude other than our ordinary, the heart will frequently be enlarged. It becomes tender, and we can vent our complaints in a more intimate manner. Spiritual desires relative to a variety of matters multiply, and we shall begin to supplicate and weep. We can then persevere and pray that it may touch the heart. Even if there are times when we have had not much else than the privilege and ability to pray, we shall nevertheless go homeward with a quiet joy and we shall frequently think of those extraordinary places; they will be to us a Jacob's Bethel.

Fourthly, the Lord is so good that He will meet His children in a special manner when they are in secret -- even though it can be at times that all is turned upside down within while they are in secret, that they are overcome with heavy darkness, that the Lord hides His countenance for some time, and they become unbelieving, dull, and entirely empty within. The Lord will yet secretly sustain and cause them to wrestle on. Upon that wrestling the Lord will meet them occasionally in

a special manner. He will then manifest Himself with such clarity that this light will be too glorious and strong for them; or He will manifest Himself with such intimacy and love that they will be, so to speak, filled to overflowing. Then again He will grant such assurance of His grace and of their eternal salvation that it will suffice them. He will lead them into the inner chamber and reveal to them His eternal purpose and love for them; the covenant of redemption established between the Father and Christ on their behalf; His wondrous incarnation; the bitterness of the suffering and death of Jesus; the necessity and efficacy of His perfect atonement on their behalf; Christ's resurrection for their justification; His glorious ascension; and His sitting at the right hand of the Father as their Advocate. This, and all that is implied therein, as well as the perfections of God which are revealed, they see in an entirely different light, and it has a different effect upon their heart than has ever been the case previously. He thus leads them into the banqueting house and His banner over them is love, and it is thus that they are satiated with love. When Jacob laid himself down in a lonely place, the Lord revealed Himself to him, so that he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place ... this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:16-17). When he wrestled in solitude on the other side of the river Jabbok, the Lord blessed him and gave him the name "Israel." This had such an effect upon his heart that he said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Genesis 32:30). When Moses was alone in the wilderness, the Lord appeared to him in the burning bush and granted him that grace to be sent forth to deliver the people of God from Egypt. When Peter was praying upon the rooftop, he fell into a trance and the Lord revealed the calling of the Gentiles unto him. Therefore, if you desire singular revelations and singular comforts, seek solitary places. You will then experience that God is good to those who seek Him, and you will perceive that you will then return homeward with a radiant soul.

Final Guidelines for Solitude

If, however, you have determined both time and place for this practice and you proceed in this, then see to the following:

- (1) Neither demand nor expect too much from your efforts, nor have any expectations from yourself. Rather, come there humbly, empty, unfit, and longing that the Holy Spirit might teach you how to pray.
- (2) Be not occupied with other thoughts which pertain to your calling or something else. Rather, during that time conduct yourself as if you were alone with God in the world, casting away and resisting all that comes to mind.
- (3) Be especially on guard against your bosom sin, for this would very much defile your solitude and prevent you from receiving a blessing.
- (4) Continually occupy yourself with prayer, thanksgiving, waiting, reading, and singing -- even if you do so without feeling and cannot get your heart involved in it. The Lord will be pleased with your efforts and will grant you a blessing.

Take heed that you keep your secret place holy, Or else it will not be safe there. When do you keep your secret place holy? When you have intimate fellowship with God. [Note: This is the translation of the Dutch poem:

Ziet toe, houdt u eenzaam heilig.

Anders is het daar niet veilig.

Wanneer houdt men heilig 't eenzaam?

Als men is met God gemeenzaam.]

083. Chapter 78: Spiritual Meditation

----- CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT ----- Spiritual Meditation In addition to solitude, we wish to consider the practice of holy meditation or spiritual reflection. This is a spiritual exercise in which a godly person -- having a heart which is separated from the earth and lifted up toward heaven -- reflects upon and engages his thoughts toward God and divine things with which he was already previously acquainted. He does so in order to be led further into divine mysteries, to be kindled with love, to be comforted, and to be stirred up to lively exercises.

Spiritual Meditation: A Religious Exercise

Spiritual meditation is a religious exercise. It neither consists in idleness, nor is it a passive disposition in which we are but recipients, permitting ourselves to be illuminated about the divine perfections and divine mysteries -- just as a mirror is irradiated by the sun. Instead, it is an activity in which the soul is occupied in reflecting upon and reasoning about these matters, approving of them, delighting in them, is astonished about them and quickened by them.

Occasionally the Lord will manifest Himself to a person without the individual having prepared himself for this. The soul, perceiving this manifestation, will then allow herself to be led into this quietly, will follow gently, and will be active with it. At other times we may resolve to occupy ourselves with meditation, and will either go for a walk or seek another place of solitude to engage ourselves as such. Some are still small in grace, and since they do not know much as yet, there is also not much for them to meditate upon. Others would be able to meditate more, but they close the door at the very outset, being desirous to have at the beginning that which comes last. At the very outset they wish to have clear light, sensibility, enjoyment, and sweetness; even though these are matters in which meditation culminates, and are the very purpose for which one engages in meditation. Those who have wisdom in this area, however, will bring to mind the perfections of God, His operations in the realm of nature and of grace, as well as His dealings with them. They do this as if they were reading it in a book and permit themselves to be influenced thereby. They reason about these matters in a holy conversation with God. At one moment they give thanks, then they pray, and then again they rejoice. Then they will ask, anticipating an answer, and then again they will strengthen their faith thereby. It is thus that they occupy themselves and intensely involve themselves in doing so. If one thing escapes their attention, they will begin to reflect upon something else. If they have occupied themselves with matters too high for them, darkness coming upon them as a result, they will descend from this level and begin to reflect upon their previous experiences and the way in which God has led them.

It is a requisite for meditation that the heart be separated from all things and be lifted up on high. It does not merely suffice to have selected a place of solitude for the regular practice of meditation, but the soul itself must be disposed toward being in solitude; that is, she must be separated from all that is upon earth and be lifted up toward invisible things -- as if she were alone with God in this world. During that time we must lay aside all cares, desires, and earthly engagements and turn heavenward toward God. This does not mean that we shall immediately be in such an elevated

frame, but we shall be striving for this. There will be ejaculatory sighs with varying intensity for the manifestation of light and grace. While thus striving to attain to a fit frame for this, we shall begin to think and meditate. The soul being empty, seeks to be filled with substance whereby, while meditating, she may be nourished. She offers herself, opens herself, yearns, anticipates, and is active.

The Person Who Meditates The one who meditates must be a godly person. As the heart is, so will be the thoughts. An unconverted person -- a natural person -- will also have reflections, but these are consistent with his nature. "He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things" (Proverbs 16:30); "An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations" (Proverbs 6:18). He reflects upon his previous ungodly deeds in which he finds renewed delight. Reflecting upon how his neighbor has wronged him, he becomes by renewal wrathful and bitter. He neither knows God nor His gracious operations. He also has no desire for them, and therefore he neither can nor is willing to reflect upon them. His best mental activity consists in being occupied in the acquiring of knowledge of the Word; however, his objective in doing so is not sound, for it is his objective to be esteemed as a wise man, to be knowledgeable like others, and to be able to converse well. We dealt with such natural meditation in chapter 43.

Instead, spiritual meditation is the activity of a godly person who has spiritual light and life -- the one less and the other more. He knows God and has a desire after God; this is the reason why his heart is repeatedly drawn to God. It was so sweet and delightful to him to have seen and tasted something of God that he could not forget it. Time and again it comes to mind and he desires to experience this again in a greater measure. Such meditation gives this experience a new sense of sweetness and stirs up his desires.

The Object of Meditation The object of such meditation is divine matters of which he has prior acquaintance. There is, furthermore, an inquisitive thinking about and meditation upon those matters with which one is not yet acquainted but, nevertheless, desires to be acquainted with. However, the meditation in question here is a practical reflection upon matters with which we are acquainted and concerning which we wish to be inwardly moved again by way of meditation. He who is desirous to engage in spiritual meditation will sometimes pursue what comes to mind, and thus follow the Spirit indiscriminately from one subject to the next. If he wishes to be selective and to focus upon one subject, it will be without effect and there will be no progress. We therefore must merely follow and yield to those inner motions which flow forth out of such meditation -- prayer, thanksgiving, love -- and to follow up what we have resolved to do. At times the heart is empty and does not yield any food for thought; this could result in wandering thoughts. Then we are to select subject matter for meditation, and it is advisable initially to select an easy subject matter, such as the way in which the Lord has led us since childhood; that is, the parents from whom we were born, what transpired in our families, how we were raised, how we conducted ourselves, where we attended school or labored and what has transpired there, the sins committed in our youth, how things progressed after that, and how we conducted ourselves during our teenage years. One could also meditate upon the prosperity and adversity we have encountered, the ways in which the Lord has led us unto the means of salvation, what initially moved us to repent, and how -- by way of falling and rising -- this came to pass. If we thus proceed from season to season, from experience to experience, from location to location, and from encounter to encounter, it will time and again stir special motions within us. While thus meditating, however, our heart must remain focused upon the Lord, and we must reflect upon each matter by relating it to the hand of God. In our scheduled devotional times we can also consider the work of redemption, beginning with eternal election, proceeding to the fall, from there

to the promise of the Surety and Mediator and forward to the coming of Christ in the flesh -- His life and deeds, and His suffering and death. In doing so we must focus upon each aspect to see whether it stirs up a motion within us. Hastiness in meditation will rob us of its fruitfulness. We can also consider the work of creation: its preservation and government, how all things are executed with precision by way of divine providence, and how each matter relates to one or more of God's attributes as they reveal themselves in His works.

Spiritual Meditation: A Work of God's Spirit

Spiritual meditation is a work of God's Spirit. The believer in and of himself is not capable of this. In addition to being known from personal experience, Scripture also teaches this: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5). God initially grants life to the soul, and He quickens that life time and again whereby she desires and seeks for food. He causes matters to come to our mind and governs our thoughts to meditate upon them in a spiritual manner. When a man once possesses spiritual life, this life cannot be idle; it will be active by way of meditation. Since this life originates in heaven, it will also gravitate toward heaven. If it were not repressed by natural corruption, this life would always, without impediment, be exercised in holy meditation. Since spiritual life is repressed, however, it wrestles with this corruption and will break forth unto holy meditation. "My heart is inditing a good matter" (Psalms 45:1). To that end it is time and again needful that there be the influence of the Holy Spirit whereby He lifts up and maintains life. Such is the manner in which the regenerate man meditates; however, he is moved to that end by the Spirit of God. The Objective of Meditation: Growth in Grace The all-encompassing goal and objective of meditation is the building up and growth of spiritual life. More particularly, it will be our objective:

- (1) to acquaint ourselves with God and to have communion with Him, since that constitutes the felicity of the soul;
- (2) to rejoice and delight ourselves in God -- in the beholding of whose countenance there is fullness of joy;
- (3) to be kindled with love toward God, to believe in and sense God's love, and by renewal to be sweetly moved in love toward God;
- (4) to be comforted when we are downcast, for by meditation upon former days and the works and perfections of God, the soul will generally find comfort and refreshment;
- (5) to be quickened in sanctification, for by way of such spiritual meditation and reflection, as well as a communing with God in solitude, the soul will acquire a good habitual disposition. She has experienced how good it is to be near unto God and she knows that sin will rob her of this. She has understood something of God's holiness and that He is worthy to be obeyed and she has increased in her love toward God. Thus, meditation renders her more zealous to walk in the way of the Lord's commandments.

These are indeed the matters we shall be striving for, and the Lord will at times also manifest Himself upon such meditation -- however, not always. It frequently happens that meditation is very lifeless, and that one neither finds delight nor sweetness in it so that he needs to desist. Such can occasionally be God's wise and sovereign dispensation. At times this can be the result of

meditation not being a habitual practice, as well as a lack of experience in this heavenly art. At other times it can be caused by our listlessness toward this work, and the fact that the soul is illdisposed toward this work. We must therefore not neglect this work, however, but resume it at another time. And if our occupation with this cannot be lengthy, we need to make it shorter -- and we shall indeed experience that it is not in vain.

Believers Exhorted

Therefore, you who are lovers of God and of holiness, learn this secret art which is practiced but little, for: First, God commands it; and since you are both obligated and willing to be obedient unto God in other matters, such must also be the case toward this duty. Consider the following injunctions: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8); "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness" (Deuteronomy 8:2).

Secondly, meditate upon the examples of the saints and let them be examples for you. There is the blessed virgin Mary: "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). There is David: "When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches" (Psalms 63:6); "O Lord, consider my meditation" (Psalms 5:1); "Let ... the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight" (Psalms 19:14). And consider Asaph: "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search" (Psalms 77:5-6).

Thirdly, it is the very nature of God's children to be desirous for this. Your heart is inclined toward this and you deem those happy who are thus engaged. Why then do you oppose the new man? Beloved, yield to your new nature. Consider in this respect Psalms 1:2 : "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

Fourthly, the very essence of sweetness is to be found herein, and it is profitable work. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord" (Psalms 104:34); "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee" (Psalms 139:17-18). How much profit there is to be found in this! It consists in having fellowship with God, to enjoy His intimate affection, to receive a foretaste of heaven, to be changed into His image, to be adorned with the luster of His glory, and to enjoy all that your soul finds delight in. What more could you wish upon earth? Therefore, engage yourself in this exercise and become accustomed to it. Even if it is a difficult and arduous task at first, it will subsequently become more delightful, and the Lord will not permit you to seek Him in vain.

I do not wish to prescribe rules to you. Begin with it and you will experience yourself which way is best for you. Only make sure that you separate yourself fully, doing so with the intention and the desire to think of nothing else during that time. Let your heart go out in prayer for the reception of the Spirit, for quickening grace, as well as for guidance. If you perceive that you cannot make a beginning with this, then read a portion in the Word of God or sing a psalm.

084. Chapter 79: Singing

----- CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE -----

Singing

Singing is a religious exercise by which, with the appropriate modulation of the voice, we worship, thank, and praise God.

It is a religious exercise, for we make use of the skill and sweetness of our voice to move others to have dealings with God. God has given man a voice to make his thoughts known to others. He has given man the ability to modulate his voice to either a high or a low pitch, or to speak slowly or rapidly, thereby enabling him to render his voice sweet and pleasant. It is also God's will that we shall use our voice in prayer, thanksgiving, and our speaking to Him: "Let Me hear thy voice" (Song of Solomon 2:14). Since the modulation of our voices at a suitable rhythm is capable of unlocking our hearts and stirring our emotions, God thus also wills that we shall lift up our hearts to Him in singing: "... singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). However, our voice and the melody in and of themselves are not pleasing to God; rather, it is the motion of the heart relative to the spiritual matters which we express before the Lord in singing which pleases Him. Both the voice and the melody are means to bring us into a spiritual frame and to lift up our hearts heavenward -- as well as the hearts of those who hear us. The Proper Use of the Voice To singing belongs the appropriate modulation of the voice. One can sing in an unskilled manner when, for instance, we have an inclination to sing while being alone in order to give expression to those matters about which we are reading (and are recorded in non-poetic form), or those which issue forth from a godly heart. This is done while modulating the voice between a high and a low pitch and by singing either slowly or rapidly -- not in an artistic manner but according to the motions of the heart. A very godly farmer, whom I knew very well, used to say, "When I am alone in my field, I can sing all psalms, even though I do not know their tunes." Many of the godly will be able to confirm this from their own experience. The Lord has given some people the ability to create artistic pieces of music which express the affections of the heart in a marvelous manner and wondrously stir up the emotions. As the builders of Noah's ark received no advantage from the structure they built, it entirely being intended for Noah and his family, such is frequently also the case here. Many musicians greatly exert themselves; however, it is to the advantage of the godly. The entire world and all that is contained in it are theirs. This is also true for all forms of art; they may freely make use of them. The manner in which someone is moved by music will be consistent with the nature of his heart. A natural man will but be moved in a natural sense, whereas the melody will move the spiritual heart in a spiritual sense. The Various Types of Songs

Some musical compositions are of a stately and dignified nature, by which the heart is inclined toward solemnity and reverence. Such is true for the tunes of the psalms of David which are sung in the church. Some are of a melancholy nature by which we are moved to be sorrowful -- yes, even to weeping. Others are of a jubilant nature whereby the heart is lifted up to jubilate; such is the singing of the psalms in the Scottish churches. Again, others are of a very rhythmic nature,

whereby the heart is stirred up to skip and leap for joy -- as Hannah said in her heart: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:1). Other compositions are very stern in nature, whereby the heart is ignited to anger and, so to speak, demands vengeance. If, however, the heart is spiritual, this spiritual heart, by way of various tunes, will become aware of spiritual motions consistent with these tunes, and by such inner motions will be drawn to God -- be it prayerfully, jubilantly, joyously, or while giving thanks and praising Him. Thus, the spiritual man does not merely relate to the melody; rather, the melody is complementary to the spiritual matters, and spiritual matters complement the melody -- in both cases the heart is involved. Thus, it can be that the heart, being in such a frame, will either yield both subject matter and melody, or the subject matter and melody will move the heart in such a manner. The more pleasant the voices or instruments are which sing or play these melodies, the more the heart is moved. When Jehoshaphat and two kings showed Elisha the peril in which their armies were, due to lack of water, he said, "But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him" (2 Kings 3:15). By way of the playing of this instrument his spirit was quickened, and having been brought into a fitting frame, he received the revelation that they would receive water.

Singing Practiced from the Beginning of Time

Creatures have engaged in singing from the very beginning of creation. The angels, having been created upon the first day and being a witness to creation the following five days, glorified God concerning this in singing: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). Not all that transpired prior to the time of Moses has been recorded, but it is credible that the godly, from the time of Adam, have delighted themselves in singing. Job, who is considered to have lived during Abraham's time, makes mention of singing in his book: "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night" (Job 35:10). After the children of Israel had left Egypt and had gone through the sea on dry ground, they praised the Lord in song: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord" (Exodus 15:1). The ninetieth psalm has the following title: A prayer of Moses. Moses, his death being imminent, gave the children of Israel a song which had been dictated to him by the Lord (Deuteronomy 31:16-30). After Sisera had been defeated, Deborah sang a song (Judges 5:1).

David was the sweet psalmist (2 Samuel 23:1). To sing unto the Lord with instruments, and to lift up voice and heart to God, was his daily work. In His goodness the Lord has given us David's psalms in His Word. We have the substance of them, but both the Hebrew art of poetry and the melodies are mostly concealed from us. I maintain that all the music which is now to be found in the world is not comparable to David's music. I believe that the melody was then composed in harmony with the motions of the heart, giving expression to this in a most appropriate manner. Since the melody proceeded from a spiritual frame of heart, it was wondrously capable of stirring these emotions in others as well. The melody of a psalm could thus not be used for any other song, since that melody was only applicable to that inner motion and that given word. The combination of musical tones, inner motions, and words was such that it would cause all who heard it to be in ecstasy. Our music does not have such an effect. We sing the melody irrespective of whether it is consistent with both the inner motions of the heart and the words. Since the art of poetry and song primarily consisted in this at that time, it is simply not practical to seek to discover David's poetic artform -- much less the melodies he composed. Nevertheless, there are some elements here and there which are also to be found in Greek, Latin, and Dutch poetry.

Scripture Enjoins Us to Sing

David did not merely sing by himself, but continually exhorts everyone to sing. For that purpose he also submitted his psalms to be sung in the temple by the appointed chief singers. The textual references to this are so numerous that there is no need to point them out. After David's time we also find psalms among the prophets, along with many exhortations to sing. We find such exhortations also among those prophecies which declare that in the days of the New Testament men would praise the Lord with singing. "Sing unto the Lord; for He hath done excellent things" (Isaiah 12:5); "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine" (Isaiah 27:2); "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth" (Psalms 96:1). Not only are we exhorted in the Old Testament to sing, but this is true for the New Testament as well. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5:19); "... teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Colossians 3:16); "Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (James 5:13); "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15); "And they sung a new song" (Revelation 5:9).

Other Spiritual Songs in Addition to the Psalms A number of godly men have composed spiritual songs for this purpose with a variety of melodies. It appears that Luther has been the first one to do so during the Reformation. His songs are still sung today with edification by the Lutherans in their churches, as well as privately by us. In our days the unforgettable Justus Van Lodesteyn has composed a songbook which is second to none as far as spirituality is concerned. Cl. Marot has put the first fifty of David's psalms to rhyme in the French language, and Theodore Beza the other one hundred. Subsequent to this, Claud. Gaudemeliu, a famous musician in Paris (who perished as a martyr in the massacre of Paris), composed the melodies, which could not have been improved upon in the judgment of musicians. Petrus Dathenus has translated them in poetic form from the French, preserving the identical tunes. It would be desirable if an artistic and godly poet were to take upon himself the task to improve them by putting them to poetry in an identical fashion, and in better harmony with the original text, so that they could be accepted for public use in the churches [Note: This occurred in the year AD 1773.] . The decision of the Dutch Synods has been very correct indeed, namely, that none other but the Psalms of David are to be used in the churches. The General Lack of Singing Lamented

It amazes me that the godly in the Netherlands have so little desire to sing, and also engage in this very infrequently. It is true that singing little is consistent with the lackadaisicalness of our nation (compared to other nations). Nevertheless, worldly people sing quite a bit, but they sing vain songs which stir up the heart toward vanity and immorality. The godly are, however, generally silent in these parts. The one says, "I am too busy"; the other, "I have no voice"; the third, "I do not know any of the melodies"; the fourth, "I do not dare for fear the neighbors would hear me and deem me to be a hypocrite." All of this is, however, not truly the problem, but it is a lack of desire. If the heart were more spiritual and joyous, we would more readily praise the Lord with joyful song and thereby stir up ourselves and others. I am here not only speaking of singing in church. (Even there many do not sing; and for some the very best they can do is read the psalm silently.) Exhortation to Sing

It is thus needful that I stir up everyone to sing -- not only psalms, but also spiritual songs. Therefore, believers, dispense with this listlessness. "Serve the Lord with gladness: come before

His presence with singing" (Psalms 100:2).

First, you must know that singing is not a neutral matter in which you may or may not engage. Rather, it is God's command. As we have shown you before, God requires this from you and desires to be served by you in this manner. Consider these and similar quotes and impress them upon your heart as being mandatory. Begin to engage in this duty with an obedient heart; break open your mouth and your closed heart will open as well.

Secondly, God has created this ability in the very nature of man. This is to be observed in children of three or four years old. Take note of how they walk around the house while singing at the same time. Observe how even in nature the birds in their own way already praise their Creator early in the morning by way of singing. If you go outside in the morning, or if you have birds in your home, you will hear it. Will the birds and small children rebuke you, and would you, who have the greatest reason in the world to sing joyously, be dumb and silent?

Thirdly, it is the work of angels, for they glorify the Lord in song (cf. Job 38:7; Luke 2:13-14; Revelation 5:11-12), and it is the work of the church upon earth and in heaven: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9); "And they sung as it were a new song before the throne ... and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth" (Revelation 14:3); "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty" (Revelation 15:3). If you have no desire to sing, then what will you do in church and in heaven? Furthermore, if you are desirous to magnify the Lord with an eternal hallelujah, you should presently begin upon earth.

Fourthly, God is particularly pleased when His children praise Him in song. There where the Lord is sweetly praised in song, there He will come with His blessings. "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalms 22:3). It is noteworthy to consider what transpired at the dedication of the temple. "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one ... that then the house was filled with a cloud ... so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God" (2 Chronicles 5:13-14). When Jehoshaphat, together with his army, lifted up their voices in joyous exclamation and song (2 Chronicles 20:22), the Lord defeated their enemies. When Paul and Silas sang praises unto God in the middle of the night, the doors of the prison were opened and the bands of all the prisoners were loosened (Acts 16:25-26). Therefore, if you are desirous to please the Lord, and delight in having the Lord visit your soul and desire to experience His help, then accustom yourself to singing.

Fifthly, singing will move a heart which frequently remains unmoved during prayer. It can be that while singing the tears will drip upon the book. Have you not frequently experienced this? Have not you been stirred up by hearing the singing of others? Others will therefore also be stirred up by your singing. The Papists in France knew this, and therefore they strictly forbade the singing of psalms and meted out cruel punishment for this -- even prior to massacring the church. Therefore, no longer be silent, but lift up your voices -- in spite of the devil and all the enemies of God -- to the honor and glory of your God, as this has done you too much good already (and still does) than that

you would refrain from thanking the Lord with songs of praise. You must furthermore do so in order that you might stir up others to serve the Lord with gladness. It will then become manifest to all natural men that godliness is a joyous rather than a grievous life, and they will become desirous for this as well. And if you sing, sing with understanding, with a fervent desire, conscious of the presence of the Lord (and thus reverently), with a modest demeanor, and with both inner and external attentiveness, so that it may all be becoming before the Lord and to the edification of others who surround us.

085. Chapter 80: Vows

----- CHAPTER EIGHTY -----

Vows A vow is a commitment toward God. It is a voluntary commitment either to perform a good deed or to refrain from something (one having the capacity to do so), either as an expression of gratitude or to promote our spiritual wellbeing. A vow is a commitment. He who previously may have been without obligation in a given matter, is placed under obligation by means of a vow. Man is under obligation to God in all that he possesses and does. This devolves from the fact that He is God and man a creature. Every human being is acquainted with this obligation, but by his actions he violates this obligation. He who enters into the covenant of grace obligates himself (who actually already was under obligation) with approbation, delight, and willingness to be the Lord's eternally and to be governed by the Spirit of God according to His will. He gives his hand to the Lord and frequently reiterates this commitment with all his heart. Observe this in the following passages: "One shall say, I am the Lord's" (Isaiah 44:5); "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant" (Psalms 116:16). This is one and the same thing as reference being made to a swearing unto the Lord that we shall serve Him. "And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; and they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice" (2 Chronicles 15:12; 2 Chronicles 15:14); "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments" (Psalms 119:106). In such swearing they did not have in view a perfect observance of the law, for they knew in advance that they were neither capable of, nor would they in reality do this; thus they could not swear to do so. Rather, their focus was upon the service of God in general; namely, that they would neither forsake the Lord nor depart from the way of obedience, and thus not turn to idolatry. Their focus was, therefore, upon an unfeigned and heartfelt intent to serve the Lord in all things with a willing soul. As such, and from this perspective, we may and must obligate ourselves to God by way of a vow. If such a person sins subsequent to this, it will be contrary to his intention, and it is thus not a breaking of his vow. For he, knowing that it was beyond his power not to sin, did not vow that he would not sin at all. A True Vow: A Commitment Toward God

It is a commitment toward God. This is not only a commitment toward God, but the promise itself is made toward God; that is, whatever one promises to either do or refrain from doing, he will do Godward. Such promises are neither to be made to angels nor deceased saints, for that would be as much an act of idolatry as worshiping them, as the making of a vow is a religious exercise. When we promise to give something to the poor, such a promise is not made to the poor but rather to God; namely, that we shall bestow our gift upon the poor. "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word" (Numbers 30:2).

(1) A vow must pertain to a good matter. Some matters are good in and of themselves; God has commanded them and we are thus under obligation to do them. The believer approves of this obligation, applies this to himself, and frequently repeats it with all his heart. Some matters are, however, inherently neutral. As far as usage is concerned man is free to either avail himself of

them or not -- such as the consumption of wine, tea, or fruit; that is, in cases other than illness or given circumstances which necessitate their use. When a person uses such inherently neutral matters, they are then no longer neutral in nature. Then we must use them in faith, according to precept, and to the honor of God. In the Old Testament, vows related primarily to free will offerings. They could not promise, however, to sacrifice either swine or men, for that was an abomination to the Lord. Having made a vow in regard to a free will offering and upon proceeding with the sacrifice, they had to sacrifice according to the law. Such is also true for us, for when we make a vow, it must pertain to lawful matters.

(2) A vow must relate to a specific matter we are acquainted with as to both its nature and circumstances, and of which we are assured that we may and are able to fulfill. Jephthah sinned in this respect when he made a general vow to the Lord. His general vow was inherently incorrect for it pertained to people who would come out of the door of his house and meet him, since he could not expect that sheep or calves would come to meet him. If he did indeed sacrifice his daughter, who came out to meet him, as a burnt-offering, he did commit an abomination -- he who otherwise defeated the children of Ammon by faith (Hebrews 11:32). Had his faith been but a miraculous faith and he, in reality, was an unconverted man, he could have easily committed such an abominable deed. Since, however, he was in truth a godly man, and his zeal having enticed him to make such a reckless and abominable vow -- if he indeed executed the vow he had made, he would have committed a double evil and sinned dreadfully against the Lord. It then serves as a beacon for us not to make evil, reckless, and unrestricted vows; furthermore, even if we have made them, we are not to perform them. It is not a sin to renege on an evil and reckless vow; rather, it is a virtue if we do not perform it due to the fear of, and in obedience to, God. The sin is in the vow itself. We need to humble ourselves about that, but not about the breaking of that vow; for that we must give thanks. Thus, if someone greatly desires to have a son and prays for a son, promising to give this son back to the Lord by causing him to become a minister, he sins if he made this vow without mentioning any conditions -- such as, evident fitness for this office and willingness to yield himself to this with his entire heart, as well as whether he himself would be able to meet the expenses without shortchanging his family and other children. Furthermore, if such qualifications would not be present and he would nevertheless cause him to be a minister, he would then sin in a double sense. The Making of Vows Objection: One might object and say, "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not" (Psalms 15:4).

Answer (1) This is applicable when the vow does not pertain to an evil matter, or if its execution does not lead us into sin. Even if, however, the performance of the vow were difficult and injurious for us; even if we would wish that we had not made that vow; and even if we would be able to perform it without sinning and without harm to ourselves, our loved ones, or others, then we must nevertheless perform it.

(2) However, according to the original text this passage reads as follows: "He that sweareth to do evil." Thus, the meaning is as follows: The godly person will maintain his tender uprightness to such an extent that, even if he had sworn to do evil, he would nevertheless not do it, and thus not depart from his uprightness; he would then not perform such an evil oath.

(3) It must be a matter which is within the realm of what we are capable of doing. It would be a reckless vow if someone were to promise God that for the rest of his life he would not commit one

more sin; or that, to all eternity, he would not again commit that sin which so easily besets him. Furthermore, he would grievously sin if he were to attach an obligation to punishment to this vow in the event that he were to commit it again. For he would then have made a vow which would be beyond the realm of his ability, not having given heed to his evil heart. He must humble himself about such a vow, and the Lord is so good that He will not cause that judgment to come upon such an upright person which he had invoked upon himself out of great hatred for sin, failing to take his own corruption into account. It would also be a sinful vow -- and it would be sinful if he were to perform it -- if someone were to promise a sum of money to the poor which he either would not be able to produce or, if he were able, would be to the detriment of himself and his children, bringing them outside of the circumstances in which God had placed them. This also pertains to all other things which are beyond the realm of our ability or those that could be beyond our control prior to the time that the vow is to be performed. Thus, we may not make vows of perpetual duration relative to neutral matters, for we do not know what can transpire in the meantime. Consider, for instance, people who presently have the gift of continence. They may not promise to remain unmarried during their entire lifetime, for their disposition could change and other circumstances could surface, making it advisable for them to marry. We must thus be very careful in making vows.

(4) When we do make vows, we must not act as if we were making a business deal with God, such as: "If Thou wilt give me this, then I will give Thee this." Rather, it must be made as an expression of gratitude toward God. "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High" (Psalms 50:14). When we are in need, we are to pray for deliverance. Included with the grounds which we present in our petition should be that we desire to serve the Lord with joy, and to thank and glorify Him upon having delivered us -- and that we would also manifest our gratitude by desisting from, giving, or doing a given thing. The other reason for making vows must be the promotion of our spiritual well-being. There can at times be something of an external nature which one either may or may not do, and we experience that either doing or not doing this causes continually a falling into sin. Thus, the believer prays against this sin, and as he prays, promises God that within a specified period of time, he will either refrain from or perform a given deed (it being within his capacity and control to do so), so that in the intervening period there may be and remain an improvement in his circumstances. Everyone must know for himself what the conditions for such a commitment are. For example, one can promise that during a specified period:

-- One will not drink wine, even though one presently does, and will subsequently continue to, drink wine. It would then not be possible to detect that one had made a vow, nor would it render one suspect of hypocrisy.

-- One will deprive himself of food and eat only once a day. This is then not intended to be a day of fasting, but rather to restrain his nature from being stirred up to lust.

-- One will not use a given external adornment, without which he would nevertheless be adorned in an honest and moderate manner -- doing all this to keep his pride in check. In all such matters, great attention must be given to the circumstances. We must not put snares in our own way by either doing or not doing something which, by way of attending circumstances, would be too noticeable.

(5) If, when considering all the circumstances, we have made a good vow, we must also be very conscientious in performing it. "Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God" (Psalms 76:11); "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee" (Deuteronomy 23:21); "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:5).

David was most conscientious in this as is evident in Psalms 66:13-14 : "I will pay Thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble."

086. Chapter 81: Concerning Experience

----- CHAPTER EIGHTY-ONE ----- Concerning Experience

Experience is a matter only few are acquainted with and is utilized by even less. However, it is of much benefit. The proverb says: "Experience is the best teacher." When we intend to hire someone, we ask, "Does he have experience?" A doctor, captain, or craftsman who has experience will be most in demand. Such is also true in the spiritual realm. Experience engenders the prosperity of the Christian, and thus we also wish to say something concerning this.

Experience is a godly exercise, consisting in a gathering of numerous noteworthy incidents for the purpose of using them to our benefit and that of others.

It is a godly exercise. "A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this," says the psalmist in Psalms 92:6. However, it is one of the activities of the godly who do gather such a treasure. The righteous shall see it, and rejoice, the wise will observe these things, and "they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Psalms 107:42-43). They exercise themselves in this in a godly manner: with a godly heart, with godly intent, and with a godly objective. This exercise consists in a gathering of numerous noteworthy incidents. God not only gives commands and promises to His children. These must be heeded with much attention and an obedient heart, for: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22); "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments" (Psalms 119:6). However, God also manifests Himself by numerous works. He frequently delivers His people and specific individuals in a remarkable manner. He comforts them when they grieve most bitterly, and executes extraordinary judgments upon the oppressors of His people. He preserved Noah in the ark, delivered His people Israel with a mighty hand out of Egypt, and fed them forty years in the wilderness with bread rained down from heaven. He delivered David out of the hand of Saul, Daniel from the lions' den, his companions out of the fiery oven, and Peter out of prison. He destroyed Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, and slew 185,000 men in one night by the hand of an angel in the army which had besieged Jerusalem. Yes, the entire Bible is filled with numerous accounts of deliverances of His people as well as of judgments upon their oppressors. God's children will bring together all such and similar deeds of God. They seek them out, meditate upon them, and analyze them carefully. They imprint them in their memories and, so to speak, establish a mental file. The Objective of Remembering God's Dealings The objective is not to be inquisitive only in order to be knowledgeable and able to talk about them. Rather, their objective is to derive personal benefit from such reflection in order to be comforted and strengthened. The church does so to help and comfort others by recounting God's dealings with the godly when in need; and also to warn others thereby, relating to them God's common dealings with such sinners, and thus to arouse them and bring them to repentance.

First, the Lord wills that His people gather together a treasure of experiences and make use of them at all occasions: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness" (Deuteronomy 8:2); "Remember the days of old, consider the years

of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee” (Deuteronomy 32:7); “Remember His marvellous works that He hath done; His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth” (Psalms 105:5).

Secondly, we know this to have been the practice of the saints who have given examples to be followed by us. David was thus engaged: “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Thy works; I muse on the work of Thy hands” (Psalms 143:5). Asaph did likewise: “I will meditate also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy doings” (Psalms 77:12). “Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19).

Thirdly, we can infer this from the purpose for which God has performed these deeds, has caused them to be recorded, and has decreed that they should be told to others, namely, that the following generation would know them and thus be dissuaded from sinning, be exhorted to godliness, and be strengthened by trusting in God’s help. “I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalms 78:2-7).

If to that end God has done so many great deeds for His people, and has caused these deeds to be recorded for this purpose as well, it is our duty to give heed to them, attentively take note of them, and commit them to our memories, so that we may have them readily at hand when they are applicable to our circumstances. The Sources from Which Experiences May Be Gleaned: Scripture, Church History, and Personal Experience This treasure of various incidents, judgments, deliverances, and divine comforts are gleaned first of all from the Word of God; a great variety of divine deeds has been recorded there. We human beings are but of yesterday, and our experience pertains to but a very small time frame. The goodness of the Lord has provided us, however, with a history of His deeds which originates at the beginning of this world and will continue until its very end. We ought to make a study of all God’s dealings with His people by attentively examining them one by one. We would thus immediately have an example at hand for every event that occurs, and this would be subservient for instruction or encouragement. Many of the Scottish divines exercised themselves in this in an exceptional manner, and have shown a marvelous ability to bring forth a history from the Bible and to apply it.

Secondly, this treasure can also be derived from church history, books about martyrs, and the biographies of the godly by Melchior Adamus in Latin, by Corput in Dutch, and by Koelman, who has added several biographies as an appendix in *The Christian’s Great Interest*. We may observe the good hand of God in the fact that so many incidents have been recorded and have come into our hands. In all our encounters we time and again conduct ourselves as fools; but such recorded incidents immediately yield light, counsel, comfort, and courage. Add to this the experiences of the godly with whom you have fellowship. In the Lord’s providence you may have the privilege of enjoying such company, enabling you to hear how the Lord has dealt with them and what manner of deliverances they have experienced -- so that you would take note of it and derive benefit

yourself from it.

Thirdly, the history of your own life -- if you would but attentively take notice -- would yield you a treasure of experiences. I shall show you the way as to how you may glean many experiences from your own life. Answer for yourself the following questions:

(1) From whom have you descended? Who were your father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, uncles, aunts, and cousins? What is your status in the world -- high or low? In what city, village, or on what street or lane were you born? Were they rich or poor, honorable or despised, ungodly or godly? At what occasion did your ancestors or you come to this country, city, or village?

(2) How were you raised -- in simplicity or luxuriously? What did your parents do to earn a living? Was there peace or discord in your home? What was their religious persuasion? Was God's Word read in your home? Were you instructed in the knowledge of the truth? How did you conduct yourself in your parental home?

(3) What specific events transpired in your parental home? What difficulties, perplexities, fears, and concerns have there been, and what was the ultimate outcome?

(4) Where did you attend school, where were you employed, and what did you encounter there? With whom have you resided? With whom have you kept company? What trade have you plied? What did you encounter there and how did you conduct yourself? What trials and accidents did you have, and what was the ultimate outcome?

(5) How did you live during your childhood, during your teenage years, and in your marriage? To what sins have you cleaved? In what manner did the Lord deliver you from your perplexities, and by what means?

(6) If you are converted, have you been a changed person from your youth? If not, what thoughts did you entertain about your present and future state? By what means were you brought under an efficacious ministry? By what occasion did you come into the company of godly people? How did you come to the knowledge of the truth, and how did you come under conviction? What transactions did you at first have with Christ? What anxious strife and assaults did you endure and in what manner were you delivered from them? What comforts, strengthenings of your faith, and assurances have you enjoyed? What vicissitudes have you experienced? Do you still remember some encounters? Do you still know those places where you were in great distress, were enabled to pray in an extraordinary manner, and where all was made exceptionally well? What bodily discomforts have you encountered? In what manner were you strengthened in them, how did the Lord grant deliverance, and by what means did He do so?

Failure to Reflect upon God's Dealings Rebuked

If you had taken careful note of and remembered all these things, or if as yet you would betake yourself to bring all these to remembrance and record them, how great a collection of experiences you would now have! How useful they would now be to you, and how great would be the benefit you would derive from them!

How have you fared, however? Did you already gather a treasure of experiences? How many of the godly will be ashamed when they perceive that such was their duty, having had a large field

from which they could have gleaned a large supply! Yes; you ought to be ashamed, for:

First, God sharply rebukes you for this. "They soon forgot His works" (Psalms 106:13). This was a sin of the disciples, and this sin has been described: "For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:52).

Secondly, it being a sin, it likewise issues forth from sin, namely:

(1) The sin of inattentiveness. One permits God to work, chastise, and bless, and yet no one gives heed to it. This is the sin of the unconverted: "They regard not the work of the Lord" (Isaiah 5:12); "A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this" (Psalms 92:6).

(2) The sin of unbelief; when evil befalls man, he considers the secondary causes. Even though he does not deny God's hand in it, he does not believingly note it to be such. If God blesses and grants a person his desire, he then acts as if it came about by chance and as if the matter would have come about even if he had not prayed -- and thus he disregards God. "If I had called, and He had answered me (by granting me the matter for which I prayed); yet would I not believe that He had hearkened unto my voice (namely, that God did so upon my prayer)" (Job 9:16).

(3) The sin of forgetfulness; we then carefully take note of the matter as it occurs, but make no use of it, and do not deeply impress it upon our heart. It therefore does not come to mind when it would suit our situation: "Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength" (Isaiah 17:10).

Thirdly, this gives birth to many of your unseasonable spiritual conditions, as well as the fact that you remain in them for such a long time. You are ignorant concerning God's dealings with His children and with yourself, and you thus remain in the dark. This in turn engenders the instability regarding your spiritual state, your excessive inner turbulence, your discouragements, and many other evil frames and sins. How grievous it then is to you that you have stored away so few experiences! How grievous it will be to have kept yourself in such a low and childlike condition for such a long time, considering that you could have been a steadfast, stable, and strong Christian! Oh, how grievous it is to you that you have given so little heed to God's dealings; that you have let Him work, so to speak, in vain, and that you have not manifested any gratitude to Him for this! Humble yourself before the Lord and seek forgiveness.

Believers Exhorted

Therefore, seek to gather a treasure of experiences for yourself from those spacious fields to which we have directed you.

First, this teaches us to discern and acknowledge the dealings of God and to thank and glorify the Lord for this. It is to that end that the Lord has manifested Himself to you by way of His works, and it is your salvation, delight, and felicity to be thus engaged. Observe this in Psalms 18:1-50, for when David reflected upon the mercies of the Lord previously manifested toward him, he concludes, "Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises unto Thy name. Great deliverance giveth He to His king; and showeth mercy to His anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore" (Psalms 18:49-50). He expresses himself likewise in Psalms 103:2 : "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Secondly, it humbles you when, on the one hand, you consider your ancestry, insignificance, and sinfulness, and on the other hand the wondrous leadings, protections, and deliverances according to body and soul: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands" (Genesis 32:10); "Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto" (2 Samuel 7:18). This humble disposition is most pleasing to the Lord and He multiplies His blessings to such. "God ... giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

Thirdly, it kindles a strong desire in believers for that sweet frame in which they previously were. This will be accompanied with tenderness of heart, considering that they are presently so far removed from this desirable frame and have to do without it. "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness" (Job 29:2-3); "Lord, where are Thy former lovingkindnesses" (Psalms 89:49); "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday" (Psalms 42:4). Observe this also in regard to the church: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion" (Psalms 137:1). Oh, how many a tear flows out of our eyes when we consider our previous circumstances and compare our present circumstances to them!

Fourthly, it sustains us in times of distress and it can serve as a means to recovery. We shall then reason as follows: "The Lord does not change, and He will finish the work which He has begun in a person. The fact is that the Lord has previously been gracious to me. How zealously did I seek the Lord at that time and how abundantly was the Spirit of prayer poured out upon me! I still remember how I was enabled to pour out my heart before the Lord with many tears and with much perseverance. I have not yet forgotten how I was able to receive Jesus as my Surety and how I entrusted my soul to Him; how I received assurance concerning my salvation; how I loved Jesus; how I delighted and rejoiced in the enjoyment of my love relationship with the Lord, and how painstakingly I refrained from sin." Thus the soul, while estranged from the Lord, will encourage herself. She will say, "The Lord remains the same, His love does not change, and He will again come to me." It is thus that the soul supports and encourages herself with her previous experiences. Observe this with David: "Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Thy works; I muse on the work of Thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto Thee: my soul thirsteth after Thee, as a thirsty land" (Psalms 143:4-6); and also with Asaph: "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search" (Psalms 77:5-6).

Fifthly, it causes us to trust in the Lord and, while exercising this trust, to be encouraged in the performance of our duty. Paul found strength in his previous experience: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:10). It made David courageous: "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:37).

Reflection upon Past Experience Engenders Spiritual Virtues

Sixthly, experience engenders the exercise of all manner of spiritual virtues, such as faith, hope, love, prayer, patience, and holiness.

(1) It engenders a godly life: "What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (Isaiah 38:15). He remembered his previous trial, and this now prompted him to refrain himself from sin and to walk carefully, lest he come into such straits again (Psalms 116:8-9).

(2) It engenders faith. The disciples, who twice had witnessed how the Lord Jesus had fed thousands of people with a few loaves, had not taken note of the miracle of the loaves, and therefore their faith faltered, for their faith was not in exercise when at another occasion they had forgotten to take bread along (Mark 8:14; Mark 8:16). If, however, we may have gathered a treasure of experiences, this habit will render us strong in the faith.

(3) It engenders hope: "And experience (worketh) hope" (Romans 5:4).

(4) It engenders love: "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice" (Psalms 116:1).

(5) It engenders the fear of God. If by way of experience we have accumulated examples of the judgments God has sent upon such sins, we shall learn to refrain ourselves from such sins by way of the fear of God. To that end the apostle holds forth the sins and plagues of Israel in the desert, saying, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things" (1 Corinthians 10:6).

(6) It engenders zeal in prayer. By remembering previous answers to prayer, we shall approach the Lord with more freedom and plead with an increased faith that our prayer will be answered. We would not be able to do so unless we had taken note of previous answers and remembered them (cf. Psalms 85:6-7). There, the psalmist holds before the Lord various blessings which have previously been bestowed upon him, and upon them he pleads: "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee" (Psalms 85:6).

(7) Yes, experience not only renders us fit to comfort ourselves, but also others. "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:4). Therefore take careful note of all that transpires, remember everything, write it down, reflect upon it often, tell it to others, and make daily use of what you have previously experienced -- to the benefit of yourself and others.

087. Chapter 82: Love for One's Neighbor

----- CHAPTER EIGHTY-TWO ----- Love for One's Neighbor

God is love, has love for humankind, and manifests this love in the natural realm to all men, as well as to His elect in the covenant of grace. God requires love in His law -- His law being comprehended in the one word love. The objects of love are God and one's neighbor. For that purpose the law has been recorded upon two tables of stone. On the first is recorded how and in which way we are to manifest our love toward God, and on the second is recorded the manner how and in which way we are to manifest our love toward our neighbor. It is the latter we now wish to discuss.

Love is the congenial frame of heart of God's children, wrought of God, whereby their heart is engaged with desires to have harmonious fellowship with their neighbor, and to seek their welfare as well as their own.

Love is a congenial frame of the heart. Among all virtues, love is the most eminent, pure, and delightful; it is a disposition of the heart. The acts of thinking, speaking, and any other activities are not love itself -- even though these actions may issue forth from love -- for such actions can also take place apart from love. Rather, the very disposition of the heart is loving and it has a propensity toward love. It is thoroughly permeated with love, and it finds delight in being thus disposed. There can be motions in the heart of aversion, anger, and pity, which, even if they were not sinful, engender some measure of grief. However, love is radiant, sweet, and joyous in nature, and the stronger this propensity and the more powerful its manifestation, the greater its sweetness will be. The subject or the seat of love is to be found in the heart of the children of God. After the fall, man in his natural state is "hateful, and hating" (Titus 3:3). He has the ability to love, for this is a human characteristic; however, he distorts it by focusing upon the wrong object and by using it in a faulty manner. Man intensely loves himself, and he only loves that from which he can derive pleasure for himself. He hates and has an aversion for whatever is not subservient to this or is against him. An unconverted person is not a true lover of his neighbor; however, regeneration changes the heart of God's children and thereby they begin to love their neighbor in the right manner. Regeneration reforms man according to the image of God, and Christ is formed in them. Since God is love, someone who is a partaker of the divine nature consequently also has love -- that is, according to the measure in which he is a partaker of the divine nature. The congregation of Colosse had love for all the saints (Colossians 1:4), and the congregation of the Thessalonians was "taught of God to love one another" (1 Thessalonians 4:9). The heart is the essential seat of all virtues, and this is therefore also true for love. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart" (1 Timothy 1:5). Since the image of God resides in the heart, love likewise resides in the heart. It does not remain hidden there, however, for if the heart is aflame within, that flame will leap forth to the outside. The object of this love is one's neighbor; that is, all who are of one blood and have come forth from one and the same Adam. We are to consider man as either presently having the image of God, or as man, or as a sinner in an unconverted state.

Furthermore, we can distinguish between various relationships: parents, children, sisters and brothers, relatives, or strangers. They are all the objects of love. The exception here is when we note sinners as sinners; however, as human beings they continue to be the object of love in a general sense -- not only to do good to them, but to love them, and thus to let our benevolence issue forth from that. Since there is such variety regarding types of neighbors, and the relationships to them, love will be expressed differently to the one than to the other. The Essence of Love The very essence of love is that it is relational in nature. Man is a social being who desires to have fellowship and communion with his fellow man. In this respect we can view love as:

(1) The singular desire of having fellowship with a human being. A person would be more dead than alive if he were alone in the world or on an island -- all hope being cut off of ever seeing or hearing a human being.

(2) Affection. There can be matters in another person's life which may or must rightfully prevent us from having familiar fellowship with him. Being hindered in doing so is grievous, however, and one would desire that this hindrance be removed -- be it that he would be converted, or that a given sin (being an impediment to spiritual communion and continually putting us in danger of being polluted) would not manifest itself so strongly in him. We shall, however, love him in spite of this, and the desire for fellowship remains. We shall make a wholehearted effort to do good to him in body and soul, and must rejoice when he prospers and grieve when it goes ill with him. It is thus that Paul loved Israel -- presently unbelieving and striving against the truth -- according to the flesh: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). Thus, we must even love our enemies -- those who are hostile and manifest enmity toward us (Matthew 5:44).

(3) Good will; that is, if we are fully one with our neighbor in the mutual enjoyment of delight, pleasure, and happiness. God is the primary and preeminent object of love. Love toward all those in whom there is some resemblance of God flows forth out of this love for God. The greater this resemblance, the greater this love will be. In addition to this there is God's command to love, which He gives us in order that we find our delight in this. Even though the angels resemble God to a higher degree than men of this earth do, they nevertheless do not qualify as our neighbors -- and are thus not to be loved as such. Therefore, the love of good will flows both from the love to God and from a love for compliance with the commands of God. The one who loves will thus unite himself with this object with pleasure and delight: "Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1). This love not only manifests itself in esteem for the regenerate, but it also strives to be united with them. The nature of love is such that it establishes a union. Therefore the apostle calls love, "the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:14), and in Colossians 2:2 he says, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love." It is thus written concerning the first church, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). Christ prays for this: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (John 17:21). This love of good will only exists between believers, since they believe of each other that God loves them, and that they love God. This love is called brotherly love: "Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1). This is not to suggest that the godly only manifest love to the godly, but the reasons for exercising the love of good will are only to be found in them. When the basis for such love is not to be found in others, the godly can also not love them in this manner. Nevertheless, they love the unregenerate with the

love of affection, seeking their welfare, doing to them all that love requires toward such an object, manifesting nevertheless in all their dealings the incompatibility and difference between them and the godly. The apostle does not want us to limit ourselves to love for the godly only, but our love must also extend to others. "... to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" [Note: The Statenvertaling reads: "... liefde jegens allen," that is, "charity toward all."] (2 Peter 1:7). Wherever there is a loving heart, it will manifest itself toward every object in which something loveable is to be found, or toward those concerning whom God has obligated them in some measure. The Origin of Love

God is the original cause of this love. This divine spark is not kindled spontaneously in us, but is kindled by God in the heart. He is therefore called the God of love (2 Corinthians 13:11). The Holy Spirit authors love: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love" (Galatians 5:22). The Thessalonians were "taught of God to love one another" (1 Thessalonians 4:9). The Holy Spirit, regenerating the godly according to the image of God and making them to be partakers of the divine nature, creates in them a new nature which enables them to love. As soon as they, as regenerate, lift up their enlightened eyes, they -- in the light of God's countenance -- behold that He is altogether lovely. Their new loving nature will immediately exercise love toward the adorable God; they love Him, because He first loved them (1 John 4:19). The godly are not only cognizant of the Spirit within them, but also in others. They discern who they are who in some measure resemble God and love Him -- and thus also who is or is not loved by God. Therefore their loving heart is attracted to such persons and expresses love toward them. The godly delight in such persons and desire to be intimately united with them. Their heart delights and rejoices in mutual fellowship. Furthermore, their new loving nature is attracted to all men whom they encounter, as they have been created in like manner as they were. It grieves the godly that such men are upon the way of destruction and in love they seek to guide them on the right way. They are sensitive to their bodily misery and will help them. They rejoice when all goes well with them, and they are friendly and kind toward everyone. The Effects or Manifestation of Love The effects or manifestations of love are manifold and vary according to the nature of the object and our relationship to it. Together they constitute the duties which the second table of the law imposes upon us. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8-10).

Concerning the manifestation of love we must note the following:

(1) The motive and the fountain from which it issues forth. This is the heart, as we have delineated before, and this love is therefore upright, heartfelt, and fervent. "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22).

(2) The means whereby this love is executed: in words, with the countenance, and in deeds. Love divorced from the heart is hypocrisy, and the heart without love is void of fruit. The countenance must be friendly: "Finally ... be courteous" [Note: The Statenvertaling reads: "Zijt ... vriendelijk," that is, "Be friendly."] (1 Peter 3:8). Our words are not to be abrasive, but kind, wise, and pleasant: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). Our deeds must be

faithful and resolute: "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

(3) The measure or extent to which we are to love is the measure or extent to which man loves himself. As heartily, truthfully, readily, and faithfully as a man must rightfully love himself, so he must also love his neighbor. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (James 2:8).

(4) The specific deeds whereby this love is executed either pertain to the soul or the body. As far as the soul is concerned, we are to pray for each other (Romans 10:1), instruct each other in the way of salvation (Acts 18:26), rebuke and exhort each other (Hebrews 3:13), warn against, not suffer sin in each other (Leviticus 19:17), and comfort each other (1 Thessalonians 5:14). As far as the body is concerned, we are to feed the hungry, give drink to those who are athirst, clothe the naked, visit the sick, give lodging to the stranger, help someone in whatever perplexity he may be, and support him by counsel and in deed (Matthew 25:35-36). That is the labor of love referred to in (1 Thessalonians 1:3). This Love Inherent in Adam's Nature The human nature of Adam was created with love for the neighbor; and after the fall God has by renewal commanded His people to love their neighbor. He did so in the law declared from Mount Sinai, its second table being: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39). This has also been enjoined by the prophets and the apostles (Leviticus 19:18; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19). Impress this upon your heart -- not only as being your obligation, but also to motivate you to engage in your duty: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another" (John 13:34). It is the Lord Jesus Himself, having exemplified love for us, who commands us to do so. Therefore we must very much take this to heart. "I give (it) unto you"; "This is My commandment, that ye love one another" (John 15:17); "These things I command you" (John 15:17); "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love" (Romans 12:10); "Honour all men" (1 Peter 2:17); "Love as brethren" (1 Peter 3:8); "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

Proofs of its Absence Not only can everyone be convinced from the foregoing as to what his duty is, but he can discern as in a mirror how far he falls short in love, or how closely he resembles this standard. We have shown before that all love toward our neighbor has its origin in love to God in Christ Jesus, and therefore only those who are born of God, who by faith are united to God in Christ and love God as their reconciled Father, will rightly love their neighbor. Furthermore, such will have as their primary and foremost object of love those who are born of God, are partakers of the divine nature, are loved of God, and who love God. We have shown that by reason of this disposition they extend their love to all who are of the same human origin -- even though they do not have the image of God and consequently cannot be loved with the love of good will and with union of heart. They will nevertheless love them with the love of affection, being desirous to do good to them and to protect them against harm, while maintaining a distance due to the difference of their natures.

Examine yourself in light of this, and observe whether you will pass the test. It is certain that the following do not have love:

(1) They who do not love God. Such is the condition of all the unconverted, whose nature has been exposed in chapter 14. If we do not love God, it is impossible to love those who bear resemblance to God, as they have something of God within them. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments" (1 John 5:2). The reverse

argument is that he who does not love God also does not love His children.

(2) They who love the godly for the wrong reasons and with a wrong perspective. It does indeed occur that the unconverted love the godly, but this is not prompted by the fact that the godly are loved by God, love God and Jesus, and bear the image of God. Rather, the unconverted love them either because they were raised together, have compatible natural temperaments, are to some extent desirable and pleasant due to natural virtues, yield them advantage and temporal benefits, are faithful and upright in their services and dealings, by loving them receive love, honor, and esteem. All of this is agreeable with the state of nature. If, however, the godly let their light shine and thereby rebuke and put the unconverted to shame, and if by virtue of the image of God, the godly are more excellent than they are, the contrast between their natures will readily manifest itself. This in turn will engender inner resistance, secret aversion, the avoidance of their company, and hatred and opposition. Such ought thereby to be convinced that they in reality do not love the godly.

(3) They who make no distinction between those who are godly, civil, or ungodly, having no love for either the one or the other (yes, many do not even have love), live by themselves and for themselves; seek their own honor, advantage, and delight; do not care about others; have a heart that is strange toward everyone, and thus are without natural love. They only have love for themselves and for those who, in subservience to their self-love, are of advantage to themselves.

(4) They who love the world -- that is, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life -- and all who are of one mind with them. In their eyes the godly are a despised lot. Instead, they honor those who serve the world, are their drinking companions, and entertain themselves with vanity, foolishness, vain conversation, gambling, carousing, fornication, dancing, boasting, etc. Such are the people to whom they join themselves and whose company they enjoy. Since such love the world, it is a certainty that they do not love the godly, but rather hate them. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

(5) They who do not only hate the godly in their heart, but inflict upon them all that issues forth from hatred. They despise them, speak about them with contempt, sneer at them, avoid their company, slander them, seek to trap them, oppress and persecute them, and they delight themselves if the godly are in adversity or meet with an accident -- finding delight in this as if they had conquered an enemy.

All such, if they give but attention to these matters and examine themselves in this light -- that is, those having natural virtue, as well as worldly ones and hypocrites -- will be convinced hereby that they have no love for the godly, and thus have no true love for others.

Consequences of Being Void of True Love

Many will not be concerned about this and will say, "It is true. I neither love them, desire to love them, nor wish to be loved by them. What is that to you? Who is affected by it?" My answer is that it indeed affects you.

(1) You are not born of God: "He that loveth not knoweth not God" (1 John 4:8). If you say, "I do indeed love God," then John says that you are lying: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God

whom he hath not seen" (1 John 4:20). And, if you do not love God, you are accursed.

(2) You are not a Christian, have no part in His suffering, and are without Christ. Thus there are no promises for you -- you are without God and without hope (Ephesians 2:12). If you reply, "I am truly a Christian, for I am baptized, I attend the Lord's Supper, and I live as a Christian," then I reply in turn, "You are lying and you are deceiving yourself, for if you were a Christian, you would love those whom Christ loves and those who love Christ." For this is an unmistakable characteristic of the Christian: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). If you are without love, you are not a disciple.

(3) All your deeds, however wonderful they may appear to be, are of no value, for they are void of love. If you loved God, you would also love His children. Then you would have the Spirit, possess spiritual life, have a heavenly nature, and everything about you would be of an entirely different nature. Since you are void of love, however, everything is dead and your works are but dead works which cannot please God. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. ... I am nothing ... it profiteth me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Observe that everything is contingent upon love, and that you who are without love are destitute of everything. All that you do is sin, aggravates your judgment, and is a powerful confirmation that you will eternally go lost if you were to die in that condition. Therefore be convinced of your wretched condition -- both present and future -- and let that be a means to engender concern, and to cause you to flee to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness. The Deficient Love of the Godly and Its Causes To observe that natural men are without love is not quite as grievous as having to make the most disturbing observation that even the godly are so deficient in love in light of what the apostle says concerning love in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

Furthermore, if one considers the conduct of many of the truly regenerate, how much they fall short of this standard! It is true: They love the godly because God loves them and because they love God in Christ. Their heart is knit to them in that respect -- with the exclusion of all other men. They esteem them, their heart goes out toward them, they rejoice when they perceive the godly in their essential nature; but when it comes to their deeds, it is manifest how weak their love is. They keep to themselves and it is as if all others were strangers to them, or they exercise fellowship with only one or with but a few, and ignore others. If one of the godly has a fault, they will immediately render his godliness suspect. If he is perceived as a challenge to us and he does not act according to our wishes, then displeasure, wrath, strife, and backbiting surface, and one gives him the cold shoulder -- acting as if their spiritual life did not proceed from one and the same Spirit. And in regard to the unconverted, where is the heartfelt affection for them? Where is the joy about their prosperity, the grief over their mishaps, and the exercise concerning their spiritual and physical welfare?

It ought indeed to be investigated why it is that there is so little love among the godly, so that everyone would be motivated to remove the causes of his lovelessness which he perceives within himself, and thus enhance his progress in the exercise of love. Lovelessness is caused by:

(1) A lack of communion with God. God is love, and having communion with God will cause us to grow warm in love. We shall then manifest more of the nature of God, and having more love within, this love will manifest itself that much more strongly externally. If your heart accuses you of lovelessness, then immediately turn to the cause, and consider that it is the result of having

wandered so far away from God -- for love must proceed from that fountain.

(2) Having but little assurance concerning our state, and a failure to take note of and acknowledge the state of grace. We are then weak in faith, yield to deadness and listlessness, and do not live tenderly. Instead, sin gains the upper hand, and we do not dare to place ourselves among God's children. Therefore, even though we esteem others as gracious souls, we neither have courage to be in their company, mutually rejoice with them, nor find delight in their fellowship.

(3) Having succumbed very much to a slumber brought on by the world and its lusts. Since their love manifests itself strongly in that direction, there is consequently a lesser degree of love for the godly and others. And the little love that is there will readily be subdued if one or the other person is hindered in attaining his earthly desires.

(4) The knowledge that most professors of the truth are unconverted, and a being disillusioned by some whom they thought to have been converted, who showed subsequently that such was not the case. They act as if it were a sin to love someone as a godly person who but appeared to be so and in reality was not -- as if we should love none other than those who are godly. The truth is that it is a much greater virtue to love such with a brotherly love as long as there is the least probability that such is warranted, and to have a strong love of affection when that probability has disappeared.

(5) The godly going too much in hiding and not letting their light shine forth. Thus, people either do not know them, or they observe but little of the grace of which they have a greater measure within. There is but little manifestation of mutual love, and thus the love and grace of the one believer does not ignite the other.

(6) The godly sinning publicly, but not manifesting their sorrow which they have in secret. If they would only show their sorrow, love would increase in strength rather than be impeded.

(7) An excessive manifestation of self-love, there being a desire to be loved in return, or an insistence that others love us first; instead, we must take the initiative and love without being loved in return.

Benefits Emanating from the Exercise of Love

It ought to grieve you in the innermost recesses of your soul that you have so little love -- of which you manifest even less. It displeases God, deprives you and the congregation of a blessing, causes the godly and godliness to be slandered, obstructs the conversion of many, and offends those beginners in grace whose heart is filled with love. Furthermore, it is the cause of the decline of the church.

Therefore, strive that your love would increase and become more fervent, and allow my exhortation to revive you in this respect.

First, all your relationships strongly obligate you to exercise brotherly love; and believers, when reflecting upon that relationship, are stirred up to love fervently. To that end consider:

(1) God is your Father and the Father of all believers; He loves you and He loves them. Should this then not stir us up to love one another (1 John 4:11)?

(2) The Lord Jesus, who is not ashamed to call you and them brothers, loves both you and them. Therefore, "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (Ephesians 5:2). Together you are the temples of one and the same Spirit who dwells in all of you, by whom all of you live, and who works love (Galatians 5:22). Therefore we pray "for the love of the Spirit" (Romans 15:30), that you do not obstruct His motions toward love; rather, yield to them and you will abound in love.

(3) Are you not partakers of the same sacraments? "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13); "For we being many are one bread, and one body" (1 Corinthians 10:17); "These are ... feasts of charity" (Jude 1:12). Therefore, should not this intimate relationship stir you up to love? Since then we are brothers, are together God's children, out of love have been delivered by the Lord Jesus, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and are united by the sacraments, let us therefore love one another fervently with brotherly love.

Secondly, God takes a special delight in the mutual love of His children for each other. This is a delight for natural parents; thus, our heavenly Father is also pleased with the mutual love of His children. Jesus rejoices in it and the angels delight in it. The Father and Christ make their abode with such and bless them: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ... for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:1; Psalms 133:3).

Thirdly, the exercise of brotherly love is most beneficial.

(1) It adds much luster to the church; all who are without will recognize her by this. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). It begets much esteem and respect for the congregation. When the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul, then "durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them" (Acts 5:13).

(2) As one candle lights the other, likewise the love of one will ignite love in the other, and everyone will thus be enlivened. As it is a delight to see a large church filled with shining lights, it is far more delightful to observe a congregation which is filled with those who love. Yes, it would be a means whereby many would be drawn to the church, the unconverted would be converted, beginners in the faith would readily grow, and backsliders would be restored.

(3) The one who loves experiences a special joy. It is a greater delight to love than to be loved. Joy is his strength; he avoids many snares, is delivered from much strife which otherwise would easily weaken his faith, and proceeds with courage.

(4) Love to the brethren assures the one who loves that he is in a state of grace, for his love for a given person proceeds from something of God being in him; since God loves him, he loves God even more -- and he who loves God is known of God (1 Corinthians 8:3).

Once more, since this love is expressed toward those who are of like persuasion, love seeks union due to this commonality. Since such a person's love issues forth to one who is like himself, and he seeks union with those who love God and are loved by God, he himself is in that state, for otherwise he would not seek fellowship on such a foundation. He is thus at the same time assured that he loves God -- something about which he is frequently concerned. "We know that we have

passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

Fourthly, mutual love serves the purpose of mutual refreshment. Animals of the same species frequently walk together and citizens of the same nation stay together when they are in a strange country. Worldly people refresh themselves by mutual love; should the godly then not do likewise? In the world they will find neither help nor comfort, for it hates them. They also do not seek it there, for they hate it. What now? Will they each live alone in the world? No, it is due to the goodness of God that they are able to have a more heartfelt love, and a more intimate and steadfast friendship with each other, than that which is to be found in the world. This mutual love refreshes them so much that they can readily do without all other love. This love yields to them mutual help, support, comfort, encouragement, compassion, and whatever else they could expect from people.

Guidelines for the Proper Exercise of Love

It almost seems to me that I have done needless work in stirring you up by way of various arguments to love -- as if light needed a recommendation, or that fire is rendered more pleasant by way of rational argument. The mere mention of love is enough to stir you up. Begin to undertake this task and it will become all the more sweet to you.

(1) Let the initiative to love come from you and do not wait for another person to make the first move. Even if you are the very least among the godly, the love of children is sweet and even kindles the love of adults.

(2) Do not seek to receive love in return; however, if you receive it, do not let it end in yourself. Rather, thank the Lord for the refreshment and the quickening you enjoy as a result of this. If you do not receive love in return, let it neither trouble nor hinder you, for you are not worthy of being loved. Let it be sufficient to you that you are permitted and able to love.

(3) Let there be high esteem for the grace which is or appears to be in another person. Be not suspicious, but be quick to accept it as being genuine. Grace can be very feeble in someone, and it will not harm you to love someone as a godly person who is unconverted. Is it not your desire and obligation to love others?

(4) The offenses and falls of others must not impede you in your love, for even great grace can coexist with great corruption -- how much more this is true when grace is feeble. You do not know how much strife another has concerning these faults, how much he grieves over them in secret, and with how many tears and prayers he seeks forgiveness.

(5) Show much love in your countenance, words, and entire conduct -- even if the heart is somewhat lukewarm. It is not hypocritical when we externally manifest and conduct ourselves as we ought to be while striving to involve our heart in this as well, even though we cannot do as we desire. While thus engaged, our heart will become more and more involved. However, to wish to create an appearance, while being differently disposed in the heart, is hypocrisy. Showing love will cause the heart to increase in love.

(6) Permit that light and grace which is in you, be it ever so feeble, to shine forth. Manifest it, and conduct yourself as such, doing so not for your sake by seeking honor, but because God commands you to do so, and in order that others might have the opportunity to exercise the virtue of love.

(7) Be much in prayer to the Lord, for love proceeds from Him. Of yourself and in your own strength, you will neither attain to nor increase this love. If you are thus engaged, the Lord will grant you more grace and cause you to grow, until He will take you into the perfect love of eternal glory.

088. Chapter 83: Humility

----- CHAPTER EIGHTY-THREE -----

Humility

Love for our neighbor is the fountain of all those virtues we are to exercise toward him, but it is humility that adorns these virtues. However excellent the performance of a virtue may be, if there is pride in the person who performs this duty, such performance will reek and be entirely without luster. Therefore, a believer who in the way of holiness wishes to live to the glory of God and render the church honorable must strive to be humble.

Humility is the humble disposition of the heart of the believer--both in a personal sense and toward his neighbor. It consists in having a correct judgment concerning himself whereby he neither elevates himself above his condition, nor wishes to be elevated by others as such. The Adornment of a Believer

True humility is only to be found in a Christian, that is, in a believer. All humility of the unconverted is nothing but an appearance without substance, and upon close examination it will prove to be either nothing but pride or else despondency -- the reason being that an unconverted person has neither life, spiritual disposition of heart, nor is he united to Christ from whom, as the Head, all virtues issue forth to His children. However, a regenerate person has the principle of life in Christ and thus also a virtuous heart -- the fountain of virtues. "Let the brother of low degree [Note: The Statenvertaling reads: "... de broeder die nederig is," that is, "... the brother who is humble."] rejoice" (James 1:9). It is the Lord who teaches humility and Christ is the example: "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Therefore, those who have fellowship with the Lord Jesus, know Him and behold Him, and in faith are united with Him, will learn this from Him and their humility is of the same nature as His. The heart is the seat of their humility. The seat of humility is not to be found in our face, talk, or dress, but in the heart. It is also not solely and essentially to be found in the intellect, even though the intellect is functional in the exercise of humility in knowing the nature and beauty of this virtue and presenting it to the will as such. Instead, the essential function of humility is in the will which embraces, loves, and delights itself in this virtue. We are to be like Jesus, that is, "lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

Humility is a disposition of the heart. The beauty of this virtue is not something which is paraded and put on display to be approved of as such. It also does not consist in having the intention to be humble -- a condition which may exist temporarily, but soon dissipates. Rather, humility is a propensity or a predisposition. The regenerate heart has a nature which is thoroughly humble -- this humility being of an enduring nature. Whenever such a person engages himself, he does so in harmony with this heart and nature. All that he does has the fragrance of and is permeated with humility. The measure in which this disposition is pervasive and steadfast is commensurate with the measure of a person's exercise to be in such a disposition. This propensity, initially having been infused by God, is fortified through much exercise. The Object and Essence of Humility The

object of humility is man himself and his neighbor.

(1) It is man himself, for due to self-knowledge he knows that there is neither excellence nor anything desirable to be found in him. In his own eyes he is a great nothing, and he views himself as such. He thus sinks away in his own nothingness as a stone cast into the water, not resting until it reaches the bottom; that is its proper position and there it will come to rest. It is likewise true that the lowest place will be the place of the humble man; there he finds rest and is in his element as a fish in water. He is able to accept the fact that others receive honor and love, enjoy themselves, and are prosperous, as long as he may be humble in himself, and in that way of humility can engage in his duty by the grace and power God affords him. He is able to end in humility when he has done something, and with that humility he can suffer and endure that which the Lord causes to come his way, either without or by the instrumentality of men -- it is all well with him.

(2) The humble person also exercises his humility toward his neighbor. He acknowledges it to be the will of God that he love his neighbor, and this motivates him to do so. He perceives in his neighbor that which is eminent and desirable; he highly esteems this, honors him as such, wholeheartedly submits himself to him in that respect, and with this disposition he does for his neighbor what God commands him to do. In comparing himself to his neighbor, he appears in his own eyes as copper compared to gold, and as lead compared to silver. Being in such a frame, he honors, loves, and renders him service. "Be not highminded" (Romans 11:20); "For I say ... to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think" (Romans 12:3); "My brethren, be not many masters" (James 3:1); "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Php 2:3). The essence of humility consists in lowliness of heart. Pride lifts up the heart and puffs it up with vain air, and a proud person in his own conceit wishes to be honored above others. This motivates him in all that he does and is the objective of his actions. If he achieves his objective, he is delighted; but if not, he becomes peevish and wrathful. Humility, on the contrary, brings the heart low and renders it humble. Thus, the humble person will not have himself in view in his actions, and upon having performed his duty he returns to himself, humbly and quietly remaining in that place, regardless of what the outcome of his performance has been. The other extreme in relation to humility is despondency. This comes about when we lose all courage, give up, and thus collapse as a wet rag. This is not humility; rather it is pride, for despondency comes about when we can neither achieve our objective nor perceive any way whereby to achieve it. Humility is positioned between these two vices (pride and despondency). Relative to the one, humility is a lowly and unassuming disposition, causing one to remain in the background. Humility needs but little room for herself. In that setting she is at home and does not move beyond its boundaries. Relative to despondency, humility is armed with courage and spiritual valor. The humble person engages himself as such in dependence upon the grace and power of God, doing so in his appointed station and with the gifts he has received. To be seen of men and to seek after honor and love are foreign to the humble soul. He will leave that for those who desire it. He will be satisfied with having done his duty, and if this renders him honor and love (without this being his goal), this will not lift him up. If it brings him shame and injury, he does not become despondent and discouraged. He will remain in his place, and there he will be humble and quiet, courageously proceeding with his duty. David gives expression to this disposition: "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother:

my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalms 131:1-2). A humble person has a childlike disposition.

Humility Proceeds from God

God is the moving cause of humility. By nature man is a creature who aspires after glory, is proud and conceited, and has high thoughts of himself. He is motivated by self, is focused on self, and is desirous that everyone's end would be to esteem, honor, fear, serve, and obey him. The heart the Lord gives to His people is different, however, for He causes Christ to be formed in them, so that, also in humility, they resemble Christ. The Lord grants them enlightened eyes of understanding by which they know themselves, are able to judge themselves rightly, know what their gifts are, and of what they are worthy. Furthermore, they have a love for righteousness and thus they neither desire nor seek that to which they are not entitled.

Thus humility issues forth from a right judgment of one's self. The humble acknowledge that they are made of dust and reside in tabernacles of clay. They know that they have sinned and come short of the glory of God; are blind, miserable, naked, and wretched, and that they are thus abominable, hateful, and intolerable before God, angels, and men. They know they are not worthy that the heavens cover them, the sun shines upon them, or that they walk upon the earth, enjoying the fellowship of men, having a piece of bread to eat, and having clothing for their body. Rather, they are worthy of having been cast into hell long ago. Such is their judgment of themselves, and they acquiesce in this -- even though it condemns them. They thus perceive how wrong it would be for them to elevate themselves, pretending that they are worthy of something. When they compare themselves with others, they perceive themselves as being foolish, void of understanding, having a disgraceful and difficult character, and their actions as being worthy of scorn. It is thus that others would know them if they knew them as well internally as they know them externally. How should they then have any high thoughts of themselves? They deem that others would be in error if they thought anything of them or wished to render them some honor. They acknowledge that the good found in them -- which they are cognizant of and highly esteem -- has been given to them by another, namely God. Since this continues to be of God, they would be guilty of the greatest foolishness if they were to covet honor, love, or esteem for something which has been loaned to them. (A beggar would invite scorn if he were to boast of an expensive garment which someone had loaned him for one day.) Yes, even if the humble person were perfect in all things, he would know that all esteem, honor, love, fear, and obedience would be due unto God. He would know that God has forbidden him to covet, strive for, and permit these matters to be attributed to him. He therefore judges it to be an act of thievery and unrighteousness to seek for this and to boast of it. This causes him to be small in his own eyes, and he is, remains, and engages himself in harmony with this disposition. The Effects of Humility The effects of humility are twofold: The humble person neither elevates himself above what his condition is, nor does he want to be elevated above such by someone else.

First, a humble person does not elevate himself above what his condition is. God has made a distinction between people -- both in the spiritual as well as the natural realm. If the Lord has truly made someone to be a Christian; if He has granted him His Spirit and His grace; and if He has bestowed on him life, light, a principle of holiness, as well as gifts to be used to the benefit of others, then such a person does not deny this, but acknowledges it. For, to deny this would be an act of pride rather than of humility, acting as if we did not receive it, whereas in truth we did.

Furthermore, it would be an intolerable act of ingratitude. Thus such a person does indeed acknowledge the grace he possesses, but he does not boasts of it nor does he wish to be honored by men for it.

Also in the natural realm God has placed people in different stations, for there are government officials, citizens, parents, children, servants, the rich, middle class citizens, and the poor. The humble person will maintain and continue in the station where God has placed him, until God calls him away from it. If he is in a lowly station, he is satisfied, it being the will of God. He possesses more than he is worthy of, and does not walk away from it, but will remain with it until the Lord removes it from him; that is, if it were to please Him to do so. If such is not the case, it is also well with him. If he holds a high position which is accompanied by wealth, he will also maintain it, and seek to be faithful therein. He does not exalt himself above others because he holds this position. Rather, he is humble, knowing that he is not worthy of it. Instead, he has come to see it as his duty to perform that function, thereby rendering honorable that office or position he holds. The denigration of one's self is not an act of humility. It is much easier to cast everything away and to subject ourselves to poverty, shame, contempt, solitude, and silence, than to preserve our position with a humble heart, and to conduct ourselves in a manner which is consistent with our position. Thus, someone can simultaneously have a high position, be rich, esteemed, and honored, and yet have a humble disposition of heart. He does not covet honor, respect, and obedience because he has this position, nor does he boast of it. He nevertheless agrees to be treated as such, solely because it is God's command.

Secondly, neither will he desire to be elevated by others above the condition in which he is. This would give neither pleasure nor joy, but rather sorrow and grief, knowing that he is not entitled to it. He wishes to be humbled and remain unnoticed as he passes through this world. He only desires to give rather than to receive. He lets the Hamans have the knee-bends and the Herods the praises. He is happy when he can be on his own, and if someone wishes to esteem him too highly, he will convey his aversion for this, saying with John the Baptist, "I am not (he)" (John 1:21). With Peter and Paul, he will abhor any excessive honor (cf. Acts 3:12; Acts 10:26; Acts 14:14). Instead, the humble person highly esteems the good he perceives in another person. He esteems that person more excellent than he is, humbles himself in his presence, is willing to be of service to him, and is not envious if this person is honored above him, but rather rejoices in this. The Proud Rebuked The depiction of humility in its nature and circumstances will give you light in the matter, so that you can examine yourself and be convinced as to whether you possess this virtue of humility or not. There are but few humble persons -- yes, humility is presently despised and made out to be dullness, melancholy, evil-temperedness, and slavishness. Nevertheless, this is the disposition with which God is pleased -- the contrary of which He hates. Take note of this:

(1) You who are proud of heart and have a haughty spirit, who have great thoughts of yourself due to your ancestry, wealth, the offices you hold, wisdom, beauty, strength, artistic talent, gifts, and all that of which a fool will boast; you who elevate yourself above your neighbor, viewing him with contempt and having the notion that he must honor and revere, bow, and yield to you; you who love to be greeted in a humble and reverent manner, to be praised and elevated above others; you who are envious when another person is elevated and honored above you, and readily cherish hatred and vengefulness against those who either do not honor you sufficiently or who despise you.

(2) You who deal haughtily with your inferiors and puff yourself up in their presence as a cropper pigeon; who raise your eyebrows, hold your head in the air, imitate a proud gait, put your hand on your side, and thus present yourself as a big bag of air, wishing that one would cry out, "Bow the knee"; or at least that everyone would yield to you, and while standing aside, would greet you in a most respectable manner.

(3) You who involve yourself in everything and speak about yourself and your accomplishments so that others may know what manner of man or woman you are.

(4) You who seek to increase your glory by boasting, decorating your house as a palace (each according to his ability) and then gloat by yourself, thinking, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built ... for the honour of my majesty" (Daniel 4:30), having the objective that others would esteem you as great, rich, and prominent. Furthermore, such will presently make themselves up as a decorated doll, and will go in public as a Bernice with great splendor (Acts 25:23; in Greek: phantasia). The entire purpose is to gain honor and glory. They avoid the company of those who are of lesser status, for this would humiliate them, but they will join themselves to those of higher social status, even if one were to make a fool of himself there.

(5) You who speak of certain persons -- if they are prominent people -- as being your cousins, even though the relationship goes all the way back to Noah, but refrain yourself from saying, "My cousin the shoemaker, my cousin the maid," for this would not promote your own status. And thus we could go on: Whatever one does and says all proceeds from pride and is for the purpose of self-elevation.

What a fool you are, however! First of all, since you are in reality so despicable, what will it profit you if people esteem you? Since there is in reality nothing honorable in you, what will it profit you if insignificant men honor you?

Secondly, your pride will readily be detected and you will be a stench to all who observe and notice this. People will have an aversion for you, ridicule you, consider you to be a fool, will avoid your company, and if you are in the presence of upright people who will give you some attention and get you to talk, your proud foolishness will manifest itself and you will make a mockery of yourself.

Thirdly, the godly (who are the honorable of the world) abhor you and do not wish to be in your company: "Him that hath an high look and a proud heart shall not I suffer" (Psalms 101:5).

Fourthly, above all take note of how God esteems you and what He will do to you.

(1) God hates you. What will it therefore benefit you if you please yourself? Consider with dread what God says concerning you: "The Lord GOD hath sworn by Himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces" (Amos 6:8); "These six things doth the Lord hate" (Proverbs 6:16-17), and a proud look is mentioned first; "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 16:5).

(2) Not only is God's heart opposed to the proud, but also His mouth; He reproves and curses them: "Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed" (Psalms 119:21).

(3) God's hand is against them: "God resisteth the proud" (1 Peter 5:5); "Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord GOD of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I shall visit thee" (Jeremiah 50:31). And if you wish to know what the outcome and your end will be, read Malachi 4:1 : "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." It was pride which caused Sodom to be consumed with fire from heaven (Ezekiel 16:49); Dathan, Abiram, and Korah to sink into the earth (Numbers 16:12-33); and Herod to be slain by an angel and be consumed alive by worms (Acts 12:21; Acts 12:23). Behold, such will be the end of the proud. The Godly Exhorted

You who are godly, upon examining yourself, you will perceive from the foregoing not only your deficient humility, but also how much pride yet remains in you. Humble yourself about this, be ashamed, and strive to increase in humility.

If pride is such a dreadful sin, and if such dreadful plagues are its consequences, then you who are godly ought to see to it that this sin does not cleave to you; rather, endeavor with your entire heart to be humble within and without, for:

First, you have nothing of yourself whereof you can be proud; instead, whatever can render you despicable is to be found in you. Your body is nothing but dust, stench, and pollution; your soul is bereft of the image of God, is a pool of all manner of impure monstrosities, and if another person would know all your thoughts and could observe and be aware of all the sins you have committed in secret, would you then dare to look him in the eye if he were to look at you? You are indeed foolish, have a difficult and disgraceful character, and others excel in areas which are not to be found in you. You know this very well, for the Lord has given you light. If you thus examine yourself, how can you yet have a lofty thought about yourself or have any desire to be esteemed as a prominent person? You are convinced that you desire something unbecoming and wrongful, and that you would require something from others which is but deceit. Can you be deceived with lies? The graces, gifts, beauty, strength, riches, and whatever else you may have, God has but granted you on loan. Would you then put these on display as if they were your own? Therefore, consider yourself, and judge aright; you will then be small and insignificant in your eyes and not seek great things.

Secondly, take note of God's command; God forbids you to be proud and commands you to be humble. Consider texts previously quoted, and add the following passages to them: "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate" (Romans 12:16); "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness" (Ephesians 4:1-2); "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but ... to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). Does the command of God, and that which your Father enjoins you to do, carry no weight with you? Should these not thoroughly permeate your soul? You have said so many times, "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth; Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Well, God answers you that you are to be humble. Therefore, take this to heart and be humble.

Thirdly, your name as well as your relationship to the Lord Jesus obligates you to humility. You are named "Christian" after the name of Christ. Your relationship to Him is that you are His bride upon whom He has set His love. The Lord Jesus was humble -- the perfect example of humility. Love ought to motivate us to be conformed to Him -- more so because He establishes Himself as an

example and commands us to follow Him in this: "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). By nature we are intolerably proud -- we who are most despicable. A Christian cannot be a Christian if he does not become humble. In order that we might become humble we need to learn how; this requires effort in order that we may all the better make progress in this. He gives us an example -- yes, He himself becomes our example. Therefore conduct yourself as such and be as He is; be humble.

Fourthly, humility is a most eminent ornament. Virgins love jewelry, and a bride will adorn herself to please her husband. However, you are spiritual virgins -- the bride of the Lord Jesus. I may thus address you as such: "Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem" (Isaiah 52:1). However, what is your ornament? -- humility. Humility is the most beautiful ornament, and renders you pleasant before God and men. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of ... humbleness" (Colossians 3:12); "Be clothed with humility" (1 Peter 5:5); "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah 57:15); "Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly" (Psalms 138:6). A humble person is pleasing to all manner of people. One proud person cannot tolerate the other one; however, since a humble person submits himself, a worldly person will enjoy having fellowship with a humble person. And as a godly person loves Jesus, he will also love those who resemble Jesus; since humility excels in the Lord Jesus, he thus especially delights in the humble.

Fifthly, humility is most advantageous.

(1) God thinks upon such with delight and desires to help them: "Who remembered us in our low estate" (Psalms 136:23).

(2) God causes them to rejoice: "I ... revive the spirit of the humble" (Isaiah 57:15).

(3) God's spiritual benefits are for such: "God ... giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

(4) God keeps them: "He shall save the humble person" (Job 22:29).

(5) It yields all manner of temporal benefits to such: "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life" (Proverbs 22:4); "Before honour is humility" (Proverbs 15:33); "Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit" (Proverbs 29:23).

(6) God comforts the humble: "Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down ..." (2 Corinthians 7:6).

(7) God exalts the humble: "He ... exalted them of low degree" (Luke 1:52).

(8) The humble person enjoys a sweet peace and has inner delight: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted" (James 1:9).

(9) A humble man is a wise man: "With the lowly is wisdom" (Proverbs 11:2).

(10) A humble person is valiant, for he neither seeks honor nor fears shame. Furthermore, everything suits him; he is willing to say and do it, and all that he does is pleasing to him. Therefore endeavor with much earnestness to be humble of heart.

Means to Learn Humility

Therefore, if you desire to be humble, it is needful for you to learn this. It does not issue forth spontaneously, and love for this virtue will also not engender it unless an effort be made in this respect and one makes use of the means which are fit for this. There are three books from which we may learn humility.

First of all there is the book of sin. Examine yourself continually in the light of your falling into sin. If you take note of your falling into sin, your goal being the humbling of yourself, you will learn experientially that you are polluted, impure, wicked, atheistic, and abominable in your heart, which time and again brings forth like deeds. You thus have no reason for complaints when God brings affliction upon you, nor when men despise you, for you know yourself to be ten times more despicable than they deem you to be. You are thus neither worthy of being the recipient of the least mercy of God nor of the least favor of men. It is thus that David learned to be humble -- as is to be observed in Psalms 51:1-19. It will also render you humble.

Secondly, there is the book of crosses. However bitter and distasteful the cross may be, it nevertheless teaches humility if we take but proper notice of it. From it we shall learn how disagreeable, unbelieving, and impatient we are, all of which are fruits of pride. We are instructed thereby about the righteousness and sovereignty of God toward His creatures in punishing sin. It removes the pride of heart, makes it subdued and pliable -- especially if it is a cross of long duration, and if we can neither avoid it nor find delight in other things. David therefore called "being chastised" being oppressed: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes. I know, O Lord ... that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psalms 119:71; Psalms 119:75). Therefore, submit yourself to the rod and to Him who has appointed it, and you will become humble.

Thirdly, there is the book of God's benefits and blessings. On the one hand they will humble us when we consider our ingratitude in failing to end with them in the Lord with a lively heart. They also teach us our inability to use them well, for we need strong legs to bear up under days of prosperity. The receipt of benefits renders some unhappy and they are happy when they may lose them. On the other hand, however, a believer will be deeply convinced of his unworthiness upon receiving special benefits. In humility of heart he will say with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth" (Genesis 32:10). When the Lord rejoiced the heart of David, he said, "And I will yet be more vile than thus" (2 Samuel 6:22).

1 The Statenvertaling reads: "... de broeder die nederig is," that is, "... the brother who is humble."

089. Chapter 84: Meekness

----- CHAPTER EIGHTY-FOUR -----

Meekness

Humility begets meekness, and it is the latter we now wish to discuss. We shall consider it in a comprehensive sense; that is, as far as it includes longsuffering and tolerance. In Hebrew it is the word 'anawah, which is a derivative from a word, which among other things, means: to be humbled, to humble one's self, to be submissive, and to be oppressed. Other derivatives include poor, oppressed, and wretched. Thus, in the vernacular, meekness is expressive of a poor, humble disposition as far as the human use of this expression is concerned. In Greek we have the word praotes, which is a derivative of a word meaning "to transfer." This refers to a person who readily establishes contact with others and with whom others easily make contact in turn. It can also refer to presence of mind. This is indicative of a person who always has his presence of mind and does not lose self-control as a result of anger. Our Dutch word, being a composite form of the words "tender" and "heart," expresses this disposition very well. Thus, it refers to a heart that is tender in its dealings.

Meekness is the believer's even-tempered disposition of heart which issues forth from union with God in Christ, consisting in self-denial and love for his neighbor. This results in having fellowship with his neighbor in an agreeable, congenial, and loving manner; in relinquishing his rights; in enduring the violation of his rights without becoming angry, being forgiving, and in rewarding it with good. This virtue also resides in the heart. The understanding, having been enlightened, perceives the vanity and transitory nature of all that is to be found in the world -- and that it is not worthy of our being disturbed about upon it being removed from us, nor of going to great lengths to attain it. The enlightened understanding is acquainted with the evil of human nature, its readiness to yield to wrath, and the readiness of the natural man to do injury to his neighbor either by words or deeds. The enlightened understanding perceives that irritableness and anger are foolish sentiments which neither yield restoration nor prevent harm. Instead, they aggravate the matter and will inflict more damage. It thus deems it best to endure all things and remain silent. Meekness is therefore wisdom. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13). The will loves this virtue, embraces it, and by way of exercise is increasingly able to control and govern the affections, in order that they do not become too violent and too disorderly. To be tender in countenance and words can frequently be nothing more than hypocrisy. The very term "meekness" implies that the heart must be tender. If the soul is in such a frame, then whatever issues forth from this fountain will cause the entire disposition of a person -- as well as his countenance and words -- to be unpretentious and tender. "... even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:4). The Subject and Object of Meekness

Let us consider the subject of this virtue. Meekness is a virtue which is to be found in believers only. A natural man may have something which resembles meekness. It may be that someone has

a lethargic and lazy disposition, is bereft of wisdom, and is not aware what is either to his advantage or disadvantage. It may be that he is so poor and miserable that he is without hope and courage; being in despair, he simply endures everything. It may be that he has a tender disposition and thus gives little reason for disturbances. It may be that he is a wise and intelligent man in the natural sense of the word, and thus perceives the foolishness of anger and the suitableness of meekness, as well as the dishonor resulting from the one and the honor from the other. It may also be that he holds a prominent and distinguished position and does not concern himself with the one who is beneath him, since such a person cannot harm him. All this has the appearance of meekness, but is not meekness; at best it is but a natural meekness, which neither proceeds from the right fountain nor contains the true essence. Only a believer who is presently united with Christ, however, and is spiritually alive due to the influence of His Spirit, is capable of being truly meek. "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Galatians 6:1). They are contrasted with the ungodly: "The Lord lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground" (Psalms 147:6). The object of this virtue is man's neighbor, that is, every person. Meekness is also practiced toward God; it relates to His commandments being embraced with a compliant and willing soul. James speaks of this: "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). It also pertains to chastisements to which one quietly submits his soul without fretfulness. Aaron thus remained silent when his children were burned (Leviticus 10:3). When Eli received a grievous message, he said, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good" (1 Samuel 3:18). However, our reference here is to meekness which is manifested toward people -- regardless of whether they are good or evil, godly or ungodly, deal tenderly or harshly, or deal righteously or unrighteously with us. Velvet remains soft irrespective of whether it is handled roughly or gently, whether it is stroked by a soft hand or a hand which is rough and callous. This is also true for a meek person, since his disposition is not of an external nature, and is not dependent upon the manner in which he is treated. Rather, the soul has this disposition when she is not in the presence of any person as well as in the absence of the occurrence of any event. Thus, such a person will remain the same regardless of how the events he encounters may vary. "... Showing all meekness unto all men" (Titus 3:2). The Essence of Meekness The essence of this virtue consists in having an even-tempered disposition of heart. Since all that satisfies man must come from an external source, he has a desire for, and is inclined toward, that which he believes will satisfy him. Since he does not have God in view at all (or only partially), he focuses either fully or partially upon that which is of the world. More particularly, he desires that toward which he is most inclined, or what most suits his abilities. Since people have desires toward the same thing, and thus are a hindrance to each other, the heart of those who are hindered in achieving their objective will be stirred up and tossed to and fro by an inner turmoil -- as if they were at sea during a storm. A meek person has chosen God to be his portion, however, and perceives all that is in the world to be vanity, and knows that no one will either speak or do anything except God wills it. Thus, as he trusts in God, his heart will be even-tempered and fixed. His heart is neither in turmoil nor restless, but is of an even-tempered, steadfast, and peaceful disposition. If someone assaults him in either word or deed, he will be as an even shore upon which the tempestuous waves crash and then trickle away playfully. This disposition is expressed in the following passages: "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord" (Psalms 112:7); "Truly my soul waiteth upon God" (Psalms 62:1); "He layeth up sound wisdom [Note: The Statenvertaling reads as follows: "Hij legt weg voor de oprechten een bestendig wezen," that is, "He furnishes the

righteous with a steadfast disposition.”] for the righteous” (Proverbs 2:7). This even-temperedness is accompanied by:

(1) Flexibility; a meek person is cooperative and will adjust himself to another person; that is, insofar as it is not contrary to God’s will. “Yea, all of you be subject one to another” (1 Peter 5:5).

(2) Agreeableness; the meek person stubbornly insists neither upon his own will nor upon his own judgment in temporal and neutral matters -- as long as it is not contrary to God’s law. He will listen to the views of and comply with the will of others; he will readily permit himself to be persuaded to that end. “But the wisdom that is from above is ... peaceable” (James 3:17).

(3) Loveliness; the meek person is charming in his speech and actions. He is good-natured, a pleasure to deal with, and friendly, so that it is a delight to interact with him. “Whatsoever things are lovely ... think on these things” (Php 4:8); “... be ... gentle, showing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2); “Let your moderation be known unto all men” (Php 4:5); “Be courteous” (1 Pet 3:8). The Moving Cause of Meekness

God is the moving cause of meekness. Man is naturally inclined to lose his temper, be angry, rancorous, and as prickly as a thorn bush which one cannot touch without being injured by it. However, when God regenerates a man according to the image of the meek Jesus, He grants him a meek heart. The apostle therefore also lists meekness among the fruits of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is ... meekness” (Galatians 5:23). A virtue never functions independently. The one virtue will always beget the other, and the one will be supportive of the other. This is also true for meekness.

(1) It issues forth from a heart that is united with God in Christ. When man has God as his portion, he has everything and has no need for anything beyond. He does not look to others in such a manner, as if he could expect something from them. He is not afraid of anyone taking something away from him, for such a person perceives all men as being but tools in the hands of his God, whom He will utilize to his advantage. If someone says anything evil about or to him, he understands that God has ordered it to be so. If anyone inflicts evil upon him, he understands that God has directed it to be so, and he acquiesces in the wise and good government of his God. He understands that if he were to become wrathful and envious, he would be opposing God Himself, and he therefore endures everything with a quiet and calm conscience.

(2) The denial of self proceeds from this disposition. The meek person no longer considers his own desires; he neither seeks nor is desirous for their fulfillment. He has discarded the desire for vain honor, the love of men, prominence, and the riches of this world. He does not want these. Why would he then quarrel about such things or become angry if someone were to challenge him in this respect? This disposition in turn engenders meekness.

(3) The meek person also loves his neighbor. One can endure much from someone he loves. A man with love will not do evil to his neighbor; the man who loves people will be grieved that his neighbor, in wronging him, is sinning. He observes his neighbor with compassion upon seeing him in such turmoil, thus bringing the wrath of God upon him. Should he then yet add grief to his neighbor’s grief? Behold, he is therefore meek. The Effects of Meekness The effects of meekness are:

(1) A being congenial, so that it is a pleasant and effortless task to interact with the meek person. A meek person is loved by everyone, and as long as his disposition is such, he will not be hated by anyone -- even though he may be ridiculed by some as having a vile and contemptible spirit. He will not have as much opposition as others, and there will even be among worldly people those who defend him. People will find his company enjoyable, and after having departed from him, the fellowship they had with him will make some impression upon the heart, convincing them that he is a godly person, whereas they themselves are not. They will thus become desirous to be like him.

(2) A relinquishing of one's rights. A meek person is a wise person; his wisdom is of a meek nature, and he is neither witless nor insensitive. He can indeed judge what is right, and he is capable of standing up for his rights. He will do so if this is God's will and he is under obligation to do so. However, he does so with quiet earnestness, freedom, and in a noble manner -- always in such a manner that his meekness shines forth. If, however, there are matters in which he may yield, then he would rather do so than to gain that which is his ultimate right by fighting for it.

(3) Enduring injustice. A meek person neither wishes to get even nor to avenge himself -- even if he were able to do so. Instead, the meek person will endure this and overlook it as if it had not been perpetrated upon him. "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

(4) The forgiving of injustice. Forgiveness does not merely consist in a refraining from taking vengeance, meanwhile harboring animosity and hatred in the heart. Instead, it consists in not holding the offender accountable and in loving him no less than before. It means that the offender must be treated as if he had not committed the deed. This is what Christ teaches: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any" (Mark 11:25). The apostle requires this: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any" (Colossians 3:13).

(5) The rewarding of evil with good. To render evil for evil is carnal, to reward good with evil is devilish, but to reward evil with good is Christian. The latter is true for the meek person: "Not rendering evil for evil" (1 Peter 3:9); "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44); "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Romans 12:20).

The Need for Self-Examination
Meekness has been held before you in its nature, so that it might be to you as a mirror in which you can observe yourself -- a mirror whereby you can ascertain how much or little you resemble a meek person. Apply this freely to your heart. To be void of the virtue of meekness -- and thus to have a disposition which is to the contrary -- is a most abominable sin and a more wretched condition to be in than you imagine. Be first convinced of this. Take then to heart what manner of person you are before God and what will befall you due to this.

(1) Do you have such an even-tempered and stable disposition of heart when people maltreat you in word and deed? Does your inner peace issue forth from union with God in Christ, from denial of self, from love for your neighbor? Are you easy to get along with, flexible, agreeable, sweet, and loveable as you interact with your neighbor? Can you relinquish your right without being disturbed about it and do you yield in a good-natured manner? Do you endure it when you have been

wronged -- even then when you would be able to avenge yourself? Do you heartily forgive your neighbor, as if he had not wronged you at all and without affecting your love to him? Do you reward evil with good, doing so sincerely and affectionately? Before you answer me, reflect upon your dealings with your superiors, equals, strangers, friends, subordinates, wife, children, and servants. Having done so, what is your answer upon these questions? Have your dealings been characterized by meekness? Oh, how many must be convinced here that as yet they have nothing -- yes nothing -- of this meekness! It is thus a certainty that everything said in God's Word about the meek is not applicable to you.

(2) Or do you have a cross, fretful, and irritable nature? Do you have as many spines as a porcupine does, or are you as prickly as a thorn bush, so that one cannot be in your presence without being pricked? That this is so is proven by the fact you are always in trouble -- now with the one and then with the other -- and that you are always complaining that you are being wronged, and that your servants do not fulfil their obligations toward you. Be assured, however, that you are to be blamed; you have a nature which is disagreeable and irritable. Are you readily provoked to anger, does your blood boil, and do all sorts of emotions stir in you, even though you do not say a word? Or do you show your anger by way of an angry countenance? Or does your anger manifest itself by speaking ill-advisedly, by quarreling, or by using abusive language? And would this not result in physical abuse if others would not prevent you from doing so? Perhaps you do not lash out in word or deed, but rather swallow it for the time being. Does this, however, beget a hatred and aversion in your heart which manifests itself subsequently -- when there is an opportunity -- in vengeance, so that you may requite another for the evil previously committed; or do you delight yourself if something evil befalls him? How does your conscience respond to all these questions? Behold, you are thus void of meekness and have a spiteful disposition.

God's Inevitable Judgment upon Those who Are void of Meekness

Come, consider what God says about you, and what will befall you. First, you are in the same sinful condition in which the first world was, this being the reason why it perished in the flood. You must anticipate a similar end. "The earth was filled with violence. And God said ... I will destroy them with the earth" (Genesis 6:11; Genesis 6:13).

Secondly, you have Cain's disposition and you will not escape Cain's punishment: "And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And now art thou cursed from the earth" (Genesis 4:5; Genesis 4:11).

Thirdly, you resemble Lamech, whose wrath was so great that he said, "I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold" (Genesis 4:23-24). If anyone considers Lamech to be a courageous man, this is an indication that he finds delight in his abominable disposition, and that he himself is abominable before God. This has been recorded to Lamech's eternal shame, and such a person will be a marked man as he was.

Fourthly, as often as wrath, anger, hatred, and vengeance arise, so often are you a murderer before God. As often as you cast a wrathful glance at your neighbor, as many a biting word as you express toward him, so often are you committing murder: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). God curses the perpetrators of anger: "Cursed be their anger, for it was

fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel" (Genesis 49:7). And, what will be the end of all murderers? "But ... murderers ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). Therefore, as insignificant as it may seem to you that you are without meekness; as heroic as you consider yourself in your wrath and in avenging yourself, so abominable you are in the eyes of God, and so dreadful will your end be if you do not repent. Do not imagine that your pretenses will excuse you before God.

Evasive Argument #1: A person is human, and one simply cannot overlook all the wrong that is done to him; flesh and blood cannot endure all this.

Answer: Flesh and blood will also not inherit the kingdom of God. It will even be more difficult for you to avoid the fire of hell.

Evasive Argument #2: If I simply take everything, people would act that much more boldly toward me. Therefore, I must fight back and teach them to respect my rights and to leave me alone.

Answer: You will thereby neither protect your rights nor enjoy your peace; rather, you will lose both and must anticipate the judgment of God to your terror -- instead of enjoying peace you will experience terror within and without.

Evasive Argument #3: In doing so they assault my reputation, and this I must protect.

Answer: In doing so you will not defend your reputation, but bring shame upon yourself. The best way to defend your reputation is to let your conversation be steadfast and godly. And, if you are accused, then you are to demonstrate your innocence quietly and to answer softly if the opportunity is there. If not, be silent, for that is better than to lash out in anger; that is the work of fools (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

Believers Exhorted to Be Meek

Believers, even if worldly men are rancorous, wrathful, and vengeful, this conduct is not becoming to you. You are to have an aversion for, and to hate and flee these things; instead, endeavor to be meek.

First, God denominates you a meek person on the basis of this virtue: "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth" (Zephaniah 2:3). The earth is filled with violence, and the very best among natural men is but a thorn. God's children are, however, of a different and more excellent spirit, manifesting this in their meekness. If you are denominated as a meek person, how much you then ought to endeavor to strive for consistency between your name and your actions!

Secondly, you are a Christian because you resemble Christ and live according to His laws. Jesus was meek and established Himself as an example for you, so that you would learn from Him and imitate Him. "Learn of Me; for I am meek" (Matthew 11:29); "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:1). Christ commands you to be thus: "Seek meekness" (Zephaniah 2:3); "... that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness" (Ephesians 4:1-2). Behold, there you have the example and commandment of Jesus, whom you love, and whom you desire to imitate and obey. Therefore, this ought to motivate you strongly to strive for meekness.

Thirdly, it behooves you to be meek in all that you undertake as a Christian.

(1) When you are to hear the Word of God, it must be done with meekness: "Receive with meekness the engrafted word" (James 1:21).

(2) When you are to pray, it must occur while "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8).

(3) When you are to make profession of and give an account of your faith and hope, such is to occur "with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

(4) When you are called to instruct others, then meekness is also mandatory: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Timothy 2:25).

(5) Meekness is needed when rebuking: "Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Galatians 6:1). You are obligated to perform these duties, and without meekness they cannot be performed. It will, however, be pleasing to both God and man if you perform them in meekness. Such conduct will bring forth excellent fruit and you will have a peaceful conscience.

Fourthly, meekness is a glorious ornament of the church. The church is the glory of Christ, and when she is glorious, God and Christ are glorified. The latter is the desire of a true member of the church. It is his desire that he may contribute something to that, and since meekness is most eminent in glory in the eyes of those who are within and without, the Christian must strive in an extraordinary manner to be adorned with this ornament. Meekness itself is an ornate garment which covers nakedness and adorns with beauty the one who wears it. "Put on therefore ... bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12). Furthermore, the meek are also adorned with salvation. "He will beautify the meek with salvation" (Psalms 149:4). This ornament makes them pleasing in God's sight: "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4). It is pleasing to man: "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression" (Proverbs 19:11). Thus, the meek person adorns the church, shining forth there as a bright star.

Fifthly, great promises are made to the meek, which will most certainly be fulfilled for them, such as:

(1) answers upon their prayers: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble" (Psalms 10:17);

(2) being led by the Spirit: "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach his way" (Psalms 25:9);

(3) being filled with grace: "He giveth grace unto the lowly" (Proverbs 3:34);

(4) the experience of joy: "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord" (Isaiah 29:19).

(5) deliverance from all who trouble them. Even though the meek may be without protection against the unrighteous dealings of such, they nevertheless have one who takes note of them and rescues them: "When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth" (Psalms 76:9); "The Lord lifteth up the meek" (Psalms 147:6);

(6) provision for all that they stand in need of for soul and body: "The meek shall eat and be satisfied" (Psalms 22:26); "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalms 37:11); "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). The world, and all that is in it, is theirs; they are its possessors (1 Corinthians 3:21-22). Whatever they possess -- be it much or little -- they have in the favor of God, and they make use of it with a peaceful conscience. They will not have much opposition in the world, for rarely will anyone oppress one who is truly meek; and if he does, he will cease as soon as he perceives his meekness. Yes others, even natural men, will protect the meek, and thus the meek sojourn safely through this world. They do not have the troubles which other people have. Therefore, they who covet these promises ought to endeavor to be meek.

Sixthly, the meek are wise, are of a noble spirit, and have strength to conquer all resistance. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32). The meek person can overcome where a rich person with his money, a prominent person with his prominence, and an angry person with his boisterous violence, must fail. He will conquer his enemies solely by his meekness and by rewarding them good for evil. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head" (Proverbs 25:21-22). This will be as unbearable to such a person as being burned by fiery coals. He will perceive that his wrath and hostility are not given any more attention than the anger of an ant, which will not concern anyone in the least. He will perceive that the meek person excels him since he rules over his heart -- and thus the enemy will have to subject himself as a vanquished one. This is unbearable to him, and it ought to lead him to repentance -- which occasionally occurs. He should learn from this not to oppose the meek person, since he will no longer receive any attention. He will no more be able to offend him than a large fly can trouble an ox while sitting upon his horns, but will himself be conquered.

Advice for Improvement

Meditate upon these arguments and allow them to have effect upon your heart in order that from henceforth you would endeavor to attain a meek disposition of heart. Be assured that you are neither born with it, will not receive it by wishing for it, nor will readily acquire it. Effort is required for it. Therefore, engage yourself in this duty.

(1) To that end you must continually take notice of those occasions when you lose your meek disposition; that is, when impatience and anger arise in you, and manifest themselves unto others. Reflect upon this for some time until it grieves you and you see your foolishness, sinfulness, and offensive behavior, and make renewed resolutions to correct this.

(2) Flee the company of impatient and angry people, for this is as infectious as the plague. "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul" (Proverbs 22:24-25). When you observe such and their behavior, take note of their foolishness so that you may develop an aversion for it, and, by way of a vivid example, may learn that "anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

(3) Seek the company of the meek and carefully observe their conduct. Observe in them how desirable meekness is. "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:19).

(4) Always hold before you the example of the meek Jesus. To that end read the gospels frequently, continually taking note of the manner in which the Lord Jesus manifested His meekness. Impress this upon your heart in such a manner, so that, so to speak, the very nature of it is transferred unto you. And if something occurs which is unsettling, allow your thoughts to turn to the gospels to ascertain whether or not the Lord Jesus has been in such a situation and how He conducted Himself under those circumstances, or how He would have conducted Himself in such a situation -- and then follow His example.

(5) When you (either within or outside of your home) come into the company of people, arm yourself with meekness, conducting yourself as if you are entering into battle. Make the express resolution that you will be meek and ask the Lord for strength for the moment. If the occasion arises, see to it that the enemy gain not the advantage, and when you are again alone, reflect upon how you have fared. If all went well, thank the Lord and keep this peaceful disposition of heart in remembrance, in order that you may thus be stirred up to conduct yourself again in this manner. If you fell into sin, grieve over this; however, do not become discouraged, for one cannot learn to practice this glorious virtue that quickly. Instead, take new courage so that you may fare that much better in the future.

090. Chapter 85: Peaceableness

----- CHAPTER EIGHTY-FIVE -----

Peaceableness

Love for our neighbor, humility, and meekness will beget peaceableness. Wherever the first three are to be found, the last will also be found. It is this virtue which we now wish to consider. In Hebrew this is expressed by the word *menuchah*, which means rest or quietness. A peacemaker is quiet and at peace within and without -- personally, as well as in the presence of others. There is also the word *shalom*, which is a derivative of *shalam*. This means: to be prosperous, to have peace, to complete. A peacemaker has peace, is prosperous, and completes his task with ease. In Greek we have the words *eirenikos* and *eirenopoios*). This word is derived from a root which means "to bind together," for peace unites the hearts, and binds people together. The apostle therefore speaks of "the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

Peaceableness is a believer's quiet and contented disposition of soul, inclining him toward, and causing him to strive for, the maintaining of a relationship with his neighbor characterized by sweet unity--doing so in the way of truth and godliness. The subject of peaceableness is the soul of the believer, this being the exclusive residence of this virtue. Even though the unconverted may refrain from strife and discord, they do not have this peaceable disposition of heart. "And the way of peace have they not known" (Romans 3:17). Rather, it is the ornament of possessors of grace, Christians who have been reconciled by the blood of Christ, who is their peace (cf. Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 2:14). They, having received the Lord Jesus by faith unto the forgiveness of sins, are justified, and thus have peace with God (Romans 5:1), which peace passes all understanding, and keeps their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Php 4:7). While thus enjoying peace with God in their conscience, it is as if all that is in the world is at peace with them, they are in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field are at peace with them (Job 5:23). They are thus disposed when they interact with people. Their heart goes out after them and their peaceable heart desires nothing but harmony, even when they are alone. Such a disposition is to be found, however, in none but believers, faith being the means whereby such a peaceable disposition is engendered (Romans 5:1). Since peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), no one possesses this unless they are partakers of the Holy Spirit. The object of this virtue is our neighbor -- all men. A peacemaker is continually at war with the devil, the world, and his corrupt flesh -- with them he neither desires nor seeks to be at peace. The more he hates and opposes them, the better he likes it. However, toward men as men -- as his neighbors -- he has a peaceable heart and with them he endeavors to live in peace. First and foremost, the peacemaker lives in peace with the godly. He has a spiritual and very intimate relationship with them whereby their hearts are united in Christ, having the same Spirit and the same regenerate nature. "Have peace one with another" (Mark 9:50). One must, however, not limit himself to the godly. Rather, peaceableness extends to all men, as from his side the peacemaker does not give any reason for discord, and even if he has a just cause, he will overlook it, and will not allow it to disturb the peace. This is the essence of the

apostle's exhortation: "If it be possible [that is, if people can be persuaded to be at peace and if the peace can be preserved], as much as lieth in you [that is, that there be no fault from your side, but strive for this with all your might], live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). The essence of this virtue consists in an inclination, proceeding from inner quietness and contentment, to live in harmony with his neighbor. A peacemaker, living in the enjoyment of peace with God, has a heart free from strife, which, relative to his neighbor, is content and at peace. He does not harbor thoughts of having been wronged by his neighbor, of envy, or of any discontentment. Rather, he is at peace within -- calm, quiet, and satisfied. When he thinks about his neighbor, his heart desires to dwell in harmony with him, and he interacts with him in a most pleasant manner. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Proverbs 3:17). Thus the essence of peace consists in hearts being knit together. It is therefore referred to as a bond: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). He is of one heart with others: "That ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind" (1 Corinthians 1:10). This occurred in the original church: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). A Fruit of Regeneration

Such a peaceable disposition does not issue forth from man's nature, for the one man is as a wolf to the other. God changes that cruel and savage heart, however, and grants His children to be at peace with Him in Christ; this in turn engenders a peaceable heart toward one's neighbor. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" (Isaiah 11:6; Isaiah 11:9). The Lord would transform the barbarous heathen into such persons and thus the apostle enumerates peace as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is ... peace" (Galatians 5:22). The apostle therefore wishes the peace of God upon the congregation. "Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means" (2 Thessalonians 3:16). Thus He is frequently called the God of peace, for He gives peace, and delights in those who are peacemakers (cf. Romans 15:33; 2 Corinthians 13:11). The effect or fruit of peaceableness is a striving to interact with our neighbor in sweet harmony. It will not avail us to imagine that we have a peaceable heart, and to be enamored with such a disposition. To strive for a peaceable relationship with our neighbor without a peaceable heart is but the fruit of nature or hypocrisy. To imagine that we have a peaceable heart and yet not to strive for a peaceable relationship is but a deceiving of self. A peaceable heart cannot fail to manifest peaceableness, and our seeking for harmony by way of an amiable relationship will be commensurate with the strength of that virtue within. It is thus that we shall be able to tolerate those who are not peaceable, and compel them to be peaceable by way of a steadfast manifestation of our love for peace. We must thus convince everyone that we seek peace, and that from our side this peace cannot be disturbed, even though someone else from his side may do so. "Live in peace" (2 Corinthians 13:11).

(1) The word live implies activity. To remain in seclusion without having any fellowship with people; without saying either good or evil about anyone; to be able to accept that everyone prospers; and neither to quarrel, fight, nor be angry -- all that does not constitute living in peace. To live in peace implies having fellowship with people in a pleasant and harmonious manner.

(2) The word live implies continual steadfastness. To occasionally conduct ourselves peacefully is not the same as living peacefully.

Rather, this mandates a continual activity and a perseverance in this respect.

(3) The word live implies “a finding delight in.” A peacemaker is in his element when he is at peace; he is then as a fish in water. When he may be in a peaceable relationship with people, he is joyful -- just as a healthy person delights himself and is of a joyful spirit. “Follow peace with all men” (Hebrews 12:14); “Seek peace, and pursue it” (Psalms 34:14). It is easy to maintain peace when someone else encounters us in a pleasant and peaceable manner, and deals with us according to our wishes. This is not how matters are, however; people are motivated by self-love and they will wrong us in both word and deed. At one time we may encounter someone who is cross, and then again another who is angry, stirring up our corrupt nature to respond to our neighbor in like manner. The peacemaker overlooks this, however, responds in a good-natured manner, and gives in -- even if this is to his own detriment and causes him to lose the esteem of the world. As one who rounds up and hunts wildlife, so he will seek peace and pursue it; and once he attains it, he considers himself to be victorious. The Practice of Peaceableness

However pleasant and desirable peace may be, we must nevertheless be on our guard that we do not pursue and maintain it at the expense of truth and godliness. In our definition we therefore added the following limitation: “in the way of truth and godliness.” There are people who are fearful of experiencing the displeasure and opposition of someone else, and therefore, however much they may be set in their ways and will protect that, so to speak, with a knife in their hands, they nevertheless easily yield that which is not theirs but was entrusted by God to their safekeeping, namely, truth and godliness -- even if this would mean the loss of everything, yes, even their life. Such people will then hide themselves behind the phrase “peace, peace.” This is clear proof that they neither belong to the peacemakers in Israel, nor do they truly have a peaceable heart. They do not seek peace, but their own expedience, and therefore they say, “Peace, peace,” even if this would mean peace with the devil and the world and that they would eternally have to miss peace with God. If new errors manifest themselves, such people insist that they must be silent and give in, for else there would be unrest; peace is best. If there is a sinner who needs to be converted from the error of his ways by way of exhortation and rebuke, one must refrain from this; he might become angry and cause us trouble. If the world insists that rather than manifesting godliness we conceal it, conforming ourselves to the world, such people will be prepared again to do so, for they do not wish unrest and therefore they say by renewal, “Peace, peace.” God says, however, that peace and truth, peace and godliness, must go hand in hand. If injury is done to one of those, we must neither set aside our peaceable heart, nor refrain from pursuing peace from our side. Instead, we are to oppose error and protect the truth. We shall thus oppose ungodliness and adhere to godliness. If others cannot endure this; if this displeases them and they cause trouble and create difficulties -- then this is for their account. A peacemaker will nevertheless adhere to truth and godliness, for God wills that these be conjoined. “Therefore love the truth and peace” (Zechariah 8:19). Athanasius would rather lose his position than to depart from one letter of the truth. Luther was accustomed to say: “I would rather have the heavens fall down, than that one crumb of truth would perish.” “Follow peace with all men, and holiness” (Hebrews 12:14); “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psalms 85:10). The ungodly Jehu answered the question of Joram very well: “Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many” (2 Kings 9:22). “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of

mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). This is the virtue which is so earnestly commanded and insisted upon everywhere in God's Word: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they will be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9); "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace" (Romans 14:19); "Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:13). Are We Peacemakers?

Behold, here is a clear mirror in which you may behold not only your obligation toward peaceableness, but in which you may examine your own disposition and doings. Is peace with God, on the basis of the satisfaction of the Lord Jesus, your portion, having received this by faith unto justification, and does your peaceableness flow from that fountain? Do you know the distinction between the godly and those who are without grace? Is your soul one with the godly in Christ, and does your exercise of peace proceed from this unity? Do you maintain a peaceable disposition from your side and still strive to be at peace when natural man comes against you with much evil? Is your heart at rest, content, and pleased as far as your neighbor is concerned when you think of him in seclusion -- or if you see or speak with him? Or, are there alien, antagonistic, angry, envious, and discontented motions within you? Do you endeavor to manifest your peaceable heart in deeds -- even when others are angry at you and commit evil toward you? Do you love the truth and godliness so much that you do not wish to depart from it one iota, even if the entire world were to assault you, and do you nevertheless maintain a peaceable disposition of heart toward such, seeking by your deeds to manifest peace from your side? How does your soul respond to this in the presence of God? Do you belong to the peacemakers? Do you truthfully possess this in principle, and do you observe your deficiency with sorrow? Or are you convinced that you are truly destitute of this disposition and its resultant deeds? How happy you would be if you were to be convinced of this and were to remain under such conviction until you would be desirous to earnestly seek the Lord Jesus, attain peace with God, and be peaceably inclined toward your neighbor! To that end, reflect for a moment upon the conviction of this sin, and consider at once how God views you, and the judgments which will come upon you. I am addressing you who, when you are in seclusion, are as cruel wolves and tigers; who are as a turbulent sea which cannot be at rest; whose heart is filled with hateful, angry, envious, and quarrelsome thoughts and motions. I am addressing you who are increasingly provoked whenever you see him whom you consider to have offended you, and who explode as gunpowder as soon as someone speaks inappropriately to you or harms you. I am addressing you who not only personally live in discord within and without, but also cause discord between others, and repeatedly and increasingly fan the fire of dissension; and you who have peace in your mouth but discord in your heart. Jeremiah speaks of such: "One speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait" (Jeremiah 9:8). Hear now what God says concerning you.

Threatenings Against the Unpeaceful

First, you are without grace, for you deny everything which denominates you a Christian. God, whom you claim to be your Father, is a God of peace, and you are void of it. Christ, whom you call your Savior, is the Prince of Peace, and you live in continual discord. The Holy Spirit, of whom you claim to be a partaker, works peace, and you live in dissension. The gospel by which you claim to have been regenerated is a gospel of peace, and yet you live in hatred, anger, envy, and discord. You call yourself a child of God; however, such are peaceable and you are not peaceable. You partake of the Lord's Supper by which the hearts of the godly are knit together, whereas your heart

is divided against everyone. You will thus perceive that you have no part in all these matters of which you are boasting.

Secondly, you bear the image of the devil and his children. Your heart and countenance are the express image of Satan, the murderer of men. You are what the ungodly are described to be. The first world was full of violence (Genesis 6:12), and so are you. Ishmael was a wild man; his hand was against every man and every man's hand was against him (Genesis 6:12); such is your condition. Hypocritical and ungodly Israel served God in an external sense; however, they lived in strife and debate, and in fighting and smiting (Isaiah 58:4); such is true of you.

Thirdly, God abhors you and will exercise vengeance upon you: "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: ... A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16; Proverbs 6:19); "Their tongue is as an arrow shot out. ... Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this" (Jeremiah 9:8-9).

Since discord, dissension, and quarreling are evidences of an evil and murderous heart which is filled with anger, envy, vengeance; since such will not inherit the kingdom of heaven, but rather will have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, you cannot expect anything else. You who live in discord with men, be afraid of yourself and of the wrath of God. God also lives in discord with you and He will prevail over you -- which He will cause you to experience. A Deficient Peaceableness And you, who truly -- and in principle -- have a peaceable heart (with so little evidence of it) the foregoing is also meant to be a mirror for you. How little do you resemble this disposition and the life of peacemakers! How many discordant thoughts do you have, and how sharp and biting are your words! How readily do you quarrel and entertain animosity within your heart! How this ought to grieve you! Mourn over this and earnestly seek to banish all discord, striving to have a peaceable heart and to live peaceably, for:

First, the absence of peace in both your heart and deeds will hinder you in all your religious exercises and will contaminate them.

(1) Your heart will lose its disposition to approach unto God, to pray, and to have fellowship with Him. "... that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). Therefore, Paul says, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8).

(2) It causes those who are without and within to be greatly offended. Everyone will be disturbed when they hear a godly person quarrel and argue, for everyone is fully convinced that such is contrary to the nature of the godly and is not becoming for children of God. What does the Lord Jesus say about those who give offense? "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). You who are godly, ought not this to deter you from discord?

(3) You thus become incapable of being of benefit to others, while using all your energy to cause discord in the church. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16).

Secondly, all that is in and related to the church counsels you to be peaceable.

(1) You have been born in the church and have been received as her member. However, the church is called

Shulamite, that is, the peaceable one (Song of Solomon 6:13). Is it then becoming to you to live in discord and disharmony? Does it not behoove you to live in peace?

(2) God, who, while you were yet enemies, has reconciled you to Himself, is the God of peace (Romans 16:20). He desires peace and finds delight in those who are peaceable. Since this God is your Father and you address Him as "Abba, Father!," then how do you dare to come to Him with a heart void of peace and a quarrelsome tongue? How can you have communion with Him while being in such a disposition?

(3) The Lord Jesus -- your Bridegroom who embodies all your comfort, delight, and love -- is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and has reconciled you to God with the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). He commands you: "Have peace one with another" (Mark 9:50); therefore, "Be at peace" (1 Thessalonians 5:13).

(4) The Holy Spirit, who resides in you, has regenerated you, teaches you, and guides you, engenders a peaceable heart within you (Galatians 5:22). He warns you against discord, and continually stirs you up to be at peace. Should you not follow Him? Should you grieve Him who calls you to be at peace (1 Corinthians 7:15)?

(5) The gospel, which is the seed of regeneration and your spiritual nourishment, is the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15). How it therefore behooves you (in harmony with this gospel) to live in peace!

(6) The members of the church with whom you interact as family members -- whom you love, and in whose presence you rejoice -- are peaceable; their heart has a peaceable disposition, and their objective and activity are the pursuit of peace. Would not you offend and grieve them by your discordant behavior? Should you corrupt and stir them up to be quarrelsome as well?

(7) The Lord Jesus denominates you as His dove and sheep (cf. Song of Solomon 2:14; John 10:27). They are among the most peaceful of animals; would a sheep assume the nature of a wolf? Should you then be present among the sheep as if you were a bear?

(8) The sacraments are not only seals of your peace with God but also engender mutual union -- not only as brothers and sisters, but even as members of one body who live by one and the same Spirit. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13); "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). How then do you dare to entertain a discordant thought; how do you dare to open your mouth to quarrel, and show an unfriendly face to someone?

Peaceableness Adorns the Christian Thirdly, consider furthermore the glory of this virtue. It is an extraordinary ornament for a Christian.

(1) It is the manifestation of a meek and quiet spirit, being an incorruptible ornament "which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4). (2) It displays a denial of self whereby we overlook the failures of our neighbor and ignore the wrong done to us. "It is his glory to pass over a

transgression" (Proverbs 19:11).

(3) Herein heavenly wisdom is manifested; quarreling is the work of fools. "A fool's lips enter into contention" (Proverbs 18:6). However, to be peaceable is the work of the wise: "But the wisdom that is from above is ... peaceable" (James 3:17); "For wisdom is better than rubies" (Proverbs 8:11); "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold!" (Proverbs 16:16); "Wisdom is better than strength" (Ecclesiastes 9:16). Wisdom causes the countenance of man to be radiant: "A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine" (Ecclesiastes 8:1). However, all these delightful matters are comprehended in peaceableness.

(4) When the church manifests herself as adorned with the ornament of peaceableness, she is a lovely and delightful object to all who observe her. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalms 133:1). Therefore, shine forth in the church with the eminent ornament of peaceableness.

Fourthly, peaceableness has most eminent rewards.

(1) A peacemaker is joyful: "To the counsellors of peace is joy" (Proverbs 12:20).

(2) Peacemakers are fit to engage in all spiritual exercises toward God and man. Their heart does not condemn them and they therefore have confidence toward God (1 John 3:21). All their words and actions are pleasant, for they proceed from a heart which is at liberty. They are seasoned with salt, that is, with wisdom; salt and peace are therefore conjoined (Mark 9:50).

(3) The Lord dwells with peacemakers in His love and favor. "Live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11). To enjoy the presence of God in the manifestation of His love toward us, is everything. If God is for us, who will then be against us? If He grants tranquility, who will then cause turmoil?

(4) God's blessings are upon the peacemakers: "There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:3). Therefore, let him live in peace who desires to receive all manner of blessings from the Lord.

(5) In summary, God declares them to be His children and the heirs of salvation: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). More we cannot desire; therefore, be diligent to live in peace.

Means to Cultivate Peaceableness

If you are desirous to live in peace: (1) Crucify your desire for money, honor, and love; it is impossible to have and maintain a peaceable heart without self-denial. Or else you yourself will be the cause of others quarrelling with you, since you are seeking after what they pursue. It can easily be that you will encounter them while in such a disposition, and your inner peace will thereby be disturbed. Whatever stirs in the heart will soon spill forth from our mouths. Greediness is a breaker of the peace. "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house" (Proverbs 15:27). Ambition begets strife: "He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife" (Proverbs 28:25). Wherever there is envy toward the honor, gain, and love that others enjoy, the heart cannot but be restless, and this will readily burst forth one way or the other. Envy and strife are therefore conjoined, for together they are a fountain of confusion and every evil work (James 3:16).

(2) Keep to yourself and let others govern their own matters. Do not appoint yourself as a detective and judge concerning the deeds of others; close your ears for backbiters. Do not listen for what is being said about you. "A whisperer separateth chief friends" (Proverbs 16:28); "Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Proverbs 26:20).

Solomon therefore wisely counseled: "Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee" (Ecclesiastes 7:21). And regarding you, remain silent in order that you speak no evil about your neighbor, for that will continually bring you in trouble and frequently stir up discord. "He that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction" (Proverbs 13:3). If you hear others quarreling, see to it that you do not involve yourself in this quarrel. Do not appoint yourself as judge, and then immediately execute your sentence by rendering assistance to the one party. It is an entirely different matter when you counsel others to be at peace. "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears" (Proverbs 26:17). Such a one (who minds the matters of others) is thus in peril of being bitten. "But let none of you suffer ... as a busybody in other men's matters" (1 Peter 4:15).

(3) Be always the least -- both in your own eyes as well as in your conduct toward others. Endure being wronged, and forgive such deeds (Colossians 3:13). In all things yield to the will of others, insofar as this is not contrary to the will of God, following Abraham's example: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee ... if thou wilt take the left hand, then I shall go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I shall go to the left" (Genesis 13:8-9). In this respect one will become rich by giving. By yielding in some measure one will gain peace and a peaceful heart, which is more precious than gold, rubies, and power. "Seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalms 34:14).

(4) If someone else encounters you in an unpleasant manner, or if you detect the first stirring of displeasure, arm yourself at once and resist strife at the very outset; be completely silent. For, if you are not on your guard, the quarrel will increase hand over hand and you will not be able to hold it back. "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water" (Proverbs 17:14).

091. Chapter 86: Diligence

----- CHAPTER EIGHTY-SIX -----

Diligence

God has granted man a soul and a body, as well as the ability to be occupied and to glorify Him with both. Adam, even while in the state of perfection, had physical labor assigned to him. "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15).

After the fall it is also God's will that man be occupied, and He appoints to every man his labor. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called" (1 Corinthians 7:20). God wills that man not only perform his calling, but that he do so diligently. This virtue we shall now discuss. In Hebrew this is expressed by the word *charoots*, which means: "sharp," "pointed," "diligent." In Greek it is expressed by the word *akribeia*. This is expressive of dealing with a matter with utmost care and prudence for the purpose of assuring that the project might be executed and turn out well. Thus, diligence implies considerably more than working only. In turn the word *akribos* is derived from this, which means "diligent." "He spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord" (Acts 18:25); "See then that ye walk circumspectly (that is diligently, precisely)" (Ephesians 5:15). The Greek also use the word *epimeleia*, which is a derivative of *melei*. This conveys the dealing with a matter in a manner which exceeds the ordinary -- with the utmost care. "... seek diligently till she find it" (Luke 15:8). The commonly used word is *spoude* from which our words speed and to speed are derived. It is thus expressive of readiness and being industrious. "He that ruleth, let him do it with diligence" (Romans 12:8).

Diligence is the exertion of the spiritual and physical powers of a believer whereby he willingly, joyously, and earnestly executes that task which God assigns him, doing so because it is the will of God. This virtue only functions in a believer. The unconverted are also diligent in their own way, but their diligence differs as much from the diligence of believers as life differs from death. The diligence of a natural man proceeds from a perverted heart filled with vices. His heart has neither desire nor love for that task as being the will of God. Instead, his objective is to earn a living, please people, or to attain some other objective. That diligence which is a Christian virtue, however, proceeds from a regenerate and believing heart. Faith unites the soul with Christ, and proceeds through Christ unto God as a reconciled Father. This in turn begets love toward God which motivates one to please the Lord, and thus believers view their task as having been commanded them by God. This engenders a willingness to accept this task, joyfulness in performing it, and industriousness to bring it to a good end -- all this because it is the will of God and in order that God might be pleased with that work. The object of diligence is the task which God assigns us. God, in His wisdom and goodness, has ordained that the one man shall live from the other. For that purpose He has instituted various ranks among men and has given each his own task. To one He assigns a task in the church, to another in civil government, and to the other to labor in the home. To each man he assigns a calling: The one becomes a fisherman, the other a

farmer, the other a businessman, and the other a craftsman. Among them there is variety as well: The one is in need of services, whereas the other renders his services. A believer takes note of his station and condition, simultaneously recognizing it to be a divine appointment; and with David, he surrenders himself to the service of the Lord. "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant" (Psalms 116:16). He is thus satisfied with the Lord's appointment for him, irrespective of whether it is prestigious or insignificant, easy or difficult -- it does not matter to him. Since the Lord is sovereign, and at the same time wise, good, and a rewarder of all His faithful servants, the believer accepts his task as one to which he has been called by God (1 Corinthians 7:20).

Exertion of One's Spiritual and Physical Faculties The essence of diligence consists in the exertion of the faculties of both soul and body. The soul of a diligent person is fully engaged to execute the task at hand well.

First, he engages his intellect to consider in what manner, and by what means, he may execute that task in the best possible manner. His mind is focused upon the task while being engaged in it. David conducted himself thus in all that he did: "... a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters" (1 Samuel 16:18); "He ... guided them by the skilfulness of his hands" (Psalms 78:72). Solomon says concerning a wise servant: "A wise servant shall have rule" (Proverbs 17:2); "A man shall be commended according to his wisdom" (Proverbs 12:8).

Secondly, the will is also engaged toward this duty in the following manner:

(1) In willingness. This is the reason why the construction of the walls of Jerusalem prospered, "for the people had a mind to work" (Nehemiah 4:6).

(2) Joyfully. We shall not work as a slave -- and thus contrary to our will, with a fretful heart, and for fear of being beaten. Rather, we shall do so joyfully, since we may serve such a great Lord and compassionate Father. Regardless of whether it is a spiritual or physical task, the diligent do their task joyfully, being an assignment from their Lord and Father. "Serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalms 100:2).

Thirdly, the emotions and affections are also engaged. The diligent person will be industrious, zealous, and find delight in his work. Just as a spirited horse, being ready to run, will kick against the door of the stable in order that he might get out, the diligent person is likewise so industrious that he is already involved in his task before the other person is half ready. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments" (Psalms 119:60). They are as "a flaming fire" (Psalms 104:4). "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings" (Proverbs 22:29).

Fourthly, the diligent person also engages the powers and faculties of the body for any physical labor to be engaged in. He neither fears perspiration nor fatigue; doing the will of the Lord is worth this to him. He considers it an honor to come before the Lord with a perspiring countenance, showing himself before Him exhausted and fatigued, saying: "This is due to the delightful and joyous engagement in Thy work." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). **The Objective of the Diligent Person** The laborer's objective motivates him, and this in turn determines the means he uses to attain his objective. It is thus that the diligent person is motivated by his objective: to do the will of God. There are times when he could do without work as such; however, it is his life to do the will of God. Whatever the diligent do, they do it because it is the will of God. They therefore dare neither to engage in any task which is sinful nor

to make use of any sinful means for a task which in and of itself is neutral. When they are self-employed, doing their task quietly, they hold God before them as commanding them to do so. If it is their calling to work for and serve someone else, they perceive in this the will of God. This is the principle, substance, and purpose of all that they do: They serve God. The diligent person also labors to make a living, provide for his family, and give something to the needy. Ultimately this is all a doing of the will of God, however, since it pleases the Lord to provide him with all this by means of labor. The apostle Paul teaches us that when we serve men we must do so as serving God: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as ... the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:57). A Lack of Diligence Rebuked By demonstrating what diligence is as a Christian virtue, the following persons ought to be convicted: First, all worms of the earth, who burrow in the earth as moles, who are indeed engaged in labor but, nevertheless, are without this virtue. Since God has imposed labor upon man, such persons pretend that their labor is religiously motivated. They must know, however, that work as such is not a religious activity. In order for it to have a religious dimension, it must be engaged in with that disposition, in that manner, and with that objective as we have just delineated. Our labor becomes a religious activity when we perform it with a heart united with Christ -- and through Him with God -- and thereby view God as a reconciled God and Father, and thus have a childlike disposition. The believer deems the labor of his calling to be a task imposed upon him by God. He fully embraces God's will and does his work with childlike obedience, having as his objective thereby to serve and please God. You miss all this, and you must thus perceive that your labor does not have a religious perspective; rather it is but a service which you render to and for yourselves. God has pronounced this curse upon all the unconverted: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" Genesis 3:17; Genesis 3:19. It is this curse which God threatens in Deuteronomy 28:20: "The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do." You are thus not able to reassure yourself that your labor is of a religious nature.

Secondly, many practice the opposite vice, namely laziness. This is such a shameful sin that the most lazy man does not wish to be labelled with it. Such a man ought to know that a lazy person is a disgrace to the church, no matter what his station in life may be. Regardless of whether he is a government official, minister, elder, deacon, married or unmarried person, tradesman, businessman, laborer, man or woman -- if such a person is a member of the church of Christ, he or she is a disgrace to Christ and His congregation. Who is lazy?

(1) He who is without work, for a diligent person will always find work. A lazy person complains that there is no work, for he cannot tolerate work. He has conducted himself in such a manner that no one wishes to have him in his employ, nor give him any work. He avoids opportunities to work, and if a position opens up, he excuses his idleness by saying: "I can't work there." However, a diligent person seeks and finds work; if the one thing does not work out, he tries something else.

(2) A lazy person is one who loves to sleep long, and who delights in turning from one side to the other in his bed, thus enabling him to slumber that much longer and that much more sweetly. Solomon describes the sluggard as such: "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep" (Proverbs 19:15); "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little

sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep" (Proverbs 6:9-10); "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed" (Proverbs 26:14).

(3) A lazy person is careless. He is disorderly, brings everything into disarray, and leaves it as such. I am not suggesting that all who put their accomplishments on display are diligent; nevertheless, carelessness is a sign of laziness. Occasionally it occurs that a diligent person is so occupied that some things have to wait in preference to others; however, this is contrary to his wishes. But, to wear torn clothing, to have a house full of dust and spider webs, and to let everything be dirty, are indicative of being a lazy person. "Drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags" (Proverbs 23:21); "I went by the field of the slothful ... and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down" (Proverbs 24:30-31).

(4) A lazy person is afraid of work. He fiddles around, walks to and fro, surveys his task before he begins, and if neither necessity would compel him nor shame would pressure him, he would refrain from working. At one time there is this obstacle and then again another. Then it is either too hot or too cold, the tools are not adequate, or the supplies are deficient. He believes that there will still be time to do the task, and he will do it at a later time. When he lies upon his bed, or walks about idly, he will form a conception of his work and contemplate how it ought to be done. Then he will contemplate how desirable the advantages are which proceed from diligence. He resolves to engage himself as such and to courageously undertake the task. It is as if he already did the work; however, when the time is there, he cannot get himself to do it. "A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom" (Proverbs 19:24); "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets" (Proverbs 22:13). When the sluggard actually does work, it is impossible to observe him without abhorrence. It is as if his legs drag behind him, as if his legs sank into the earth up to his knees, and as if all that he touched was tar and thus cleaved to his hands. He will carefully examine what he is working on, change its position in various ways, will fit it, measure it again, and will stroke it once more; and thus time passes on. In the meantime, he will even insist upon double wages.

(5) A lazy person is a man full of ideas and imagination. As far as he is concerned, matters are not handled well; it should be handled thus and thus. He dreams of great things; in his imagination he dreams himself to be one thing, and then again another thing, always knowing best when judgment must be given in a given situation. "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason" (Proverbs 26:16). He believes that he has learned the wrong trade. If only he were in such and such a situation and had such and such a job, all would be well. He does not care for his profession, however, and occupies himself with trifles. He will construct one thing, disassemble something else, and do everything else -- except the labor of his calling.

Arguments to Deter Laziness

We have thus fully depicted the lazy person for you, so that everyone might be convinced how much or how little he resembles such a person. And truthfully, some of the godly are also not entirely free from this. Even if they are diligent, very much is lacking as far as the pure nature of diligence (as previously described) is concerned. In order to further deter everyone from laziness, we shall hold before you some of its evil consequences.

First, God hates the sluggard, which he demonstrates by the fact that He did not want the firstborn of an ass. It either had to be redeemed, or else its neck had to be broken (Exodus 13:13). What a dreadful state it is to be hated and abhorred by God, and to be worthy of having our neck broken or our skull crushed!

Secondly, a sluggard is hated and despised by all honorable men. Men will have compassion for a poor person, but who will have compassion for a sluggard? "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him" (Proverbs 10:26). Such a person is a nuisance and troublesome to have around.

Thirdly, a sluggard is a burden to himself. He must work and he does not want to work. When he begins to work, it is a double burden for him. It is as if he has to pass through a hedge of thorns with his naked body, thorns pricking him from all sides. "The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns" (Proverbs 15:19).

Fourthly, the sluggard brings himself and his loved ones to extreme poverty, thus being worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8). His grief and destitute condition cause him to waste away. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing" (Proverbs 13:4); "The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh" (Ecclesiastes 4:5).

Fifthly, laziness is the fountain of all manner of sin, vain thoughts, fornication 2 Samuel 11:2, backbiting Romans 1:30, unrighteousness, and despair. And thus one sin begets the other, upon which at last eternal death follows as its wages (Romans 6:23). Therefore, be fearful of laziness. He who is lazy in temporal matters will be lazy in spiritual matters, and he who is diligent in spiritual matters will be diligent in temporal matters.

Believers Exhorted to be Diligent To the same degree that a believer hates and flees laziness, so earnest must he be in endeavoring to be diligent, doing so in the spiritual manner as has been proposed. A godly person cannot but be enamored when viewing this virtue in its beauty, and will earnestly endeavor to perform his physical labors in a spiritual manner. To be further stirred up in this matter, consider the following:

First, there is God's command. You have chosen the Lord to be your God and have surrendered yourself to His service. A servant will ask his master: "What would you have me do?" You ought to conduct yourself as such. Therefore, hear God's command: "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). It appears that this was greatly lacking in this congregation, for he exhorts them to that end also in his second letter: "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12). These words are also addressed to you.

Secondly, diligence is an ornament to the Christian, and it removes the slanderous accusation which worldly citizens make concerning the godly; that they frequent all church services, catechism lessons, lectures, and meetings (going from the one to the other), while neglecting their calling, not giving attention to their families, and being lazy. Citizens of the world think much of diligence and have little use for godliness. You, however, ought to join them, so that everyone may

be convinced that godliness renders people both diligent and upright. You will thus be an ornament to the church of God, put those to shame who slander godliness, and stir up others.

Thirdly, God holds before us His own example: to labor six days and to rest on the seventh (Exodus 20:9-11). The Lord Jesus says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). It thus behooves us to be industrious. How else would you dare to expect a blessing from the Lord? Even the animals teach you to be diligent.

Fourthly, God promises His blessing upon diligence. This blessing is not inherent in industry itself, for "it is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows" (Psalms 127:2). Rather, it is all dependent upon God's blessing. Moses therefore prayed, "Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it" (Psalms 90:17). God causes His commandment to prosper with those who comply with it. Why is it that an ungodly man who cultivates and sows his field harvests much fruit and that a godly person, if he were not to cultivate his land and sow the seed in an appropriate manner, would come home with empty hands at harvest time? Is the earth capable in and of itself to bring forth grain? Is it not God who causes it to come forth from the earth? Why then do the ungodly receive so much and the godly so little? Does God prefer the ungodly over the godly? No; rather, God blesses what He commands, and thus the ungodly are blessed because they use the means ordained by God. If someone fails to do so, he will also miss the fruit. If, however, a godly person is industrious, he will not only have fruit, but his fruit will also be blessed. This is according to promise: "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich" (Proverbs 10:4); "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule" (Proverbs 12:24); "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat. Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase" (Proverbs 13:4; Proverbs 13:11). Even if a godly person does not gather as much as he would desire in a natural sense, the Lord's blessing will nevertheless rest upon the little that he has. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (Psalms 37:16). This promise will be confirmed to you: "For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee" (Psalms 128:2).

092. Chapter 87: Compassion

----- CHAPTER EIGHTY-SEVEN -----

Compassion

God, in His wisdom and goodness, is pleased to preserve and govern all things upon this earth by the use of means. This is true for the inanimate as well as the animate creation. One person's life is contingent upon that of another. Thousands of people are involved in the well-being of one person; however, the nature of this involvement is such that each person seeks his own welfare. When help is rendered to a needy person, however, the only objective is (and indeed ought to be) the welfare of the person who is being helped; that is, when we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, and render assistance to the poor, sick, and weak. This practice is referred to as compassion, benevolence, liberality, and kindness. This is a virtue praised by all, practiced by few, and practiced rightly by even fewer. In Hebrew we have the word *rechem* (= mercy), which is expressive of love of the most tender sort -- a love that is most readily stirred up. The tender motion of a mother toward the fruit of her womb is designated by the very same word *rechem*. The apostle therefore expresses compassion as the bowels of mercy *Colossians 3:12*, as they are the fountain from which compassion proceeds. The Hebrew word for compassion, *nedivah*, means as much as being noble and willing to give freely, as the giving of the compassionate person is not compulsory. His giving is motivated by his own inclination and noble disposition. Benevolence is expressed as *chesed*, which means mercifulness and kindness, since it proceeds from a good and kind heart. The meaning of liberality in Hebrew is identical in our language. It means to share; that is, to divide what we have. It means that we keep one portion for ourselves and give another portion to another, and thus in that sense make that person equal to ourselves. The Greek word *eleos* or mercy is indicative of being distraught. It is the result of the compassionate person taking the needs of the other person to heart to such an extent as if he himself were in that condition.

Compassion is the inner motion of sympathy in the heart of a believer, generated by a consideration of the misery of the other person, thus motivating the believer to assist another in very deed. This virtue is exclusively to be found in the believer. Outwardly an unconverted person can perform whatever a godly person performs. The distinction is as great, however, as the difference between the artificial motion of a watch and the motion of a living being. The natural man is dead in sins and trespasses and is thus unto all good work reprobate. His compassion proceeds from a natural heart, which in reality is a having compassion with himself, imagining within himself what it would be like if he were that miserable. He therefore, so to speak, gives to himself, except that he has a heart which strives to be rewarded with honor and love. The godly person, however, has spiritual life by reason of his faith in Christ. Since he has become a partaker of the nature of Christ as a result of that union, his actions are motivated by love to God and His will. From this proceeds love for his neighbor, being inclined also to seek his spiritual welfare in order that God may be thanked and glorified by the recipient of such help. It is with such a

disposition that the believer helps the needy person. The apostle therefore limits compassion to the elect who are holy and beloved: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies" (Colossians 3:12). The object of compassion is a given need. Love manifests itself toward the neighbor by reason of his being our neighbor, irrespective of what condition he may be in. However, the compassionate person is moved in love toward his neighbor as being a needy person. There may be a spiritual need -- such as when a person is unconverted and we observe him traversing the broad way to destruction. Or it can pertain to a converted person who is in a state of spiritual desertion, has strife, or any other grief of soul he may have. The compassionate person is engaged to be of help to such people -- seeking to bring the one to repentance, and to strengthen and comfort the other. There can also be bodily needs which can have a variety of causes, such as illness, mishaps, loss of loved ones, poverty, hunger, or the deprivation of shelter. The compassionate person is engaged to be of help to such a person in accordance with the diversity of his perplexity. Also in this case the needy person can either be unconverted or converted. The compassionate person is engaged toward both. However, there is the following distinction: He is much more involved with the godly, doing so with entirely different affections. However, he will also not refuse his help to others. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). Our compassion must also extend itself toward those who hate us. "Do good to them that hate you" (Matthew 5:44); "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him" (Romans 12:20). Among all natural relationships with people, our relatives are nearest to us, and they must have preference over all other people. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). The Essence of Compassion The essence of compassion consists in being inwardly moved to sympathy, which, if it is right, will always be accompanied by an inclination and willingness to help. It does not consist in either fully or partially parting with our belongings. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor ... and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). Rather, there must be:

(1) Sympathy. Where there is love, there will also be sympathy when the person being loved is in need. The compassionate person will thus take note of the condition of those who come to mind. If he perceives perplexing circumstances or sorrow, he will reflect and focus upon them until he is fully cognizant of the person's need, moved and touched by it, grieves over it and, so to speak, suffers with him: "Weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:15). Job testifies of himself: "Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?" (Job 30:25). The apostle Peter exhorts us to be thus: "Finally ... having compassion one of another" (1 Peter 3:8).

(2) Inner motions of compassion, whereby the veracity and intensity of this sympathy is expressed, so that it touches and moves the heart. Yes, a compassionate person can be more sensitive to the suffering of another person than that person is himself. God's mercy is expressed in this manner: "Through the tender mercy of our God" (Luke 1:78). Such is also stated concerning the Lord Jesus: "And Jesus, moved with compassion" (Mark 1:41); "I have compassion on the multitude" (Matthew 15:32).

(3) An inclination, willingness, and zeal to assist the needy person in accordance with his need: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath" (2 Corinthians 8:12). We observe this wherever mention is made of both the compassion of God and Christ; that is, it immediately results in the rendering of help. Such is also the case among men, for as there

can be no compassion without sympathy, likewise sympathy without the inclination and willingness to render assistance is not compassion. These go hand in hand and cannot be separated. Thus compassion consists of the inner motions of sympathy, accompanied by the inclination and willingness to help. "Put on therefore ... bowels of mercies" (Colossians 3:12).

God, the Fountain of Compassion The origin of compassion is not found in man himself, for man is by nature filled with all manner of wickedness, maliciousness, envy, murder, malignity, without natural affection, and unmerciful Romans 1:29; Romans 1:31. However, as the regeneration and spiritual life of God's children have their origin in God, this is likewise true for the virtue of compassion. This propensity, having been infused by God, is stirred up upon consideration of the need of someone else. If there were no objects toward whom this could be exercised, this virtue would be present in the believer as a propensity, but it would not be able to be exercised. The Lord has ordained, however, that both rich and poor will meet each other, and that there will be an abundance of objects for the exercise of compassion. Nevertheless, the priest and the Levite ignored the misery of the man who had fallen into the hands of murderers, and passed him by. However, when the Samaritan "saw him, he had compassion on him" (Luke 10:33). When a godly person meets a needy person, he will focus his attention upon him, and by reason of such observance his compassionate nature will be stirred up. Whenever mention is made of the compassion of the Lord Jesus, it is always written, "Jesus seeing him, her, the multitude ...," which proves that compassion is kindled by the observance of those who are in need. A compassionate person will take note of the needy persons he encounters, and if he does not encounter any, he will seek them out. **The Effects or Fruits of Compassion** The effects or fruits of compassion are a being charitable and a rendering of assistance. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). It consists in:

(1) Providing shelter for the poor who are homeless -- especially those of the household of faith: "Is it not to ... bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?" (Isaiah 58:7).

(2) Feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty: "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry? ... and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul" Isaiah 58:7; Isaiah 58:10.

(3) Clothing the naked: "... when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:7).

(4) Visiting the sick who are poor, offering them monetary assistance, or refreshing them with some delightful food. The Lord Jesus visited the sick in Bethesda John 5:5-6, and the mother of Peter's wife who was in bed with a high fever (Luke 4:38-39). Consider furthermore the comprehensive listing of the works of compassion in (Matthew 25:35). Thus generosity manifests itself in being generous. This is the virtue which God's Word so frequently commands us to practice. Therefore, impress this upon your heart. "Thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth" (Deuteronomy 15:7-8). Compassion is not only to be exercised when someone has come into extreme poverty, but also when someone is still able to stay afloat; that is, if there is some probability that he can earn his living. If he is in need of some goods or merchandise, it is an act of compassion if we provide a generous loan (if we have the means to do so) to such a person -- be it that he returns this when he is able to; that he can never pay it back; that he can pay interest; or that neither payment for the interest nor the

principal is to be expected. The Lord Jesus commands us to do this: "Lend, hoping for nothing again" (Luke 6:35). Add to this the following passage: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). All godliness is comprehended in this: To humbly walk with God, and not only to be righteous and compassionate toward our neighbor, but also to have love for, find delight in, seek, and be desirous to give expression to these virtues. Add to this the following passages: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted" (Ephesians 4:32); "But to do good and to communicate forget not" (Hebrews 13:16). Apply this to yourself as having been said to you. Is it not therefore true that benevolence is your duty? The Need for Self-Examination

Now turn within and observe yourself in the mirror we have held before you in delineating the nature of compassion. Do you belong to the compassionate? Is there compassion in your heart flowing forth out of union with the Lord Jesus, having become a partaker of His loving nature by faith? Are there motions of sympathy, mercy, and compassion to be found within you toward outcasts, the poor in general -- and particularly toward those who hate and evil entreat you? Are you mostly compassionate toward the godly and the members of the household of faith? Do you take their misery to heart? Do you seek them out, and do you focus upon their need so that you might be moved by it and become willing and zealous to help them? Do you provide shelter for the poor who are homeless, feed the hungry, clothe the naked? Do you visit and encourage those among the sick who are poor? Do you help and support those who have come to their wit's end, and do you lend to them without hoping for something in return? What are your answers upon these questions? If you must answer negatively, be convinced that you are not among the merciful and the compassionate. There are various types among those who are void of compassion.

Persons Void of Compassion Identified

First, there are people without natural love -- and thus also without compassion. They are cruel and have nearly rid themselves of all humaneness. They gather and scrape together for themselves as much as they can, and they cling to that which they possess with all their might. No one may benefit from this, and they say with Nabal: "Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh ... and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?" (1 Samuel 25:11). They are neither concerned about the poor, nor are they inwardly moved by their condition. If they see someone in need, they will pass him by as the priest and Levite did.

Secondly, there are people who fear that they might be moved to give something, and thus they avoid such opportunities. They turn their heads, close their doors, or walk away when they see someone in need. They already "smell" from a distance if someone visits them to plead the cause of a poor person. They will change the subject of the conversation, and their heart becomes averse to such pleas for help.

Thirdly, there are people who are indeed moved with compassion, but who do not like to give. Therefore they pacify themselves and harden their hearts; they do violence to themselves so that they do not have to give, and dismiss the poor with a friendly word. James speaks of such: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (James 2:15-16). They will look for some reasons whereby they may pacify themselves and excuse themselves before others who request something from them.

They reason as follows:

(1) I need this for myself and my loved ones. (2) There is so much to be contributed for various taxes and other causes.

(3) There are so many poor people; I cannot help them all. Thus, they do not help anyone.

(4) I do not know whether my gift will be used properly, for there are so many dishonest people. They will drink away or waste in gluttony what I have worked for and have saved. I have been deceived so many times that I no longer can have any compassion for the poor.

(5) I make my contribution to the deacons who have been appointed to care for the poor.

(6) I have remembered the poor in my will. Upon my death they will receive such and such an amount from me. Such are just like hogs who are useless during their life but are beneficial after their death.

(7) When I am in better circumstances and have a bit more leeway, I shall give. Then the poor will benefit, for I have indeed a good inclination toward being compassionate. By these and similar arguments they will pacify themselves, and this culminates in not giving at all.

Fourthly, there are others who indeed do give but whose compassion is not of the right sort.

(1) Some give out of a sense of shame and dare not refrain from giving. They do so by compulsion, however, and it is as if, so to speak, it were forcefully pressed from their heart. While giving with their hand, there is an evil inclination in their heart.

(2) Some give in order to be honored and praised by men. They would like to blow the trumpet when they are about to give something to the poor so that everyone will know it. And, in order that it may be known that they are generous, they will bring up the matter in conversation and frequently pretend to have given ten times more than is really the case.

(3) Some spend money indiscriminately and disperse it randomly, without being moved by any inner motions of love and compassion. The poor do indeed receive something, but such giving is not a giving of alms.

Misers Rebuked

Come, you misers who are void of compassion, hear what God has to say about you and toward you. May it be a means to your conversion.

First, you are thieves and murderers. You are thieves, for God has given you all that you have. He has not only given this to you personally, but He has done so with the express command that this be shared with the poor according to your ability. If you therefore keep this for yourself, you are robbing the poor to whom this ordinance pertains and toward whom you are financially obliged. You are also murderers, not only due to the cruelty which is implicit in your lack of compassion, but also because you are responsible for the poor perishing for hunger and lack of shelter. If their lives are preserved, this is not because of your doings, but rather due to the efforts of others who help them. Be it known, however, that thieves and murderers will not inherit the kingdom of heaven -- and this therefore also applies to you.

Secondly, you are numbered among the most ungodly and abominable sinners. You know that Sodom and all its inhabitants -- parents and children -- were consumed by God with fire which fell from heaven, and that God has made these cities to be an example to those who live ungodly lives (2 Peter 2:6). What did their ungodliness consist of, however? It was lack of compassion for the poor -- the sin in which you are living. "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16:49). This you also do not do, and therefore you are like her; since your sin is of the same sort, your punishment will also be like hers.

Thirdly, do not imagine that you have faith and love for God in your heart, for if that were so, you would also be compassionate and generous -- particularly to the poor among the godly. Where compassion is absent, faith is absent. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone ... show me thy faith without thy works" (James 2:17-18). Where compassion is absent, the love of God is absent. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

Fourthly, all your religion is vain -- even your fasting and praying. God is neither pleased with it nor will He hear your prayers. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). The Jews were very religious, sought God daily, greatly desired the knowledge of His ways, fasted often, and yet complained that God did not hear them (Isaiah 58:5-3). God revealed, however, that He was not pleased with them, as they were neither compassionate nor benevolent toward the poor. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" Isaiah 58:5; Isaiah 58:7. Do you complain that God neither helps you nor hears your prayer? It is no wonder, for you do not hear the cry of the poor. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard" (Proverbs 21:13).

Fifthly, the judgments and curses of God -- both temporal and eternal -- will come upon the merciless. The Lord curses them and their goods, and it may be that even in this life they will be reduced to a piece of bread, experience that their children will have to beg, and be glad that there are shelters, orphanages, and boarding houses for the poor. And even if all this does not come upon them in this life, it will come upon them eternally. How frightful it will be to hear this dreadful sentence in the last day when the Lord Jesus will say unto them, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not" Matthew 25:41-43! Take note of this; do not delude yourself by fostering expectations about yourself that all is well. Jesus, who is truth Himself, is saying this. Or do you think that in the day of judgment Jesus will say, "You have done all this," while yet you have not done it? "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (James 2:13).

Believers Exhorted to be Compassionate And you, believers -- in whom the principle of compassion is indeed to be found -- can observe from that which has been said how much is yet lacking as far as the manifestation of your compassionate nature is concerned; what an abominable sin it is to be without mercy and not to exercise compassion; and what you are

consequently deserving of. May it cause you to be ashamed before God, to be deeply humbled, and to abhor yourself; and may it be accompanied with a joyous and grateful acknowledgement that the Lord Jesus has also removed these sins by His blood. May the mercy of God move you henceforth to exercise more compassion.

Therefore, you who are godly, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy” (Hosea 10:12); “Keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually” (Hosea 12:6). In order to stir you up more to this end, give heed to the following matters with an obedient heart.

First, precepts teach, but examples attract. Therefore, observe those compassionate persons who have gone before you, and have left you an example. The most perfect example is the Lord Jesus, whom you ought to follow joyfully and willingly, since He is altogether lovely to you. Read only the history of His life, the gospels, and you will perceive that all His footsteps were nothing but mercy. Time and again you will read: “Jesus being moved with compassion ...” He was not merely moved, however, but His compassion culminated in deeds. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, gave the oppressed their dead again, and traversed the entire country doing good. In doing so He has left us an example, so that we would follow in His footsteps. Therefore, out of love for Him, conduct yourself as He did. Your name “Christian” also obligates you to this.

Furthermore, add to this the example of Job. Who can read about his compassion without being moved to follow his example? “I was eyes to the blind, and feet as I to the lame. I was a father to the poor” (Job 29:15-16); “If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother’s womb;) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep” (Job 31:16-20). That was exemplary.

Add to the example of this man the example of a compassionate woman: Tabitha or Dorcas. Observe the following of her: “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did ... and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them” (Acts 9:36; Acts 9:39). She was a mother to the poor! She did not occasionally do a good deed, but rather she was full of, and overflowing with, good works and alms (gifts which are the manifestation of compassion). The Greek word *elémósune* is a composite word and a derivative of *eleéo*, which means to have compassion. Thus, she did not only give, but rather she gave, being moved with compassion. First the heart was moved, and the heart thus moved, in turn moved her hand. She did not only buy material from which she made clothing, but her benevolent love was so great that it was her delight to do the sewing herself and to dress the widows with the work of her own hands.

Secondly, compassion is most pleasing to God and man. God loves such persons and is pleased with their doings: “God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7); “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16). If you desire to be loved by God and to experience His love, and if you furthermore desire to please God, let your heart and hand be compassionate. People have esteem and love for those who are generous and will bless them in their heart. Furthermore, the giver experiences more joy than the

one who receives the gift.

Thirdly, the poor and their needs are very powerful motives to stir up a compassionate heart. When you observe a godly person who is poor, consider that God loves him, that the Lord Jesus has died out of love for him, that he lives in the enjoyment of the communion and love of God, and that he will eternally live in glory with you. Consider furthermore that it pleases the Lord to keep him poor in this life, and causes him to meet you so that you may have the opportunity to exercise love and compassion (even though God does not need your gift, can quickly make the poor person rich, or support him without your help). In addition, consider how distressed he is in his house, how he observes his children with sorrow, how his heart breaks when he witnesses the hunger and nakedness of his children, and how he cries to God for help. If you consider all this, it will not be possible for your heart to remain unmoved if there is but the least principle of life there. Rather, all that is within you will be moved to compassion and your hand will open itself to be generous.

Fourthly, compassion glorifies God, for when a godly poor person, having been helped by you, goes to his hut, and there rejoices before the face of the Lord, thanks God, praises His mercy, is stirred up to put his trust in God, and prays to God that He might pour out a blessing upon you according to soul and body -- how can one consider all that and not have a vehement desire to be compassionate? Furthermore, (even though you do not do this to be seen of men, and may not refrain from doing so simply because it may come to the people's knowledge) your light will break through, for nowhere is love more apparent than in the manifestation of benevolence. The godly will see it, glorify and thank God for it, and will be stirred up to emulate you. It will be a means whereby others will be drawn to the truth and to repentance. If, therefore, it is your desire that God be glorified, thanked, praised; that the godly rejoice in the Lord and be stirred up toward compassion which in turn will cause other poor persons to rejoice in God; that God be thanked by many; and that the unconverted be led to the Lord Jesus -- if you desire this, then exercise compassion: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Fifthly, God makes eminent promises to those who are compassionate.

(1) God reckons it as having been done toward Him, since it was done out of love toward Him; He will richly reward the gift made to Him. Although believers have enough with the virtue itself, and are motivated more thereby than the reward, they must nevertheless permit themselves to be stirred up by this, as it pleases God to stir them up by means of promises. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again" (Proverbs 19:17); "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40).

(2) The reward will be incomparably greater than your insignificant gift: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water ... verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42); "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom" (Luke 6:38); "He which soweth bountifully (that is, consistently and joyfully) shall reap also bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6).

(3) You need not fear that your genuine generosity will cause you and your children to become poor. If you believe that you will nevertheless be taking something from them, consider that God will bless you again in response to your generosity. If this does not occur in the manner in which you thought it would come to pass, it will transpire in a different manner: "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack" (Proverbs 28:27); "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed" (Psalms 37:25-26).

(4) The Lord will help the compassionate person when he experiences days of distress and becomes sick. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he will be blessed upon the earth: and Thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness" (Psalms 41:1-3).

(5) Since true compassion is a fruit of faith and love, eternal glory is promised to compassionate persons. "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:18-19); "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:13-14).

Oh, how glorious and delightful it will be in the day of judgment to hear this lovely voice: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in" (Matthew 25:34-35). When such compassionate persons, having done good to those poor among the godly who have died before them, will subsequently die and arrive in heaven, then the poor who have been the recipients of their benevolence will welcome them in heaven. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness (that is, the riches which some people receive unrighteously and use unrighteously); that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (Luke 16:9).

Guidelines for Manifesting Compassion

Having been moved to be compassionate, it is therefore needful that you conduct yourself wisely in exercising compassion. To that end the following needs to be noted:

First, the persons who are to be compassionate are the rich, people of moderate means, people of limited means, as well as the poor -- no one is excluded. Everyone must inwardly be moved toward compassion, which is to be accompanied by a ready inclination to render assistance. The gift varies, however; the one gives much, the other less, and another little. Each is to give according to his means and consistent with the authority he has over certain possessions. Someone who is subordinate to no one gives in a certain way, and someone who is married, having children, in a different manner. Children may give of that which their parents give them to buy something nice or delectable. They either save it fully or partially, giving that which they have saved with a generous heart to the poor. This is pleasing to both God and man. Married persons must each give alms individually without informing each other about this. One may not let the left hand know what the right hand is doing. It may, however, not be to the detriment of the family.

Instead, one should eat a little bit less, make one less garment, or wear a certain garment a bit longer so that the routine of the family is maintained. If, however, a greater measure needs to be given, this needs to be discussed mutually. If no agreement can be reached, the gift must either not be made at all, or it must be reduced until the resistant party agrees. If the one party is as Nabal, the other party must give in the manner stated. In these matters the husband has more authority than the wife. He who cannot share any goods must render assistance to whomever is in need, and he who cannot even do this must pray with a compassionate heart that the Lord may help the poor.

Secondly, the persons to whom we must be generous are first of all the godly -- and then the unconverted among the citizenry, as well as widows, orphans, and the homeless. We must particularly be generous to those who are in exile, or those who must flee for the sake of true religion. The common vagrants are generally rogues who would be better off in a house of correction than on the street. If they are healthy, hunger may perhaps teach them how to work; or if they are invalids, we are obligated to give them a piece of bread.

Thirdly, the gift must proceed from that which is ours and be given in a righteous manner. To give liberally while being deeply in debt is theft. It is an abomination before God to give a portion to the poor from that which we have obtained through unrighteous means or by way of gambling, doing so to quiet the conscience somewhat or to atone for one's wrongdoing. This is no more pleasing to God than "the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog" Deuteronomy 23:18, God forbidding that such funds would come into the treasury.

Fourthly, the manner in which alms are to be given is:

(1) With a simple heart: "... he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity" (Romans 12:8). Thus, this is to be done with a truly compassionate heart, a gentle hand, and without seeking one's own honor, so that the engagement of the heart and hand, as well as the objective, be in harmony with and characterized by sincerity.

(2) Joyfully: "... he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:8); "... not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). This means that we shall rejoice in having such a good opportunity, and therefore shall engage ourselves toward the poor with a happy and friendly countenance. The giving of our alms will then be doubly delightful.

(3) Wisely; that is, in respect to ourselves, in a manner in which we neither give everything away at once, nor shortchange our family. Rather, we are to give in such a manner that we shall be able to continue to give. However, in extraordinary times something extraordinary needs to be done. Wisdom must also be exercised as far as the persons are concerned to whom we give. Some of the poor do not manage their affairs well and are not diligent enough. Such need to be taught to be prudent by way of an exhortation or a rebuke. It is better to hire them and teach them to work; they will thus earn what we otherwise would have given them. It is to no purpose to give others money, for they either cannot save well, or they have so many debts that they are immediately without money again, and thus will remain equally poor. In such cases it is sometimes the most prudent course of action to allow them go to the baker once a week to get some bread, and to the grocer for a weekly quantity of grits, flour, peas, and butter. Here we must make a distinction between poor and poor. Some are too proud to admit poverty and nevertheless suffer want. However, for

such we can become surety by giving them money so that they can pay their incurred debts. For others we may have them obtain the goods while paying for them ourselves. We are to proceed in like manner as far as clothing is concerned. The most prudent approach is to personally buy strong linen and wool, have the clothing made, and then forward it. This will be much more efficient.

(4) We are to be steadfast in our generosity. We must not do so in a rush which immediately dissipates, while it all ends in remorse over having given so much. Our giving must always be commensurate with the present need, doing so in accordance with our circumstances, and without it being detrimental to our own situation. We must not be weary in well-doing, for compassion culminates in receiving the crown. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

093. Chapter 88: Prudence

----- CHAPTER EIGHTY-EIGHT -----

Prudence

What a rudder is to a ship, prudence is to the exercise of those virtues we have thus far discussed. Therefore, as a conclusion, we wish to append a consideration of prudence. In Hebrew we have the word *chazuth*, which means a vision, and is derived from *chazah*, which means to see. From this is derived the word *choze*, which means a seer or a prophet. This word is used, because the prudent person is someone who sees everything in advance, notices everything in advance, and governs his actions accordingly. In Greek we have *phronoia*, *phronesis*, which is derived from *phreen*, meaning understanding, wisdom. From this is derived *phroneo*, which means to understand, to think, to consider, to conclude, and to care for. Thus the word prudence is expressive of the consideration of a matter. This consideration relates to the end as well as the means, which in turn yields the determination to carry out this matter by way of those means, while seeing to it that all is properly executed in doing so. Also the word *akribeia* is used, which is indicative of a diligence characterized by neatness and excellence. "See then that ye walk circumspectly (*akribos*)" (Ephesians 5:15). In our language this is indicative of seeing ahead. We shall deal with this virtue comprehensively, that is, including both wisdom and discretion.

Prudence is the exertion of the believer's intellect, which governs him in accomplishing his intended objective by the premeditated use of suitable means.

Prudence is only to be found in the believing children of God. The unconverted have a civil prudence by which they take care of earthly and worldly affairs. This is beneficial for the welfare of a given commonwealth, and profitable in its context -- that is, as far as its effects are concerned. It has, however, no effect upon the present and future well-being of the soul. Rather, it is generally detrimental to the soul. It is the prudence of those who are careful to gain a nickel and in the meantime neglect a ton of gold and suffer harm. Therefore the Scriptures call them fools. "But God said unto him, Thou fool" (Luke 12:20); "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22); "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Corinthians 3:19). The unconverted are indeed cunning and subtle in carrying out their evil designs: "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8); "... by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14). Yet in all of this not a trace of true prudence is to be found. However, believers have received "wisdom that is from above" James 3:17, and "the wisdom of the just" (Luke 1:17). They are therefore called "wise virgins" Matthew 25:2, and "wise servants" Matthew 24:45, for they are acquainted with the nature of true felicity and hold this before them as their objective. They are acquainted with the true way and appropriate means; and they enter upon that way and make use of those means.

The Object and Nature of Prudence The object of this virtue is the objective pursued and the means used in pursuing that objective. The objective which the prudent person has in view is manifold: to enjoy and glorify God; to have peace and joy in God; and love toward God; to exercise holiness; to

refrain from sin; to practice a given virtue; to be instrumental in the conversion of one's neighbor; and to restore one who has gone astray and is backslidden, doing so by way of rebuke, exhortation, and words of comfort. In one word, he has in view all that God commands in His law. The prudent person also makes active use of the means. He considers the time, when it is best either to avoid or execute certain things. Furthermore, he considers the place, the company and the people among whom he finds himself, the situations as they occur, the manner in which something can best be carried out, and the matters themselves -- considering what is either advantageous or disadvantageous. He delights in his ultimate objective and is therefore averse to delay. He contemplates what is to be done now, what is to be done later, and what will be the best approach. Having determined both the end and the means, he resolves to execute them in that certain manner, and focuses upon that resolution -- as a carpenter looks to his blueprint -- so that he may conduct himself accordingly. The nature of prudence consists in the government of the intellect, will, affections, vision, speech, mobility, and activities, so that the designated means may be used properly and the objective determined may thus be achieved. Prudence governs the intellect and causes it to be focused upon those matters which either ought or ought not to be done -- upon that which is either good or evil, pleasing or displeasing to God, advantageous or injurious, as well as whether or not the objective being pursued is lawful and untainted. It focuses upon the means, as to whether they are either suitable or unsuitable, and whether either beneficial or detrimental. It also focuses upon the manner of conduct, that is, whether it would be best to be either harsh or gentle, hasty or cautious, silent or vocal. A prudent person is neither blind, evil, nor foolish, but rather astute and wise. He endeavors to examine every matter and each means thoroughly and from every perspective, ascertaining whether all is according to the rule of God's Word. This is the only rule according to which he functions; neither pleasant nor grievous circumstances can cause him to deviate therefrom. When the intellect perceives how desirable and beneficial a given matter is, and the appropriateness of the way and the means, prudence will also direct the will to love and embrace a given matter, even if it were not agreeable with our natural interest and delight. Prudence also governs the affections so that they will not run ahead, and thus neither be too subdued nor too vehement, as they are very often ruinous to a good work. When all within is in order, prudence preserves the soul in this condition, and she in turn begins to carry out her intention by the means ordained to that end. The prudent person will anticipate opposition and will arm himself against this accordingly. He will deal with the dangers at hand and control his countenance, eyes, ears, tongue, hands and feet, so that they all render him fit to carry out his intent. He will see to it that he is neither too stern nor too gentle; neither too overbearing nor too timid; neither too modest nor too exuberant -- but that all things may be in accordance with the objects at hand, the time, and the place, doing so steadfastly until the matter has been carried out. Such self-control adorns the person thus engaged, renders the activity itself desirable, and causes the goal to be achieved -- in spite of the magnitude of the opposition and the craftiness of the opponents. Prudence does not cause the task at hand to be neglected, but it directs in the accomplishment of it.

The Moving Cause of Prudence The moving cause of prudence is God alone. By nature man is foolish Titus 3:3 and heady [Note: Statenvertaling: roekeloos, that is, reckless.] (2 Timothy 3:4). However, the Lord grants His children prudent wisdom: "He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding" (Daniel 2:21). David was desirous for this virtue. Perceiving his foolishness, however, and knowing that the Lord alone grants this wisdom, he prayed: "Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments"

(Psalms 119:73). A godly person improves this infused virtue:

(1) By means of God's Word, doing so not only by searching it, but also by doing it. "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts" (Psalms 119:100); "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments" (Psalms 119:6).

(2) By thoughtfully considering a matter before undertaking it. "With the well advised is wisdom" Proverbs 13:10, and by proceeding thoughtfully as he engages in the task. "For my mouth shall speak truth" (Proverbs 8:7).

(3) By way of experience; that is, by giving heed to and remembering that in which one failed and wherein one succeeded. If such a task is to be undertaken again, then (by reason of previous experience) he will avoid the one thing and do the other.

(4) By consulting others in important matters. Good counsel will thus be given to us, or it may occur that a good solution will dawn upon us. "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22). It is in this manner that the prudent person carries out his task.

Prudence Highly Exalted in Scripture

Prudence is a great virtue which is greatly praised and highly recommended in the Word of God, and is given as an extraordinary gift to God's children. It is praised as being an exceptional ornament: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock" (Matthew 7:24); "Who then is a faithful and wise servant ... blessed is that servant. ... Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods" (Matthew 24:45-47); "But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps ... and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage" (Matthew 25:4-10). It is most earnestly recommended: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents" (Matthew 10:16); "See then that ye walk circumspectly" (Ephesians 5:15); "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate ... that they may teach the young women to be sober" (Titus 2:2-4). It is given as an extraordinary gift to God's children: "And He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just" (Luke 1:17); "Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (Ephesians 1:8). A Call to Self-Examination
The foregoing is a suitable mirror to convince the unconverted and converted of their want or great deficiency in this matter.

You who are unconverted will be able to see clearly from that which has been said

(1) That you do not even have an eye upon the spiritual benefits mentioned above. Do you desire to have communion with God, to have joy and peace in God, to have a tender heart, to preserve spiritual peace within the heart, and live as such? Do you have a desire for genuine holiness and to exercise all manner of virtues in a spiritual manner? Do you fear sin? Is it your desire to shine forth as a light in the darkness and to be an ornament in the church? You are convinced, are you not, that this is not your most desirable objective, and that you are not pursuing this as your goal? Therefore, you have no use for spiritual prudence, nor have any need for it; you neither possess it nor seek after it.

(2) That you are fools when viewing yourself in light of this virtue. Many of you have not even progressed as far as the foolish virgins who joined themselves to the wise virgins, were desirous to enter with the bridegroom, and at least had lamps. Others are just like them: They go to church and have a hope concerning salvation; however, they have no oil -- they neither have life nor faith. They are not concerned about this, but neglect their time, are drowsy and careless, and awake when it is too late. You must therefore perceive that you must number yourself among the foolish virgins, and that you are as the foolish builder who built his house upon the sand (Matthew 7:26).

(3) That instead of being prudent, you are foolish and crude, ignorant of the happiness to be attained and of the danger you are in -- to perish forever -- and that you rush toward this so foolishly. Solomon speaks of such persons: "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3).

(4) That perhaps you have nothing but carnal wisdom. You are crafty and trust in your wisdom as Solomon's fool did. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Proverbs 28:26); "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him" (Proverbs 26:12). You use all your prudence to indulge in your wicked and sinful lusts and belong to that people of whom Jeremiah speaks: "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jeremiah 4:22). You ought thus to be convinced that you despise that which is precious, and choose and pursue that which is evil; you reject eternal felicity, and the perfect and delightful way which leads to this -- entering instead upon a way which is full of thorns and ending in the pool of damnation. You ought thus to perceive that you are not prudent, but are a great fool. "A fool hath no delight in understanding" (Proverbs 18:2); "Wisdom is too high for a fool" (Proverbs 24:7).

Oh, that you would awaken upon hearing my voice and see how imprudent you are in so great a matter! For if you continue to proceed thus, you will be caught in the snare of your foolishness, and your end will be as the end of the fool who built his house upon the sand (Matthew 7:26). You will experience what the foolish virgins experienced who found the door to be shut when they wanted to enter (Matthew 25:12). Then you will see how foolish you have been and how prudently the godly have conducted themselves. You will then agree with the fools who speak as follows in the apocryphal book of Wisdom: This was he, whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach: we fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honor: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints! Therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us (Wis 5:3-6). The Deficient Prudence of the Godly The exposition of prudence is also meant to be a mirror for the godly who are indeed wise virgins, having chosen the best portion. If, however, they examine themselves in light of what we have presented concerning prudence, how they then ought to be convinced that they are very imprudent!

(1) They are so lukewarm toward that which they have chosen as their portion, these matters being so remote and obscure, and their love for them being so faint.

(2) Their fear for vices is also lukewarm.

(3) They give no heed to the enemies who lie in wait to take advantage of them.

(4) They bring themselves so recklessly into all manner of situations and thus fall into sin -- of which they have many a grievous experience.

How imprudent they are in lending their eyes and ears for that which wounds their soul! How imprudent they are in their speaking, whereby their heart is troubled and others are offended! They still have so much carnal prudence. For fear of injury and shame, they so readily refrain from doing their duty and that which is good. And this they would like to be considered as prudence. They rush into everything ill-advisedly as long as it is but a good matter they are pursuing, paying little attention to their state, calling, location, the persons involved, and their manner of conduct -- acting as if being rash were a virtue. In reality, however, this zeal proceeds from a secret desire for gaining one's own way and honor.

Acknowledge your imprudence, and bring about improvement.

(1) Imprudence injures your soul. How much trouble and what great grief has this already caused you! All the delight and encouragement which you could have derived from having engaged yourself prudently has vanished, and grief has come in its place.

(2) You spoil the good of your undertaking, and it neither edifies nor has the effect which otherwise it would have had.

(3) Moreover, the wicked immediately attack you because of your imprudence and thus slander your work, yourself, and even the way of godliness itself. Therefore, regret your imprudence, and confess it as much as you confess other sins. Reflect upon it for some time so that your perception of the foolishness and harm of your imprudence may deeply penetrate your heart. You will thus learn to be prudent. The Godly Exhorted Therefore, you who are godly, lift up your soul and make every effort to let all your conduct be governed by prudence.

First, it is a delightful ornament -- an ornament which only God's children have. It is "the wisdom of the just" (Luke 1:17). It is a characteristic exclusive to the saints: "The knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). It is the image of the Lord Jesus upon whom rests "the spirit of wisdom and ... of knowledge" (Isaiah 11:2). Do you not care for prudence? Is it not beautiful in your eyes? Do you not esteem a godly person who conducts himself prudently in all things above all the honorable of the earth? Is it not your inmost desire to be conformed to Jesus? "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7).

Secondly, prudence is an absolute necessity, for you are surrounded by your enemies, the devil is crafty, the world is deceptive, and the flesh tempts in a most subtle manner. You must either give up and let these enemies rule over you, or, if you wish to preserve your life, peace, and godliness, you must be on guard, prudently avoiding the snares which have been laid for you, and prudently carrying out that which the Lord has commanded you to do. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16).

Thirdly, prudence will cause you to grow and to progress from grace to grace. "The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it. Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city" Ecclesiastes 7:12; Ecclesiastes 7:19. Prudence will cause you to distrust your wisdom and strength, depend on the Lord continually, and proceed in taking hold of His strength and be engaged accordingly. This will give you sweet peace and joy, and it will time and again give you new strength.

Fourthly, it will cause your endeavors to be prosperous, and your speaking, conduct, and silence will be enhanced. The unconverted will not have an effect on you and they will be inwardly convicted. The godly will learn to be prudent by your example; and your counsel, instruction, rebukes, exhortations, and comforting words will be much more effective. Therefore, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt (that is, with wisdom), that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6).

I am certain that a godly person who reads this will be enamored with prudence, but at the same time will grieve, not knowing how to achieve this, being immediately convicted of his very imprudent actions which have spoiled his endeavors hitherto. Such ought to know, however, that God does not grant His sanctifying grace all at one time, for He wills that we shall increase by way of strife. Therefore, be not discouraged, for you will learn while thus engaged. Instead, give heed to my advice and follow it.

First, pray for this, believing that God will hear your prayer, that your desire is pleasing to Him, that He is mighty to give this to you, and that according to His promise He will answer your prayer at that time and in that measure as it pleases Him to do in His wisdom. While thus persevering, you will time and again receive a greater measure. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith" (James 1:5-6).

Secondly, apply yourself with much zeal and diligence. Focus upon this virtue, love it, continually hold it before you, be active in learning how to be prudent, and be exercised as such in your speaking and conduct. If you have failed, do not be discouraged, but courageously strive to improve matters time and again. While thus engaged, you will receive more and more of this virtue. "So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures. ... When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: to deliver thee from the way of the evil man" Proverbs 2:2-4; Proverbs 2:10-12.

Thirdly, do the following:

- (1) Never go beyond the boundaries of your calling, or else you will fall.
- (2) Deny yourself and forsake all honor, love, and profit. Failure to deny self will lead you into the snare of imprudence before you know it.
- (3) Have much fellowship with prudent people and observe how this virtue functions in them.
- (4) In matters which you intend to undertake or to which you are called, always seek counsel with the Lord Jesus, whose name is Counselor, as well as from the Word of God, searching whether there is either a rule or an example which can shed light over it. If you have a bosom friend, consult him and it will be a blessing to you.
- (5) Always keep your objective in view, and be prepared for it that your enemies are lying in wait. Let David's prayer be found in your heart: "Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalms 143:10); "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3). Amen.

----- 1 Statenvertaling: roekeloos, that is, reckless.

094. Chapter 89: Spiritual Growth

----- CHAPTER EIGHTY-NINE ----- Spiritual Growth

God has assigned to each creature his station and measure of perfection, having created in each creature the inclination to be in that station and to strive for perfection. Heavy objects have a downward inclination, whereas fire is inclined to go upward, and the sparks of fire rise upward to float away. A fish seeks out the water, a bird chooses the air, and other animals seek out dry ground. As soon as a seed germinates, the plant will not rest until it has attained its proper height and size. As soon as a living creature is born, it will seek for food in order that he might grow. This is also true for spiritual life. As soon as a believer has been regenerated, he will be dissatisfied with the feeble measure of grace he possesses, and will at once be desirous to grow -- yes, would desire to be perfect at once. This is so typical for a believer, that whoever does not have this smarting desire is no true believer. Our attempt to understand the essence of a given matter will be in vain if we do not first of all know what this essence is. Therefore, we shall 1) show that growth is common to all believers, 2) show what the nature of spiritual growth Isaiah 3:1-26) call man to examine himself to ascertain whether he is growing or not, 4) subsequently exhort everyone to strive for growth, 5) warn for obstacles which impede one's growth, and 6) identify those means which are subservient unto growth.

Natural to All Believers That it is natural for a believer to grow -- a truth which is to be impressed upon your heart -- is evident for the following reasons:

First, God promises that He will cause His regenerated children to grow. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Psalms 92:13); "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon" (Hosea 14:5-6); "Ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall" (Malachi 4:2). God's promises are in truth, and He who has declared them will also perform them. Let the godly person remind the Lord of this.

Secondly, it is the very nature of spiritual life to grow. Wherever the principle of this life is to be found, it can be no different for it must grow. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18); "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger" (Job 17:9). This refers to the children of God, who are compared to palm and cedar trees (Psalms 92:12). As natural as it is for children and trees to grow, so natural is growth for the regenerated children of God.

Thirdly, the growth of His children is the goal and objective God has in view by administering the means of grace to them. "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints ... that we henceforth be no more children ... but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head" (Ephesians 4:11-15). This is also to be observed in 1 Peter 2:2 : "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." God will reach His goal and His

Word will not return to Him void; thus God's children will grow in grace.

Fourthly, it is a duty to which God's children are continually exhorted, and their activity is to consist in a striving for growth. That it is their duty is to be observed in the following passages: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18); "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11). The nature of this activity is expressed as follows: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after" (Php 3:12). If it were not necessary for believers to grow, the exhortations to that end would be in vain.

Fifthly, this is also conveyed by the difference in believers in regard to their condition and the measure of grace. In the church there are children, young men, and fathers. "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2:13). It is in grace as it is in nature: first a child, then a young man, and after that a father. All this proves it to be a certainty that it is neither the mere duty nor that it would be merely a good thing for the godly to grow, but it is their nature. Thus, those who do not manifest any growth are not believers. Hereby the unconverted ought immediately to be convinced that as yet it is not well with them. Furthermore, this can, first of all, be of comfort to God's children regarding the grace they possess, and they can already in the beginning be stirred up to strive for spiritual growth. A Gracious Work of God Spiritual growth is a gracious work of God in the regenerate whereby they increase in both habitual and actual grace.

Spiritual growth is a work of God. The spiritual life of the regenerate proceeds from God, who has caused them to be regenerated according to His will. The preservation of that spiritual life in them is also from God, who, by His power, preserves them by faith unto salvation. If that were not so, they would lose it a thousand times in one day. Likewise the increase and growth of spiritual life also proceed from God. Believers, by reason of the spiritual life within them, cannot of themselves bring about anything unless this were at all times joined by the preceding, cooperating, and pursuant power of the Holy Spirit. "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5); "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do" (Php 2:13). The persons referred to here are already regenerate, and yet these words are said of them. Since it is God who grants, preserves, and activates life, it is likewise He alone who causes life to increase. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish" (Psalms 92:13); "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:29). The disciples therefore prayed, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). The Lord causes spiritual life to grow by granting an increased measure of His Spirit. The water which Ezekiel witnessed coming out of the sanctuary, continually increased. First it came to the ankles, then to the knees, then to the loins, and after that it could not be passed over (Ezekiel 47:1-5). Elisha desired a double portion of the spirit of Elijah and received it (2 Kings 2:9). On the day of Pentecost the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:4). As God, in the realm of nature, causes trees and herbs to grow by way of rain and sunshine, He likewise does so in spiritual life. He does so by means of:

(1) the Word, that is, the sincere milk (1 Peter 2:2); (2) prayer (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Ezekiel 36:37); (3) providing us with examples of those who have a greater measure of the Spirit, whereby we may perceive that there is more to be had than we personally possess, and whereby we are thus stirred

up to emulate them (Php 3:17);

(4) trials and tribulations (2 Corinthians 4:17); (5) prosperity, physical (Acts 3:8) as well as spiritual (Nehemiah 8:11).

Peculiar to the Regenerate Only

Those who grow are the regenerate. That which does not exist can neither be increased nor decreased. Growth presupposes the presence of life. Some die shortly after having been regenerated -- such as the thief on the cross and others who are converted upon their deathbed. The life such persons have received has the propensity toward growth, but lacks time, and it is at once made perfect.

Some grow rapidly and are "as plants grown up in their youth" (Psalms 144:12). They grow by the day, so that everyone observes it and is amazed. However, the Lord will occasionally take such away after a short season, and for them it is true what is written in the apocryphal book of Wisdom: But though the righteous be prevented with death, yet shall he be in rest. For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age. He pleased God, and was beloved of Him: so that living among sinners he was translated. Yea, speedily was he taken away, lest that wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. For the bewitching of naughtiness doth obscure things that are honest; and the wandering of concupiscence doth undermine the simple mind. He, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time: for his soul pleased the Lord: therefore hastened He to take him away from among the wicked (Wis 4:7-14).

Some remain small; they do grow somewhat, but do not make much progress. Also in nature all men are not equally tall; there are giants, men of medium height, and dwarfs. This is also the case here. Some remain feeble, having but little life and strength. This can be due to a lack of nourishment, living under a barren ministry, or being without guidance. It can also be that they naturally have a slow mind and a lazy disposition; that they have strong corruptions which draw them away; that they are without much strife; that they are too busy from early morning till late evening, due to heavy labor, or to having a family with many children, and thus must struggle or are povertystricken. Furthermore, it can be that they either do not have the opportunity to converse with the godly; that they do not avail themselves of such opportunities; or that they are lazy as far as reading in God's Word and prayer are concerned. Such persons are generally subject to many ups and downs. At one time they lift up their heads out of all their troubles, by renewal becoming serious, and they seek God with their whole heart. It does not take long, however, and they are quickly cast down in despondency -- or their lusts gain the upper hand. Thus they remain feeble and are, so to speak, continually on the verge of death. Some of them occasionally make good progress, but then grieve the Spirit of God and backslide rapidly. For some this lasts for a season, after which they are restored, but others are as those who suffer from consumption -- they languish until they die. Oh, what a sad condition this is!

Some progress steadily -- which is not to imply that they have no opposition. It occurs only rarely that someone increases in strength by a wise conduct relative to the truth; and, without much strife and many comforts. Rather, they generally increase in the way of strife, since vigilance is present; and by the exercise of faith, fasting, prayer, reading, spiritual fellowship, the sharing of their gifts

and graces with others, they overcome everything and proceed in the strength of the Lord Jehovah. They are those who from children become young men and then men and fathers in Christ. Since, however, such differ greatly as far as strife, intermittent seasons of backsliding, and the vicissitudes of life are concerned, they neither all attain the same measure of strength nor grow until their death. It can happen that a godly person who has become a man in Christ becomes weak spiritually in his old age when everything physical begins to weaken -- yes, that prior to his death he falls into a particular sin, as is to be observed in David, Asa, Solomon, and Hezekiah. Therefore, one needs to pray most earnestly, "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not" Psalms 71:9; Psalms 71:18. Someone has expressed this in this sweet verse:

Qui me servasti puerum, juvenemque virumque:

Nunc fer opem misero, Christe benigne! seni. That is, Thou hast fed and preserved me;

First as a child, then as a young man, and now in old age;

However, help me now, oh Lord, In my gray old age.

Oh, cause me to proceed prudently, And to stand firm for the truth as a rock.

Let my last time be my best time;

Let my life be one of peace and my end a joyous one.

Datheen adds the following poem:

Lord, when I shall be old and cold, And weak and full of sorrow, Then do not cast me away!

Exalted Lord, also when I am wretched above measure, Then do not forsake me! [Note: Metrical version of Psalms 71:1-24.]

However, some proceed steadfastly until their death. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing" (Psalms 92:14). Thus, the Lord grants to each of His children their own measure of growth, the one more and the other less. The smallest one is as much His child as the greatest among them, and He loves the little ones as much as the mature ones. He will bring the one as well as the other into heaven. The Growth of a Gracious Disposition

Spiritual growth occurs in reference to habitual grace as well as actual grace. We shall first consider spiritual growth in reference to habitual grace.

(1) The increase in gifts to edify others (even if the use of these gifts is of increased benefit to others) is not evidence of growth if such activity does not proceed from habitual grace being in the soul. As such, an unconverted person can then excel a gracious person.

(2) It is also no indication of growth if someone increasingly refrains from sin, and becomes more eminent in the exercise of all manner of virtues, while in the meantime there is no improvement in the virtuous disposition of the heart. In external things the natural man can excel the truly godly person. Thus, one who has but a small measure of habitual grace can in this respect far excel him who has a greater measure of habitual grace. This is simply due to much activity proceeding from his nature and but little from continual union with Christ and making use of Him daily unto

justification. One who does not continually strive to live in a reconciled relationship with God, and thus makes no daily use of Christ as His Surety, has but a small measure of purity in his sanctification.

(3) Spiritual growth also does not consist in receiving many comforts from the Lord, there being a greater measure of holiness at the time when this comfort is experienced. At such a time one is being carried and drawn forward. This is similar to a man carrying a child, and like a man taking a child by the hand who is willing to walk, thus causing the child to walk more rapidly than he would be able to do in his own strength. The Lord refreshes His children at times in this manner, but when He puts them back on their own feet, they have but little more strength than was previously the case.

However, spiritual growth first of all consists in the increase of spiritual light. This is not an external knowledge of the literal sense of the Word of God, for the converted and unconverted have this in common -- yes, the latter can even excel the former in this. Rather, there is an increase in spiritual light. Such a person understands the spirituality of the truths, that is, in their essential and spiritual nature. This light has an inherent warmth and ignites the soul in love, renders one fruitful, and brings spiritual truths into the soul, so that whatever is true in the Word also becomes true within. This light enables them to see God more clearly in His attributes and works -- not only external to themselves but also within themselves. When there is less light in a room, only large objects and any obvious filth can be discerned. When the sun shines its rays brightly into a room, however, we shall see in those rays a multitude of dust particles which previously were not visible. Such is also true here. The more we see of God, the more we shall perceive the pollution of our heart. Spiritual growth consists in the increase of such light. "But grow ... in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18); "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning" (1 John 2:13); "Now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself" (Job 42:5-6).

Secondly, spiritual growth consists in more persistent and steadfast fellowship with God. Union with God constitutes the life, joy, and salvation of the soul. The unconverted are entirely without this, a regenerate person has but a small beginning of this, and he who may be a father in Christ has a larger measure. This is the essential issue, and everything is contingent upon it. One who receives a larger measure of grace receives this, both in larger measure and in greater steadfastness. The disposition of the heart is Godward, and the thoughts will be focused upon God. He will pray, yearn for, desire after, and speak with the Lord. His heart will be fixed upon the Lord, and he will rest, rejoice in, and glorify Him. In such a frame he lies down, sleeps, and awakes, while still being with Him. His thoughts will then not gravitate toward earthly and vain things, but to his God. He will immediately be aware of any estrangement or darkness setting in. It will without delay cause grief, and he will not be able to rest until intimate and humble communion with the Lord has been restored. This is the epitome of his felicity. "Nevertheless I am continually with thee" (Psalms 73:23); "But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:28). The more the latter is true for a person, the more he grows.

Thirdly, spiritual growth consists in making use of Christ with more understanding and a greater measure of faith. Growth which does not center in Christ is no spiritual growth. He who is of the opinion that he only needed Christ at the outset of his spiritual life and that he is now beyond that

and thus leaves Christ alone, only focusing upon holiness -- or if he solely makes use of Christ as an example for holiness -- has gone astray and regresses more than he progresses. He who lives, lives in Christ "who is our life" Colossians 3:4, and he who grows, grows in Christ. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith" (Colossians 2:6-7); "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16). Christ is the vine, believers have been grafted into this vine, and continually draw sap from this vine. They live and grow by means of the sap from this vine, and they never progress so far that they have no need of the vine, Christ (Romans 6:5). "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:5). We grow in Christ when we continually unite ourselves with Christ by faith as our Surety unto justification; that is, if we continually make use of Him as the way and as the High Priest to go unto God by Him. This means that we shall neither dare nor are able to approach unto God except through Him, being acquainted with God's majesty, holiness, and our own sinfulness. We shall furthermore understand that it is unbecoming Godward and us-ward to have fellowship with God apart from Him. Furthermore, we grow when we do not consider God's attributes in and of themselves, but rather as they manifest themselves in Christ, and as such reflect upon us. This is the work of angels, and the more a person increases in grace, the more he will exercise himself in this. All this constitutes growth, and he who does not grow in this respect is not growing -- however much this may appear to be so and he may imagine himself to be increasing in other things. Such growth is worth little.

Fourthly, spiritual growth consists in a purer sort of engagement. The more we increase, the more we shall take note of the manner in which we engage ourselves. We shall then find no delight in our conduct if it is not governed by a holy objective; that is, not having ourselves in view, but doing all to the honor of God 1 Corinthians 10:31, in the presence of God Genesis 17:1, in obedient submission to God and His will Ephesians 6:6, in love 1 Corinthians 13:1, in the fear of God Job 31:23, and in believing union with Christ and through Christ with God (Hebrews 1:6). We shall thus do everything out of God, for God, and unto God. This is what is meant by our deeds being "wrought in God" (John 3:21). Thus, spiritual growth does not only consist in doing much, but in doing it well.

Fifthly, spiritual growth also consists in an increased manifestation of grace. Habitual graces cannot be restrained from manifesting themselves, but will break forth as actions. When a believer is actively engaged in mortifying sin and intent upon the practice of a virtue, this will beget a frame of heart which opposes all sin and is inclined toward all virtues. The heart will become increasingly virtuous, and thus a good heart will bring forth good deeds, and the exercise of good deeds will improve the frame of the heart. When a godly person grows, he not only grows in one virtue, but in all. He does not first totally mortify the one sin before proceeding with the next. He also does not first learn one virtue, and having learned that, move on to another; rather, it transpires simultaneously. He does indeed focus more on the one sin and on the one virtue more than the other. He is also frequently more victorious with the one sin and virtue than with the other. At the same time he gains in spiritual-mindedness and thus prevails over all sins and unto all virtues.

Nevertheless, the one sin will retain more vigor than the other, and the one virtue will be exercised less than the other.

Growth in the Actual Manifestation of Grace

First, there is growth when one becomes concerned about more sins and desires more virtues. At the very outset of spiritual life we generally are mostly aware of sin -- and particularly of a given sin or sins -- which are our most besetting sins into which we fall most frequently. We shall then consider it to be a great accomplishment if we have not committed this sin or these sins on a specific day. When we grow spiritually, however, we become aware of more sins and will strive more against them -- not only against external but also against internal sins. This will also pertain to both our neglect and deficiency in the performance of virtues. In the evening one will ask, "Have I abstained from my besetting sins?" One will ask, "Have I also committed other sins? What good have I performed in this day and in what manner have I performed it?" When we grow we shall also exercise more virtues than was previously the case -- both in regard to the first and the second table of the law.

Then we shall bear much fruit (John 15:5). "At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits" (Song of Solomon 7:13); "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Secondly, there is growth when we persevere upon encountering powerful opposition. Such is true when we are able to let the fiery darts of the wicked be deflected by the shield of faith, and when we do not permit inward strife to hinder and detract us from the performance of our duties toward God and our neighbor, thus conquering the wicked one (1 John 2:13). We grow when we are able to avoid those situations which generally cause us to fall, or, if we must be in them, we conduct ourselves better than was previously the case. We grow when worldly charm no longer entices us, but when it has lost its charm so that it is no longer esteemed, no more advantage is seen in it, and it has lost its appeal. This means that neither by flattery, nor by threats, nor by actual or verbal persecution shall we allow ourselves to be detracted from our godliness. We grow when, by reason of the fear of and love for God, we can more easily resist sinful lusts which stir within, and upon falling arise all the more readily -- yes, as a result of falling become stronger and more careful. We grow, when in spite of all opposition, we persevere, rather than that we be drawn away.

Thirdly, there is spiritual growth when we proceed with the practice of virtue with more wisdom, determination, faith, and zeal. The initial zeal of the believer is mixed with many natural passions. At that time we shall act illadvisedly, and, in one way or the other go beyond our boundaries. We then know neither when nor how to act. We shall be either in good or low spirits and be either active or passive. A minor event will readily cast us down, and faith, hope, and love will easily succumb. However, after frequent stumblings, falling and rising again, we then begin to walk more steadfastly, rely more upon the Lord Jesus by faith -- even when the Lord hides Himself, and the feelings, which the Christian is so intent upon having, depart. We then, nevertheless, persevere in the way which we have chosen and in our seeking. Falling into sin is much more grievous than before, but we nevertheless do not disown our state so readily. We rely more upon the Word and shall unreservedly put our trust in it. We know in whom we have believed and become better

acquainted with how God deals with His children, knowing that the Lord will again cause the darkness to disappear. We become more steadfast in our conduct, more careful with our words, and more thoughtful in our conduct. A wisdom which is both humble and meek will increasingly shine forth. We shall not be disturbed when we neither receive love nor esteem from others, being well satisfied to live with God alone. We shall then have a love which goes out to the godly and to all men -- in a manner appropriate to each individual -- and it shall be manifested. With composed zeal we do what we know to be our duty. We speak when we must speak and are silent when we must be silent, and in the performance of our duty we shall neither allow ourselves to be hindered by our own inability, nor by the pride, wisdom, goodness, or wickedness of men. We become more and more weaned from the creature. The love of Christ constrains, and the hope of glory motivates to be active. If we fall, we rise again, and if we have not conducted ourselves well in other respects, we then strive for improvement. We take hold of the strength of the Lord and charge through all opposition, and shall thus proceed from strength to strength. The Need for Self-Examination

You who either read or hear this read, examine yourself in light of this. What do you now say of yourself? Are you growing or are you not growing? Bring yourself into the presence of God who knows your heart and who will judge you. Do not flatter yourself with vain imaginations, and do not bypass your heart. On the other side, do not deny your growth if there has been some, for it is not your work, but the result of the grace of God. If you may perceive some growth, it will greatly comfort and strengthen you; if not, it ought to motivate you to seek true conversion or zeal to make progress in this matter. To that end, do not hesitate to read that which has been said once more and to examine yourself in that mirror. Has your spiritual light increased? Do you have a more continual and steadfast fellowship with God? Do you make use of the Lord Jesus with more understanding and a greater measure of faith? Are you more upright in your dealings? Has the scope of your engagement increased regarding sins and virtues? Do you persevere more upon encountering strong opposition? Do you proceed with more wisdom, determination, faith, and zeal? What do you say for yourself? Do not focus upon a brief time span, but compare yourself as to who you were prior to your conversion and the present, and since your conversion and the present. Do not deny grace because you are ambitious to achieve a certain level of grace, nor in the way of ingratitude, by not considering what you have received -- as if it were your own work and you should already have made more progress. You will thus grieve and chide yourself more, rather than being joyful. Therefore, judge yourself in a realistic manner.

(1) Some may perhaps have become convinced of not only having failed to make any progress, but rather that they never even have had any grace, and that until now they have only been a run-along. All their activity has only been a product of their mind and natural zeal.

(2) Some will perceive that they are progressing in sin, and are adding the one sin to the other; that they are progressing from one evil to the other; that their sinning has reached a higher level; and that with highly elevated shields they battle against the Lord and say, so to speak: "We do not desire to hear Thee." Contrary to all light and conviction, they break through, and, in an ungodly manner, engage in wickedness and render sin exceedingly sinful. They become more and more insensitive in their commission of sin, having seared their conscience with a hot iron, so that they commit all manner of sin all the more intently.

(3) Some will remember their first spiritual emotion, the first time they became aware of their duty, their first conviction and prayer, and their desisting from sin for a season. In spite of all that, however, they willingly departed from that way again, and as a dog they have turned to their own vomit; and as a washed sow to their wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:22). It may be that they have been hardened, or that they think, "Woe unto me! What have I done! What have I departed from! If only I had those first motions again!"

(4) Some may possibly have good thoughts about themselves, be of the opinion that they wish to continue in this way, that they will thus be saved, and that nothing more is necessary. They do not wish to be that particular in their walk; they leave that to the hair-splitters. Oh, who will deliver such?

Oh, that someone would be sensibly convinced and receive a deep impression of his wretched condition, for all your righteousnesses will be deemed to have no value, as they did not proceed from your inner inclination. Indeed, all the illumination and conviction from which you have departed and which you have resisted will aggravate your judgment and condemnation if you do not repent, and in the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the heathen than for you. They will stand up against you and justify your condemnation. Oh, consider all this, become sensible, and repent; for to be under conviction is the primary means unto conversion. Then there is still hope, for Christ still calls you. Why then would you die?

Concerned Souls Addressed From the foregoing many of those who are truly gracious will perceive that they have indeed backslidden, and that they are as the congregation of Ephesus, to whom the Lord Jesus says, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:5). I wish that the following words would be applied to their heart: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Revelation 2:5). We shall speak of this in the following chapter. There are, however, gracious souls who in truth have not backslidden, and who, nevertheless, are of the opinion that they are backsliding, thus doubting their entire spiritual state. For they think: "Growth is peculiar to God's children, but I am a backslider, and thus I am not a child of God." However, it ought to be known:

(1) That many are not capable of perceiving their own growth. They do not remember their previous condition, and thus are not able to judge about their present condition. At that time they were as yet without understanding about the spiritual nature of their propensities and actions, and therefore they only focused on their preceding vehement emotions, with which, if they had them under the current circumstances, they would presently not be pleased.

(2) That growth cannot be measured by what we were yesterday, the day before yesterday, or a month ago. Rather, we are to compare ourselves with what we were at the outset of our spiritual life and what we are now; we would then be able to discern our growth.

(3) That a godly person has his spiritual winters. Just as a tree appears to be barren and dead in the winter, one will nevertheless be able to perceive that it has grown when comparing it to the time that it was first planted. A child of God grows in the same fashion -- even though he has his winters.

(4) That a tree occasionally grows more in one branch and then again in another branch. A child of God grows likewise -- sometimes more in the one area and then again in the other. Even if he

does not grow as much in that wherein he previously flourished, he therefore cannot say: "I am not growing." He now grows either more in the root, in breadth, or in another branch.

(5) That when we say that growth is peculiar to God's children, it is to be understood as a normal habitual tendency. Such is true for men or for trees when planted in suitable soil, from which they can extract suitable nourishment, and when receiving an adequate amount of rain and sunshine. A believer can at times be deprived of suitable nourishment, or of rain and sunshine. He can even become ill or meet with an accident. Would an ill child, or he who has met with an accident, say, "I am not human, for I do not grow?"

(6) That we sometimes have fellowship with other Christians who grow much more than we do. They have had a later start, and now they have already passed us by. From this one could draw the erroneous conclusion: Since others grow more and more quickly than I do, I am consequently not growing.

(7) That we now have eyes which are more spiritual and have a stronger desire for greater things. Since these stronger and more elevated desires are not fulfilled, we can therefore not conclude that we are not growing. On the contrary, we are to conclude from this that we are indeed growing as our light and desires are increasing.

(8) That the godly generally believe that they are regressing. Well, let that be as it may, for that is nevertheless a sign that they have grown. For if one had neither life nor growth, one would also not be able to regress. Let us then assume that you are not as serious-minded as at the beginning, that you cannot pray as fervently and with as many tears, and that you now occasionally fall into sin from which you could desist at that time. However, at that time you were more motivated by a fear for perishing and all this was accompanied by natural emotions. The opportunity for given sins was then not there, and you were not tried and tempted by the enemies as you are now. I therefore conclude that you have not regressed; or if you have truly backslidden, there has nevertheless been life and growth. And if these have been there, they are still there, for He who has begun that good work in you will also finish it. If, however, you compare yourself with composure to what we have said, you will not dare to say that you have backslidden, but you will be convinced that you have grown; that you have more light, faith, intimate and familiar communion with God; and that there is more love, steadfastness, more comprehensiveness, and more fervor in all your conduct than was previously the case. Therefore, acknowledge the grace which you have and rejoice over it; and may this in turn stir you up.

Reasons Why Believers Do Not Grow as Much as They Ought

Even though many among the converted come to the conclusion that they do not grow, it is nevertheless true that they do not grow as much as they ought to. How many blessed means they have! There is the precious Word of God, the sincere milk; there are spiritual and faithful ministers who have excellent gifts and are inclined to lead everyone by the hand; and there are eminent examples which ought to stimulate all to emulation. How little they benefit from this, however, and how little growth there is by many! One must frequently be amazed -- and many are amazed about themselves -- that they do not grow more. Thus they rightfully rebuke themselves, for it is indeed their own fault. They think: "What is the cause of all this?" My answer is: "You are the cause."

First, there is at times the secret and carnal thought that one shall nevertheless be saved, for if one has grace -- whether to a smaller or greater degree -- salvation will ensue upon this. This is God's promise to the regenerate, and thus growth is not that essential. My response is that this proceeds from the flesh, for the principle of grace is of a different nature. Yes, even if growth were not essential, the spiritual nature is nevertheless inclined toward growth. It is the life and delight of this nature, and it knows that this is pleasing to God. Therefore, away with this sinning at the expense of grace.

Secondly, many are hindered by their unbelief and think, "I am not a child of God anyhow; I have no grace. Why should I strive for growth?" Such are always occupied with finding evidences of their regeneration. At times their conclusion is this: "I am not converted; believers are entirely different from what I am." And thus they go on despondently and desist from spiritual activity. Occasionally they do come to the conclusion, "Indeed, I have grace," and thus are invigorated in their walk. It does not last long, however, and they again begin to doubt, and by renewal begin to examine themselves. Such are like a mason who, having laid the foundation, proceeds to build, but then begins to doubt whether he has indeed laid the foundation and consequently turns everything upside down and begins anew -- a little while later repeating the same procedure.

Thirdly, many are too despondent to make progress, for they perceive so many vices in themselves. They are conscious of the many virtues they ought to have and this causes them to be at their wit's end. Furthermore, they deem all their efforts to have been fruitless until now and believe that all will be in vain in the future. Sin is too prevalent and the manifestations of virtues are too weak. They know not what to do and thus their hands become feeble. Instead, they ought to consider that he who overcomes one sin and perseveres in one virtue accomplishes this by reason of a virtuous disposition, and that this is at the same time applicable to all sins and all virtues.

Fourthly, world conformity enters the picture here. Believers still have a desire for the things of the world under the cover and pretense that they are lawful, necessary, and fitting -- even though the real motive is love for the world. The world and the Spirit are enemies, and the one is always intent on expelling the other; they are a mutual impediment to each other, and therefore we must either fully yield to the world, or must yield fully and entirely to grace. As long as we halt between two opinions, and as long as we attempt to join together Christ and Belial, so long shall we make no progress. A bird which has been fastened to the earth will fall back to the earth when it wants to fly upward. Thus, he who wishes to fly heavenward must divorce himself from the world.

Fifthly, many are hindered in their walk solely by laziness. Just as it is true in the natural realm that the soul of the sluggard is desirous, but has nothing, since his hands refuse to labor, so it is in the spiritual realm. We indeed desire to be in an elevated spiritual frame and to grow as a palm tree, but we are not willing to exert any effort -- and thus we also do not receive it. Effort is required here -- consisting in prayer, fasting, watchfulness, meditation, and the engagement in spiritual warfare. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force. Therefore, you who are desirous of attaining the end must also be desirous to use the means. When the bride remained upon her comfortable bed and made many excuses for not arising and giving entrance to the bridegroom, he departed and left her empty. Therefore, leave your bed while others are sleeping. Seek, and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you, pray and you shall receive; and thus you will experience that this work is not as difficult as you are currently considering it to be. In

the beginning it may be somewhat unpleasant, but it will soon become sweet when you will perceive how sweet the rewards are upon but a little effort.

Christians Exhorted to Strive for Spiritual Growth

Therefore, Christians, to the task! Strive to grow in both habitual and actual grace, for: First, your spiritual state is as yet imperfect and you have but a small beginning of life. If in all that we begin to undertake we strive for completion, should you then remain stationary at the starting point? The greater and more glorious perfection is, the more desirous we should be to attain it, the more earnest our endeavors should be, and no trouble should be spared to achieve this.

Secondly, not to grow is to remain in your sin and pollution. Would you who have been washed in the blood of Christ, have become partakers of the Spirit of sanctification, are the children of God, have become the bride of the holy Jesus -- will you continue in your sorrow and remain in your pollution? Oh, let it not be thus! Be no longer disobedient to God your Father. Disentangle yourself from the bondage of pollution, expel sin, and flee from it. The more you grow, the more you will distance yourself from sin; and the more you distance yourself from sin, the more you will grow.

Thirdly, the more one grows, the more the image of God will become manifest, and the more likeness to God there will be -- for that is the perfection held before us. You already do grieve, however, that you are so far from God, and with all your desire you long to be near to God. It is your only and all-satisfying comfort to live in blessed communion with God. Of all this there is a small beginning in you and there is the certainty that this suggested perfection is to be attained. Would you not then pursue that which you love so much; would you not then make this your objective and endeavor to come closer to achieving this? Yes, it has already been prepared for you and God stands ready to give it to you. He holds it, so to speak, in His hand and calls you but to come in order that He may place the crown of perfection upon you. Therefore, forget what is behind you and "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Php 3:14).

Fourthly, the more one grows, the more pleasing he will be to God. A father is delighted when his children grow, and one rejoices when he observes the growth of trees he has planted. Since, however, God takes pleasure in the growth of His children, having regenerated them by His will and according to the Word of His truth, and since He delights Himself in the garden and the trees which He Himself has planted there, should we then not endeavor to be pleasing unto the Lord and to become "His pleasant plant" Isaiah 5:7?

Fifthly, God is glorified by our growth, for therein it becomes apparent that He is neither a barren nor a howling wilderness to His children, but that He is good, benevolent, faithful, holy, and omnipotent. This is evident from the fact that He fulfills His promises to them, preserves them in the midst of all enemies, causes them even to grow in the midst of all manner of storms, pours out His Spirit upon them, and reveals the invisible things to them. And those who grow are rendered fit to honor and glorify Him. Therefore, you who desire to live to the honor and glory of your God, to be trees of righteousness that He might be glorified Isaiah 61:3, and are desirous to declare the Lord's glory -- having been formed by Him for that purpose -- strive for growth, for herein is God "glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8).

Sixthly, the Lord will grant many comforts to those who grow, so that they will find much delight and joy in their growth. The Lord promises that He will manifest Himself to them and make His abode with them. He will grant them an increasing measure of grace, fill them with His Spirit, and cause them to increase even more. "Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2); "They ... shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). Therefore, you who find delight in these promises -- which is your desire, children of God -- do not remain stationary, do not be satisfied with the condition in which you are, do not teeter on the brink of spiritual failure, but be resolved to charge ahead and to make progress. I repeat: The reward is commensurate with the labor performed.

Additional Means He who is therefore desirous to make progress:

(1) Let him be intent to do so with valiant courage. Let him take hold of the strength of Christ as his own and thus proceed in the strength of the Lord. Let him be fully resolved wholly to exert himself, to yield to nothing, and to spare no labor or effort to be assured of the perfection to be attained hereafter, and to grow in this present state. "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart" (Psalms 31:24).

(2) Proceed with a joyful willingness, rejoicing in the resolution itself, the end to be attained, and that you will charge through your enemies. Willingly engage yourself in this work and in the fact that you will proceed that much more prosperously. "Serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (1 Chronicles 28:9).

(3) Should not be too distraught about sustained wounds, nor be despondent about his falls, for these will occur frequently. If these render you inactive, causing you to give up in discouragement, you will not make much progress. Rather, you are to arise time and again. Make a new beginning every morning and do so especially every sabbath. Persevere in your resolve and focus on the reward. If much opposition comes, stand firm as a rock, resist it with force, and charge through it. They who are for you are more than they who are against you, and you have the promise that the Lord will raise up those who are bowed down and will grant them new strength.

(4) Continually feed upon the Word of God for by this one grows. Be continually in prayer in order that you might continually be strengthened and supported by the Spirit of the Lord -- for you are weak and will not prevail in your own strength. Continually exercise faith so that you may continually be united with Christ and apply the promises to yourself. You will thus purify the heart by faith, overcome the world, and resist the devil. While thus engaged, you will soon experience that you are progressing and increasing in strength.

(5) Should continually be engaged in battle against all sins and be in the practice of all virtues. However, be especially vigilant against your besetting sin -- that chief sin -- by which you are most frequently tempted and into which you most frequently fall, which will trigger all other sins and turn everything upside down within. Make a covenant to oppose those sins, conduct days of fasting to that end, flee all opportunities for sin and when they present themselves, cast them away from you as rapidly as you remove fire from your clothing. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

095. Chapter 90: Backsliding in the Spiritual Life of the Godly

----- CHAPTER NINETY ----- Backsliding in the Spiritual Life of the Godly

Even though the nature of the regenerate is such that it is always disposed toward growth, and though some of the regenerate grow more than others, they nevertheless do not proceed in the might of the Lord from strength to strength without resistance. They do not always have the valor of a majestic horse in battle, nor are they always “as mighty men, who tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle” (Zechariah 10:5). They do not always grow as a palm tree and as a cedar upon Lebanon. They cannot always boast with Hannah: “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:1). Their latter works are not always more than their first works -- such as was true for the congregation of Thyatira. However, as trees experience their winters in which they are void of foliage and fruits, appearing to be barren and dead, the godly likewise have their spiritual winters. The Lord Jesus said to the church, “The winter is past,” which implies that it had experienced a winter. As people are subject to numerous illnesses, the godly likewise are subject to numerous spiritual illnesses. What a most blessed time it would be if there would not be one inhabitant of spiritual Jerusalem who would say, “I am sick!” Such is, however, not always the case.

These illnesses we now wish to discuss. We shall first consider backsliding in general and then focus on some specific spiritual illnesses to which believers become subject. When speaking of backsliding we are thereby not to understand the daily stumblings, spiritual strife, and a lack of spirituality, which pass after a short period of time. He who is able to pray and engage in spiritual warfare will not have to complain much about backsliding. The complaints of such a believer are generally due to an increase in light and life, as a result of which he perceives more sin than he did previously; and becomes better acquainted with the nature of spirituality, which ought to be present in all his activity. Furthermore, he has an increased desire for a more elevated and spiritual frame. Since he perceives himself yet to be so far removed from all this, he is of the opinion that he is backsliding, whereas in reality he is gaining ground.

Instead, we understand backsliding to be the very opposite of growth: the decrease of both habitual and actual graces. It is possible that the life in the soul becomes less viable and loses its vigor and this must necessarily result in a decline in the quality of the actions -- be it regarding the spirituality or regarding the manifestation of these actions. In some, the habitual manifestation of grace will continue as before. Since, however, intimate fellowship with God -- the strength of their light and life -- becomes less, the spirituality of its manifestation is also reduced. Sometimes this can occur suddenly -- when one suddenly, from being in a good frame, reverts into darkness, a sinful condition, and a state of spiritual desertion. Sometimes believers backslide gradually and imperceptibly, similar to Samson’s case who, without his knowledge, was deprived of his strength. When he intended to use it, he perceived that the Lord had departed from him. Such is also the experience of some of the godly. They proceed as they normally do in maintaining their relationship with God, and in offering ejaculatory prayers, not perceiving that they are losing

ground. They neglect their devotional exercises or they perform them quickly. There are no express transactions with God through Christ, and if they then earnestly seek to begin as of old, only then will they experience what they have lost. They are then astonished that they are not able to draw near. Some do recover from this and renew their youth as the eagle's, but others fall victim to a spiritual consumption and languish until their death.

Seasons of Backsliding: Common to Most Believers When believers perceive that they are backslidden, they are at once ready to disown their spiritual state and to think that it has never been right with them. They cannot believe that others encounter this, believing that it is always given to others to grow. It is therefore necessary to show to them that the godly indeed have their seasons of backsliding. This is, first of all, to be observed in declarations that they are backslidden. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4); "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord" (Lamentations 3:18); "For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity" (Psalms 31:10); "My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me" (Psalms 38:10). The wise virgins also fell asleep Matthew 25:5, and also the bride, even though her heart was yet wakeful (Song of Solomon 5:2).

Secondly, this is to be observed in the warnings relative to this. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God" (Hebrews 12:15); "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Hebrews 12:12-13).

Thirdly, this is to be observed from the complaints of the saints about their lack of what they previously possessed. "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me" (Job 29:2-5); "Lord, where are Thy former lovingkindnesses?" (Psalms 89:49). From all this it is evident that saints indeed do backslide, and it thus ought not to be a strange thing to you -- as if you were encountering something which other children of God do not experience. You are therefore not to disown your state, for this would cause you to backslide even further. At the appropriate occasion we have shown that true believers cannot apostatize. The Causes of Backsliding

It will be subservient to one's restoration and to his proper conduct while in a backslidden state, to be acquainted with the causes which engender backsliding. We shall therefore present the most significant of them.

First, the Lord at times withdraws Himself in order to try believers and to teach them to understand things which they previously were neither acquainted with nor had committed; that is, not in that manner, nor to that extent. He wants them to be humbled about their sinfulness, being desirous that they would make more use of Christ and value Him more. He wishes to acquaint them, in a vivid and experiential manner, with His longsuffering, the freeness of His grace, His care for them, and His faithfulness. To that end He occasionally withdraws Himself, even though there are no specific reasons given from their side. At least this is not the reason for His withdrawal. Observe this, for example, in 2 Chronicles 32:31 : "God left him (Hezekiah), to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." When God withdraws Himself, backsliding follows.

Secondly, backsliding sometimes results from the commission of a particularly heinous sin -- a sin committed intentionally and against the conscience. This is particularly the case when this sin gives great offense. This is to be observed in David's life after he committed sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah. The magnitude of his backsliding to which he became subject is evident from his confession, complaints, and supplication for restoration in Psalms 51:1-19. Upon the commission of such sin, God withdraws Himself and the soul loses its vigor due to this wound.

Thirdly, it is sometimes caused by a cleaving to sins which are of a lesser degree. This happens when in the course of everyday life we do not live as tenderly according to our conscience as usual, but rather give in to lesser sins. It can be that we yield to sinful phantasies, or think about other worldly or vain matters. This saps the vitality of spiritual life, causes the heart to be estranged from God, and results in a reduction of vigor.

Fourthly, it is sometimes caused by failure to make use of Christ continually unto justification and sanctification. At the outset of spiritual life Jesus was precious, we sought Him continually for forgiveness, continually came to God through Him, were stirred up to pursue justification and sanctification, and thus were growing for a season. Some depart from this way, however, doing so either out of ignorance or due to vain wisdom, whereby they are of the opinion that Christ is only to be made use of for entering into a gracious state. Having presently attained to this, they know not how to make further use of Him, for they believe that since they already possess grace, they cannot remove themselves from the state of grace and, so to speak, start afresh. They are not acquainted with the manner in which a soul ought to be occupied in meditating -- while making personal application to themselves -- upon the way in which God leads a man unto salvation through Christ. They do not know what wondrous discoveries they may make while doing so and how the perfections of God may be beheld in the face of Christ. They neither know what it means to delight themselves in the love of Christ; nor how they, upon having sinned, must repeatedly receive Him unto justification, applying His blood to their heart for the purging of the conscience in order to serve the living God, nor do they know how they are to make use of Him continually unto sanctification. Acting as if all this were but the work of a beginning Christian, they entrust their soul to Christ with a greater or lesser measure of assurance, and subsequently proceed with sanctification, prayer for strength against sin, and the practice of virtue. If in doing so they may gain something, make progress in sanctification, and have immediate fellowship with God -- worshiping, loving, and fearing Him -- they are of the opinion that they are growing. In reality, however, they remain immature and even regress from the measure of spirituality they previously had. Their sanctification lacks both purity and much of the true essence of sanctification. It becomes more a natural work and approximates the virtuousness of unconverted people. This becomes evident when either death or some other great danger approaches; at which time sanctification can be of no comfort and one needs Christ alone for support. Then one will perceive that they who appeared to be men are but weak children and inexperienced in the unadulterated way of salvation. They who grow spiritually grow in Christ. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith" (Colossians 2:6-7); "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

Fifthly, backsliding is sometimes caused by despondency and a disowning of our faith. Such believers do indeed have a great desire for progress and they also strive for it. Rather than

progressing, however, they believe themselves to be rapidly regressing. This nearly causes them to give up, since they do not know how to overcome this. Yes, they even begin to question their faith, and if they succeed in casting their faith aside, it is as if they have accomplished something. Such will truly regress due to their foolish and wrong actions, and due to the stopping of the fountain from which their growth must proceed. They ought to know that growth cannot be detected every day; that as long as they are here below everything will only be in part; that to struggle and to strive is growth; that salvation is received out of free grace, by the merits of Christ, and in the way of sanctification; and that one must always continue to exercise faith in order to be saved.

Sixthly, sometimes backsliding is caused by laziness, manifesting itself either in the neglect or hasty performance of one's morning, noon, and evening devotions; that is, if one has time for this. When the bride remained on her bed, the bridegroom departed; if we do not pray, we shall not receive. Imperceptibly the soul becomes less familiar with God and loses her vigor, even though this will not be noticed at first. Furthermore, the Lord, perceiving that there is so little desire to seek Him, withdraws Himself, and this cannot but result in backsliding.

Believers Exhorted to Seek Restoration

He who finds himself guilty of one of these acts of backsliding ought to acknowledge that he himself is the cause of his backsliding. Let him justify God, and if he desires to grow, let him improve this situation. Even though we would have just cause to rebuke him sharply and to threaten him, we prefer to have compassion with him in his sinful frame, and lament over him. Such persons are generally mortally wounded, and therefore we wish to take them by the hand and lift them up. And you (to whom this applies), do not resist, but allow yourself to be persuaded and exert yourself to arise. The Lord, who has called you and granted you life, not only requires from you that you strive for growth, but that you, having regressed, repent and do your first works. Is this divine injunction from your heavenly Father of none effect upon you? Does it neither affect nor impress your heart? It is one thing to know your duty and to say, "I know this to be my duty and I have known this for a long time," and it is another thing to hear the voice of the Lord attentively and to take His injunction to heart. Beloved, hear the calling voice of the Lord and do not harden yourself against it. Sometimes the Lord arouses you by way of a complaint: "Thus saith the Lord; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?" (Jeremiah 8:4-5). Sometimes the Lord does so by way of a threat: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly" (Revelation 2:5). Sometimes the Lord does this by way of friendly allurements with many sweet promises: "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth. ... O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" Song of Solomon 2:10-12; Song of Solomon 2:14. Furthermore, it is the Lord who time and again knocks on your heart and addresses you inwardly: "Arise." Oh, that you would hear, and that the voice of the Lord would so resound within you, that you would arise at once and recover yourself unto the renewal of your conversion!

Secondly, this state of backsliding, since it is both sinful and grievous, is indeed a burden to you. How grievous it is when God hides Himself; when light disappears and it becomes dark; when the heart becomes faint and dull; when one is vulnerable to his enemies, barren, and fruitless; when a chill (due to the absence of zeal) closes up the heart; and when one languishes insensibly! How grievous it is when one falls from the one sin into the other, and the soul is filled with fear and terror upon considering the end of life! What a wretched condition indeed! Such is the nature of the regression, however, and you know and perceive it to be so. Why then would you yield to such a condition any longer? Therefore arise and return!

Thirdly, the longer you remain in this condition, the further you will stray. You are perhaps only beginning to backslide and think that it cannot get any worse. Beware of this condition, however, for the longer you wait with seeking recovery, the more you will deem the initial condition to have been a happy one. You will say, "Then I thought that it could not get any worse, but oh, if only I had now what I had then. If I were yet as I was then, I would still be hopeful for restoration!" And thus you will backslide more and more. Or are you brazen toward the Lord? Do you not wish to repent, but remain where you are, unless God Himself comes, picks you up, and carries you as you sometimes have to do with naughty children? Consider that God will not put up with your sulking. "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?" (Job 9:4). God may come and make life so bitter for you, that for the remainder of your life you will lament that you have been so rancorous toward the Lord. Therefore, take care that you regress no further.

Fourthly, consider the price the Lord Jesus had to pay in order to merit grace for you! He, the Lord of glory, became Surety for you and assumed your human nature in order that He could perform that great work. Out of pure and incomprehensible love He took your sins upon His account, endured all that bitter suffering in body and soul, rendered payment for you, satisfied God's justice, and merited peace and salvation for you. Consider what labor He has bestowed upon you to make all this known to you and to make you a partaker of conversion, spiritual life, faith, and the hope of glory!

Thus, even if you doubt whether you are a partaker of Him, you nevertheless know of your change, prior seeking, praying, and cleaving to Him; you perceive your present grief and sorrow over your lack of light, life, love, over your estrangement from God, and your inner desire to be nearer unto God; for your previous earnestness, and for a purity of holiness to the end that you might be pleasing to the Lord. If you had sufficient light and historical faith, you would acknowledge that these are evidences of true saving faith. Furthermore, would you not give everything you had -- and still have -- in exchange for the entire world? You will thus perceive how appropriate it is to acknowledge what you have received. Therefore, should reflection upon all this not cause an inner melting of the heart about your backsliding? Will this not arouse the following resolve in you: "I shall return; I shall arise and return to my father; I was better off then than I am now; I wish to make a new beginning"? Oh, that the love of Jesus would conquer you, so that you would return to Him and seek Him in love! Therefore, arise and begin with new zeal.

Fifthly, your repentance will not only be advantageous to you, but heaven and earth will also rejoice over you. God will be pleased with it, the Lord Jesus will rejoice in it, and the angels will exult in it. "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one

sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:20). The angels accompany believers and take note of their conduct. Thus, when you arise from your regression -- with which they are displeased -- the angels who accompany you will rejoice and announce it to other angels, and together they will glorify God about your repentance. There is likewise joy about you upon earth. The ministers will see it, rejoice over it, and thank God for it. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:4). Believers who know you and observe your restoration will rejoice in this. After the lost penny and the lost sheep had been found, the neighbors were called together in order to rejoice together (Luke 15:4-9). Even if your own advantage could not motivate you to seek restoration, then you ought indeed to be moved to cause others to rejoice in God and to glorify Him. It will, however, also be to your personal advantage. It will be difficult for you to start afresh and to move beyond mourning and all opposition, and the difficulty of this work could keep you from pursuing it. Be it known, however, that the Lord will render this task much lighter than you can imagine. Frequently the Lord readily rewards sincere intentions and endeavors to repent. "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). The father of the prodigal son "saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). Therefore, begin, and the Lord will help you and meet you in His eternal love.

Sixthly, let me address you once more in light of your own judgment about yourself, as you were not able to believe that you were in a state of grace. Let us assume this to be so. But what then? Are you to remain as you are? To do this would be tantamount to running willingly and knowingly to eternal perdition, for you know that no one will get to heaven without regeneration, faith in Christ, and sanctification. You may say, "It is hopeless; it is done with me; I have neglected the time of grace; I have resisted the work of the Holy Spirit; I have become an apostate, and it is impossible that such will be brought to repentance again (Hebrews 6:4-6)." My response is that I have explained the meaning of this text above.

However, are you not contradicting your own judgment about yourself? Are you fully assured that there will be no grace for you and that you will never be converted? You do not truly dare to say this with composure, and you will perhaps be convinced that such thoughts are engendered more by despondency, fretfulness, and laziness, than from being assured that such is the case. You know that the gospel still offers Christ to you in all His fullness, promising salvation if you receive Him with a true faith. You are convinced that you are illuminated at least outwardly, are acquainted with grace, spiritual life, and the benefits thereof. Furthermore, you are desirous to be converted, to be set free from all your sins, and to serve the Lord in the way of genuine holiness -- if only the Lord would grant you His Holy Spirit to that end. You are thus to observe that it is yet not too late. Even if presently you had not received anything, you do not know whether it will please the Lord to grant this to you in the future. Truly, if you would but set aside your fretfulness and crossness, and say with composure, "I am going to hell and eternal damnation," you would seek to be delivered with all your heart and strive to attain salvation -- even if you could not ascertain if you would receive this upon your seeking. You would then avail yourself of all means, saying, "Who can tell? There might yet be mercy" (Jonah 3:9; Joel 2:14). Therefore, remaining inactive will not gain you anything, and a despondent and fretful casting away of all hope will not deliver you from hell. Instead, arise, engage yourself, and you will experience that those who seek the Lord will find Him.

Means for Recovery from Backsliding

If someone has been moved by that which has been said and is resolved to arise, he ought to know that active engagement must go hand in hand with this resolution. However, in order that such a person be not hindered in this endeavor, but be directed in the right way, he must be on guard against some things, and perform other things.

First, one is to be on guard against:

(1) That by which he became backslidden. Such a person ought to reflect upon his past for the purpose of discovering what it was. Having discovered this, he is to confess this before the Lord in the way of self-condemnation, enter into a covenant against it, and always be on guard against coming into the power of this sin again -- having felt the bitterness of this sin.

(2) Being despondent that things can never become right again, for despondency makes the hands feeble. It is true that if you were to undertake your restoration in your own strength, nothing would come of it. However, it proceeds from the Lord. "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down" (Psalms 145:14); "He giveth power to the faint" (Isaiah 40:29). He reaches out to you, thus enabling you by His grace to lift up your head out of your sorrow, and to be resolved to arise again. He who has thus reached out to you will subsequently also sustain you.

(3) Laxness and those motions that resist the Spirit. Beloved, do not give heed to your lazy flesh. Let the sweetness and purity of being in a restored state be worth something to you -- it is indeed worth the price.

(4) Relationships with worldly people (that is, beyond that which is necessary), world conformity, and partial love. Instead, choose the Lord only as your portion, seek to have fellowship with the Lord in solitude, and thus demonstrate that nothing but the Lord is able to satisfy us.

Secondly, if you wish to recover from backsliding:

(1) Start from the beginning. This does not mean that you are to reject everything the Lord has previously wrought in you, and that you are to consider yourself as being without grace in an unconverted state. This a gracious person cannot do, for that would be a denial of something he has received. It would be an inordinate act of ingratitude. If, however, he cannot determine what his spiritual state is, he must quietly let this matter rest as something which he currently cannot discern. Instead, he must proceed as a small child. If he insists on proceeding with that measure of light and in the manner in which he had previously proceeded while being in a good frame, he would immediately succumb; it would be an impossible matter for him. If, however, he proceeds with that small measure of light and strength which as yet remains, and if he faithfully avails himself of these, he will gradually increase and not only return to the condition from which he has departed, but will become more steadfast and stronger than ever before.

(2) As he begins, he must be firmly resolved and willing to seek until the end of his life, and to arise as often as he falls down. He should be resolved to do so even if he were never to attain that comfort and that frame which he had prior to his departure.

Instead, he ought to rejoice that he may seek, pray, and strive, and that with his feeble strength he is able to do so, seldom being able to proceed without becoming faint by renewal. And if all this appears strange to him and he insists on becoming despondent over this, he will never make

progress.

(3) He must wrestle to be restored in the way of faith. At times God will permit His children to see a glimpse of His countenance and to taste a little of the spiritual manna. The sweetness of this makes them so desirous that they would always wish to live in this enjoyment. Occasionally the Lord will do this at the outset of their restoration. The father of the prodigal son kissed his returning son immediately; however, the Lord does not always do so. He may let them taste the bitterness of their previous departures for some time and occasionally will enable them to find Him again after a long period of seeking. Thus, the returning sinner must not insist on the immediate enjoyment of sweetness, lest he be discouraged when it does not immediately transpire in this manner. If he receives this, it is to be deemed extraordinary. Instead, he must live by faith, and with uplifted heart hold before him the promises which God has promised to fulfill upon seeking. He must embrace and believe them as being certain and infallible truths which will also prove to be true in his case. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Therefore, upon finding a promise in the Word of God, let him rely upon it without reservation. Let him deem these promises to be a certainty, even if a thousand spurious reasons could be produced to the contrary. Let him reason thus: "God is truthful and will confirm this to seekers -- and thus also to me." Let him therefore expectantly wrestle, pray, and hope upon the Lord until He is pleased to visit him. And even if it were so that he would not enjoy this in this life, he would most certainly receive it all in heaven upon his death. Would not this seeking then have been adequately rewarded? To believe this will be to his support, will lift him up time and again, and will cause the seeking itself to be sweet. In all humility he will plead with the Lord and remind Him of His nature, mercy, goodness, and grace, the satisfaction of the Surety Jesus Christ, and His promises. He will declare that he believes these promises, will rely upon and put his entire trust in them, trusting the Lord to vindicate His Word in the presence of angels and men. Let such a person therefore rely upon the Word, engage in his duty, and keep himself occupied in seeking.

096. Chapter 91: Spiritual Desertion

----- CHAPTER NINETY-ONE ----- Spiritual Desertion The thoughts and ways of the Lord are not the same as ours. Since many do not understand this, nor submit themselves well to the wise and sovereign dealings of God, they conduct themselves foolishly and manifest an increasingly negative disposition. Some who may have received a measure of light and life, would now wish to prescribe to the Lord the way in which He ought to lead His children. If, however, the Lord's dealings are not according to their conception, they either resist or are unable to justify the Lord in His way by subjecting themselves to them with quiet resignation. If they do so, it is only in view of their sinfulness, deeming themselves worthy of being dealt with in this manner -- acting as if they were still in the covenant of works, subject to God's wrath, and as yet not having been translated into the state of grace. If we were wise, we would not disown our spiritual state when God deals with us in a distasteful manner. We would then submit ourselves to God -- not only in view of having sinned, and thus having to endure all this, but also because all the Lord's dealings are only wise, good, faithful, and loving. We would then believe this and willingly submit ourselves to the Lord's government -- however painful this would be, and however little we would be able to comprehend the Lord's reasons and purposes.

Among all the ways in which the Lord leads His people, spiritual desertion is among the most unique. Believers generally do not behave themselves well when thus led, and it will therefore be fruitful if we delineate the nature of this condition, comfort those who are deserted, and give them direction.

What Spiritual Desertion is Not

First, in discussing spiritual desertion we do not understand this to refer to the desertion of the unconverted. God does grant much temporal prosperity, riches, honor, and prominence to the unconverted. He may grant them external illumination, historical faith, conviction, stirrings unto repentance, and a fleeing from the base pollutions of the world. When such persons abuse all these common blessings and do not repent in consequence of this, God deserts them altogether and gives them over to themselves. Then they become even more abominable than before, upon which even more dreadful judgments may follow. This may already occur in this world, so that divine justice is both observed and glorified in them. However, this will especially occur after they die -- in hell. This is to be observed in 1 Samuel 16:14 : "But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him," as well as in (Romans 1:21-26). However, we are here discussing the desertion of the regenerate.

Secondly, we do not understand this to be an entire or a final desertion. That is impossible, due to God's immutable decree and election, Christ's atonement, the sealing and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and all the sure promises of God. During a period of desertion, the Lord sustains the regenerate by secret and imperceptible influences. "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down" (Psalms 145:14).

Thirdly, we do not understand this to be a lesser infusion of spiritual grace in the one as compared to the other. In His church, God has children of various maturity. There are children, young men, and fathers. The children have a much smaller measure of grace than the fathers, but they are therefore not in a state of desertion. A father can be in a state of desertion while having and preserving more grace than the children.

Fourthly, we also do not understand it to refer to the cessation of extraordinary illuminations and comforts, after which those of an ordinary nature continue. When Paul returned again from the third heaven, it could not be said of him that he was deserted. God also grants certain of His children something extraordinary which is above and beyond the way in which they are commonly led. When this ceases, He causes them to return to their normal state. Such are not to think that they are deserted to a greater or lesser degree since they now have to miss the extraordinary.

Fifthly, we also do not understand this to refer to daily offenses, even though they occur due to the absence of the Spirit's influence, who indeed would have been able to keep us from such offenses. This is nevertheless not a withdrawal of His normal influences. Even if the falling into special sins (against which we would have been able to remain standing by way of the normal support of the Spirit) indeed occurs due to the withdrawal of His influence -- "God left him" 2 Chronicles 32:31 -- this is nevertheless not the desertion which is under discussion here.

Sixthly, we also do not understand this to refer to a reduction of habitual grace. God does not only move His own by way of external influences, but rather, He brings spiritual life into the soul, and this life is more vigorous in the one than in the other. This life, by reason of its spiritual principle, not only has an inherent inclination to be active, but in reality also is active by virtue of the normal operation of the Spirit. Thus, this infused propensity is enhanced by way of exercise, but can also be diminished by a variety of causes. In spiritual desertion God neither removes these propensities entirely nor partially. Instead, He withholds the normal operation of the Spirit, and as a necessary consequence of this, habitual graces sometimes diminish. This is, however, not true for all desertion, for in some cases habitual graces will increase -- such as is true for tree roots, both during storms as well as during winters.

Spiritual Desertion Defined

Spiritual desertion is a lengthy withholding and withdrawal of those normal operations and influences of the Holy Spirit in the regenerate by which He illuminates them, assures them of His favor, comforts them, fortifies them against sin and temptation, and renders them help in and deliverance from temporal trials. This causes them to be in darkness, weak in faith, disconsolate, to fall into sin, succumb to temptations, and to remain grieved and fretful in the bearing of a temporal cross.

Thus, desertion pertains to both justification (and all that relates to it) and sanctification. The desertion of one person may pertain more to justification, and to sanctification with another. For the one person it is of longer duration and for the other of shorter duration. Some experience this at the outset of their conversion. It can go so far that it seems as if all will come to nought, and it seems more unlikely than ever before that their conversion is true. However, the Lord will intermittently manifest Himself to them and cause them to be steadfast again. Some come into this grievous condition after they have made some progress, the Lord having manifested Himself

intimately. This will occur either suddenly or gradually. Some have to taste this at the end of their life, and sometimes the Lord will grant them His comforts again prior to their death, causing them to depart triumphantly. Sometimes they die in a condition of great desertion, darkness, and powerful temptations. In one moment they go from one extreme to the other, and that which they never thought they would attain to, they receive unexpectedly.

Believers, who, from the Word of God and their experience, have not sufficiently become acquainted with their impotence, rely upon their own strength. Even though they believe and confess otherwise, this negative frame proceeds from themselves. In doing so, they are not suggesting that they have not given the Lord reason to desert them -- which is certainly the truth -- but that they do not believe the Lord's hand to be in it. Instead, they believe that their soul is turned from God due to their neglect and inordinate desires. Thus, they secretly imagine that all will come to rights again by their own activity if they would but engage themselves, believing that they would most certainly perish if they were to neglect to do so. Others, however, who tangibly perceive this to be the work of God (namely, that He withdraws His normal support), immediately disown their spiritual state and believe it to be an evidence of God's wrath, and a declaration that their eternal judgment is pending -- and are thus filled with fear and terror. They therefore will neglect almost all use of the means, being of the opinion that there is no hope, and they are thus consumed by despondency. There are but few who remain silent and possess their soul in patience, look to heaven for help, continue to seek even though they are in thick darkness, persevere, occasionally weep heartily, and desire to hope in the Lord -- even if He were to slay them. Such are generally delivered earlier, and reap the most benefit from spiritual desertion.

Desertion is the Lord's Withdrawal of the Normal Influences of His Spirit

It is of the greatest importance to know that it is the Lord who, in the state of desertion, withdraws His normal operation, infusion of grace, illumination, and comfort. In the Word of God this is represented with a variety of expressions, each of which are expressive of a specific manner of desertion:

(1) to return: "I will go and return to My place" (Hosea 5:15); "I opened to my Beloved; but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone: my soul failed when He spake (that is, succumbed due to shame and sorrow)" (Song of Solomon 5:6);

(2) to forsake: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee" (Isaiah 54:7); "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Psalms 22:1);

(3) to hide: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid Me" (Isaiah 57:17); "How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?" (Psalms 13:1);

(4) to forget: "How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?" (Psalms 13:1);

(5) to restrain: "Where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels and of Thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?" (Isaiah 63:15);

(6) to keep silence; to hold one's peace: "Keep not Thou silence, O God: hold not Thy peace, and be not still, O God" (Psalms 83:1);

(7) to stand afar: "Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord?" (Psalms 10:1);

(8) to shut up: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah" (Psalms 77:9);

(9) to cast off: "Lord, why castest Thou off my soul? why hidest Thou Thy face from me?" (Psalms 88:14);

(10) to be wrathful: "Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; Thy terrors have cut me off" (Psalms 88:16). From all this it is evident that believers do not always bring themselves into a state of being estranged from God due to their misbehavior -- even though this may be the case at other times. Rather, it can be that God also hides Himself from His side and departs for a season, withholding His illuminating, comforting, and sanctifying operations. This is a most grievous and distressing condition. I pity all those who are in it; I commiserate with them. Even though God preserves His own from eternal condemnation, He does yet permit them to taste somewhat of it. Damnation consists in the missing of God's countenance, the sense of His wrath, and all manner of pain in soul and body. An unconverted person does not know what it is to miss God, for he has never experienced the sweetness of having had communion with God. He always finds something in this life whereby he can entertain and refresh himself. To be utterly destitute, however, to have a howling heart after it has been filled, to be without any expectation that this emptiness shall be filled, and then to miss God is a hell in the soul -- even when man is yet outside of hell. God's children, however, who are acquainted with and who have tasted that it is good to be near unto the Lord, when they are deserted by God, and not only must miss fellowship with God, but also must experience that God is withdrawing Himself, and who, instead of enjoying His favor, must experience God's wrath and rejection, succumb when they experience this. "I am consumed by the blow of Thine hand" (Psalms 39:10). Then their "heart panteth" (Psalms 38:10). Then their condition is as expressed by Asaph: "I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed" (Psalms 77:3).

It is nearly impossible to express all these disturbing thoughts and sorrowful motions within. We shall nevertheless present some, so that they who are thus may know that they are not alone in this (which they generally believe to be the case). Furthermore, we do so in order that they may know that there is reason for their sorrow, and that they -- their condition having been held before them -- would become tender and begin to weep, for this will refresh their soul. This will yet engender hope that at one time they will return to God.

Particular Aspects of Being in a Deserted State

It is no wonder that you are so troubled, for: First, your Father hides Himself. How perplexed a child is whose father and mother have departed, leaving the child in a lonely and dark place! How this child will cry! And if someone were to ask, "Why are you crying," the child would answer, "My father and mother are gone." Has your heavenly Father also departed -- your Father with whom you so intimately shared your need, before whom you could bring your desire with supplication, who used to answer and comfort you in such a familiar manner, and to whom you customarily cried out, "My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?" Poor child, has your beloved Father departed? One will say, "If only I knew that God was my Father, then I would melt away."

Secondly, your Jesus -- your Beloved -- your Bridegroom has departed. If one were to ask you, "Why are you so sorrowful," would you then not answer, "My Beloved who used to kiss me with the

kisses of His mouth; under whose shadow I used to sit; whose fruit was sweet to my mouth; who led me into the banqueting house; who waved His banner of love over me; who was all my delight; upon whom I used to lean as my Beloved; and of whom I used to boast, His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely Song of Solomon 5:16 -- He who is my Beloved and my friend has departed, and therefore I am so sorrowful.”

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit refrains His influences, and thus what light, comfort, and joy can you then have? There can be nothing other than sorrow, unrest, and anxiety. “For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me” (Lamentations 1:16).

Fourthly, a deserted soul is in the dark, is surrounded by darkness, walks in darkness, and does not know where she is going. Wherever she turns, she suffers a setback and stumbles over the smallest thing, for the Lord who is her light has departed from her. The Lord Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, is gone down. The Dayspring from on high does not shine upon her, and the renowned Morning Star does not arise in her heart. This causes her to be sorrowful, anxious, and full of fear.

Fifthly, she is weak and impotent, for the Lord who is the strength of her life has departed. She is ill, for the Lord Jesus her Physician has departed from her. There is no balm in Gilead for her healing, and therefore she is ready to die.

Sixthly, she is desperate and knows not what to undertake. Now she seeks it here and then there, but she knows not where to find it. The Lord Jesus, whose name is Counselor and who used to counsel her so sweetly in her perplexities, directing her to the way and to the means (always having fared so well in doing so), leaves her to herself and refuses to give her counsel. Therefore no matter what way she enters upon, she finds herself at a loss and is entangled in all manner of snares.

Seventhly, she would desire to turn to God and indeed begins to do so, but she is not able. The way is fenced up, enclosed with hewn stone, and encompassed by thorns, which she cannot penetrate, for the Lord Jesus who is the way, without whom no one can come to the Father, has departed. The Holy Spirit does not help in her infirmities and does not groan within her with groanings that cannot be uttered. Even when she prays, the Lord encompasses Himself with a cloud so that no prayer can penetrate, and when she calls, He does not answer her at all. And thus she must depart again without comfort.

Eighthly, when she takes refuge to the Word of God in order to derive some comfort from it, it is a closed Book for her. She finds nothing there for herself. Her eyes may indeed fall upon a passage of Scripture, but it disturbs her, and that which should lift her up has the opposite effect, casting her down. The Word of God is nothing more to her than a fire and a two-edged sword. It neither makes an impression nor does it have an effect upon her, for the Spirit neither joins Himself to it, nor works by means of it, and therefore it is not efficacious.

Ninthly, the enemies attack her from all sides, and everyone of them gets the advantage over her. Every arrow hits, Satan is successful in every attack, all the scorn of the world wounds her, and every manifestation of a sinful desire draws her away. She is thus as a bird caught in the snare, for her King has forsaken her and does not go into battle with her. The Lord, who is her shield, has

departed and lets her stand without protection.

Tenthly, if only it were true that the soul in all this were as yet always sensible, tender, and able to cry. But no, despondency makes her numb, closes her heart, and she is, so to speak, frozen solid in a harsh winter. The Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus, who formerly caused the heart to burn within, neither set her aflame any longer nor baptize her with fire. The fountain of life has been stopped and water no longer issues forth.

Eleventhly, all this would cause more stirring within if we could but believe ourself to be a child of God. Here is, however, the primary source of anxiety: We then believe that we are not elected, never had grace, have nothing more than external illumination, and have indeed been cast away by God in His wrath. We furthermore believe that God will never be gracious to us, but that He will condemn us forever. This sense of hopelessness therefore makes us so dead and insensitive, that not a thing can move us any more. All we feel is the fatal wound in our heart. Or else we shall be so tossed about by despair that we, feeling hell so to speak, begin to entertain all manner of desperate thoughts and words. This will aggravate our sorrow to such an extent that we shall be fretful and we shall not be able to silently resign ourselves.

Thus the poor soul languishes, is as a woman forsaken, grieves in spirit, is oppressed, tossed with tempest, and not comforted. And thus her life is consumed by sorrow and her years with sighing. If the Lord did not secretly sustain her, what would then come of it all? The Lord keeps her in His power, however, and by reason of His unchangeable grace and goodness to her, will restore her again, reveal Himself to her again, and will by renewal speak to her heart and comfort her. "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him" Isaiah 57:16; Isaiah 57:18-19. When God's children encounter a trial of some sort, they are not satisfied to know that it is from the Lord -- with which they ought to be satisfied, knowing it to be the good, holy, and benevolent will of God with which their will ought to agree with delight, even if it were with tears in their eyes. However, they also wish to know the reason, not so much because they desire to know how they can improve their condition from their side, but to sit in judgment about the dealings of God and judge whether God's dealings are righteous. For they reason as follows: "If I am a child of God, reconciled through Christ, loved of God, and an heir of eternal life, and if God does not deal thus with His other children, who prosper in body and soul, why then does God deal with me thus?" They would then conclude, "I am not a child of God," doing so more in fretfulness than in earnest. Therefore, it is commonly their question: "Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me" (Job 10:2). Even though you need not know any reasons -- for God does not give an account of His deeds -- I shall nevertheless give you some.

How God Is Glorified in Desertion First, God wills thus to be glorified. There are others beside you who will observe how God deals with you.

(1) It is to you and them that God wants to show His sovereignty and freeness in manifesting His mercy to whomever and whenever He wills. The fact that He receives you and passes others by; that you know God in Christ; that you strive to receive Jesus unto justification and sanctification; and that you have the principle of spiritual life within you, whereas others are deprived of this -- all

of this is not your work, but is due to the sovereign grace of God. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Romans 9:15). This is the lesson the angels and believers who are acquainted with your condition learn. You will learn this lesson while in your straits, God is glorified by others by it, and He will also be glorified by you concerning this. If we were always to live in the enjoyment of spiritual embrace, we would secretly imagine that we were entitled to this -- as if it were in our power to keep ourself near to God. Upon missing it, however, we learn to know the sovereignty of God, and we learn to acknowledge and love it. Then the thought ceases, "Why am I not as another person is?" Then we learn, "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4:35). To learn this is worth some anxiety.

(2) The Lord thus reveals the greatness of His mercy. Not only does one become acquainted with himself as to how sinful and unworthy he is of the least grace and what a wonder it is that God would look upon him in grace; but he also knows and acknowledges that all is empty and that nothing but God can satisfy him. Oh, the mercy of God becomes so precious to him! If he may be the object of mercy, he is able and willing to miss everything, for if he must miss God, he must die for sorrow. To learn this, that is, to esteem God above his own supreme happiness, is indeed worth the occasional experience of desertion.

(3) The Lord thus demonstrates His holiness and righteousness, and His aversion for sin. Furthermore, the Lord hereby shows that, even though the believer is pleasing to Him in Christ, his corruption nevertheless displeases Him. His eyes are too pure than that they would behold evil. Believers must perceive that God is righteous in dealing with them thus -- yes, that God would be righteous if He would forsake them and eternally cast them away from before His countenance, "that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Psalms 51:4). To perceive and embrace this is indeed worthy of the experience of some measure of sorrow.

(4) The Lord thus reveals His immutability, faithfulness, longsuffering and truthfulness. All this is confirmed by the fact that God bears with the believer in his wrong and foolish actions while being subject to His chastisement; and that God secretly supports and upholds him during this desertion so that his spiritual life is not extinguished, neither does he succumb to despair nor break forth with abominable words and deeds. God neither casts him away, nor deserts him excessively, but is still with him when he must go through the water and the fire; He restores him, and by renewal causes him to taste the mercies he previously enjoyed.

We may previously have believed in, and have acknowledged all these perfections. However, by way of spiritual desertion we shall become acquainted with them experientially. Such knowledge, such acknowledgement, and such worship far exceeds what we had before this. It is true that during a time of desertion we do not perceive all this very well, but we shall experience this subsequently. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5). Thus, spiritual desertion is subservient to the glory of God.

God's Children Benefit from Desertion

Secondly, spiritual desertion will serve the best interest of God's children. This is not only because they thus become better acquainted with the perfections of God and glorify them more, but:

(1) They thus also become better acquainted with themselves. They perceive their sinful nature and deeds; how abominable they are before God, angels, and men; what they are worthy of; and what they should expect if God were to deal with them according to their conduct. This causes the soul to sink away in humility and in her nothingness. The soul experiences her impotence, neither being able to lift herself up by faith, nor being able to comfort herself thereby. Thus, if she is to be restored, her restoration must come from the Lord alone, without there being the least worthiness in her.

(2) Hereby they learn to esteem grace all the more highly. The crumbs which they previously did not regard, the least longing for the Lord Jesus, the least sigh, the feeblest prayer, the smallest measure of light, and the smallest measure of hope now appear exceedingly precious to them, presently refresh them, and they thank the Lord for them. They thus become all the more careful to preserve grace. They actively will seek to preserve what they have in order that they may continue to enjoy the love of God and His communion. When Hezekiah, after his sorrow, by renewal enjoyed comfort, he said, "What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (Isaiah 38:15). When the bride found her bridegroom again after having been deserted by him, she said, "I held him, and would not let him go" (Song of Solomon 3:4).

(3) They are thus weaned from the world and all creatures. They no longer cleave to it, nor do they desire it. They have no need for it, and expect nothing from man. They only make use of the means as a matter of obedience -- not as if thereby to obtain their desires, as if they were contingent upon these means. Time and again they turn to the Lord as their portion and their resting place, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalms 73:28-28); "But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:28).

(4) Hereby the Lord makes known to the world and His children what graces He has planted in them, thus manifesting His omnipotence, goodness, faithfulness, and immutability. How would we have ever been acquainted with Job's patience, unless he had been in those trying circumstances? How would we have known about Abraham's faith and obedience, unless he had been subjected to those severe trials? Such is also the case when believers must experience desertion. Everyone who receives knowledge of this and interacts with them, will perceive from their actions that they despise the world and all that is in it, that they deem all their comfort to consist in having communion with God, and that the only reason for their mourning is that they must miss communion with God. This is further confirmed when, upon having been restored, it is perceived how they emerge from this trial; how they are as tried gold coming out of the fire; how fearful they are of sin; how majestic and glorious God is in their eyes; how precious Jesus is to them; how godly, humble, longsuffering, compassionate, and obliging they are; how encouraged they are in the Lord; and how they trust in Him. And thus everyone will be astonished about their change. This will be to the conviction of worldly people. It will teach God's children to understand the Lord's ways, make them strong to hope upon the Lord in trials, motivate them to thank and glorify the Lord, and also stir them up to fear and serve the Lord increasingly.

Tell me now -- you who have asked for reasons why the Lord brings desertion upon His children -- do not these reasons express the wisdom and goodness of God, and is it not beneficial?

Objection: God can grant all this without bringing desertion upon them.

Answer: They could not have been acquainted with all this in an experiential way, and it would be as much as to ask: "Why doesn't God make His children perfect from the moment of their birth? Why doesn't God take His children to heaven in their childhood?" There is no other way for me to answer you than by saying, "It is the wisdom and the goodness of God." By way of His dealings, angels and men thus attain to a greater measure of felicity, greater admiration, and are rendered more fit to answer to their purpose of glorifying God in His perfections as they are revealed in Christ.

Desertion: Due to Specific Sins

Thirdly, God will at times desert His children due to specific sins. God will not desert his children because of their daily weaknesses and offenses; however, He will do so due to certain specific sins.

(1) He will do so for great sins which, in spite of many inner warnings, are deliberately committed against the conscience, and which cause great offense. Such is true for adultery, this being the reason why David had to experience desertion Psalms 51:1-19. Desertion will also occur when we -- in order to gratify our lust for dominance, honor, money, and whatever else there may be -- conspire with the world and the men of the world, and thus forsake God's cause and His children, conducting ourselves as if we were one with the world, or engage in evil practices by way of lying and hypocrisy. It will be observed that God deserts such in regard to their internal comforts and their sanctification. Externally He will bring upon them shame, contempt, and distress; loss of husband, wife, children, health, and goods; and He will cause them to die in fear.

(2) He will do so if we become proud in civil life, and if in the spiritual realm we pride ourselves in our gifts, knowledge, and grace; if we wish to be esteemed as a great person in the church and seek the praise of others. We do so if inwardly, and with our behavior, we despise those among the godly who either have a lower station in the world, or are not as advanced in grace; and if we envy those who either have a higher position in the world or a greater measure of grace and gifts than we ourselves have. In this way -- in thought, word, and deed -- we stir up those emotions that beget envy. Pride is a dreadful thing which God cannot tolerate. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

(3) He will do so if we esteem the grace of God and communion with Him of little value -- not judgmentally, for that cannot be, but rather with our will, and in our practice and conduct. Such is true when we begin to love the world, halt between two opinions, and are divided in our heart and love: God something and the world something. If we thus neglect to seek God with our whole heart, with earnestness and zeal, and as the only One whom we desire; if we lightly omit our scheduled devotions or conduct them hastily in order to pacify our conscience and to assure ourselves of our salvation; if we do not open to a Jesus who is knocking, but let Him stand before the door, thereby demonstrating that communion with Him is but of little value, being without desire to make any effort; and if we grieve but little over our backsliding -- then it is as if God says: "If I am worth that little to you, go your way; enjoy and entertain yourself in the world." God will then

withdraw Himself and allow this person to fend for himself.

(4) He will do so if we become conceited and depart from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus, being desirous to have something new. We shall then engage ourselves in study in order to gain in wisdom and to acquire knowledge. Spiritual matters are too common, as they concern matters about which we are already knowledgeable and have frequently heard about. All that is new we readily embrace, regardless of whether it is truth or not. We then imagine that only now the light has dawned upon us, we have become wise, have become steadfast in the faith, and have overcome our previous dragging of our feet. We then mock with those who live tenderly and have strife. We turn our backs upon such and join ourselves to those who likewise enjoy this new-found light, irrespective of whether they fear the Lord or not. We are then at liberty and have freedom to do all that which previously smote our conscience. We are then able to boast as the world does, and do as the world does, while imagining that we are increasing wondrously. In the meantime, however, God sends a leanness into the soul. Since we do not embrace internal spiritual truths with more heartfelt love, God does at times also leave us to go our own way, not allowing us to proceed beyond the letter, and thus decrease our understanding of the spiritual dimension. Happy are they who remember from whence they have fallen, repent, and do their first works. It is rare, however, that such regain their initial level of spirituality.

Restoration for Those in Spiritual Desertion

Having presented to you spiritual desertion in its nature, consequences, and causes, we now wish to be of assistance to such and help them out of this grievous condition -- even though it is a difficult task. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14). It is, however, the duty of the strong to assist the weak and to lift up those who are bowed down. God also frequently blesses the means above expectation. Words, the strongest encouragements, the most serious exhortations, and the most effective arguments are not sufficient to that end. Deserted persons are too destitute of strength to be lifted up by this. The God who has deserted them must by renewal visit and take them by the hand. God occasionally does this in an immediate manner, infusing new grace solely by the Holy Spirit, and quickening residual grace -- and they are thus restored, so to speak, in a moment. Sometimes God does this by way of external circumstances and events, which in and of themselves are not capable of being a means to that end. However, God generally uses His read or spoken Word for this purpose, which is applied to them. In order that we might be a means to your restoration, we shall propose some comforts and then give you some guidance.

Prior to this, however, I would like to ask those who are in a state of desertion the following questions: "Do you desire to be delivered from this condition? Are you desirous that the Lord would clear up your darkness and shine upon you with His light; that the Lord would assure you of having been adopted as His child and of being an heir of eternal life; that the Lord would say unto your soul, I am thy salvation, call you by name, and declare to you that you have found grace in His eyes; that the Lord would lovingly embrace your soul and cast all your sins behind His back; and that the Lord Jesus would kiss you with the kisses of His mouth and manifest His love to you? Are you desirous to again weep sweet tears, pray, believe, have loving fellowship with Him and to walk in tender piety before His countenance?" What is your answer? If you answer in the affirmative, then I ask you, "Is this true and do you really mean it?" Do you again answer "Yes,"

with the sigh, "I wish it were so, but I cannot expect this"? However, there is hope in this respect; that is, only if you are willing to be delivered. If you are indeed willing, then with composure listen to the following: The deserted person does not believe that he is a child of God and a recipient of grace. He thinks that if he were able to believe that, he would be enabled to persevere courageously in this darkness, even if it pleased the Lord not to permit him to feel His grace and comforts. Although he would very much desire this, he would nevertheless cleave to the Lord. It is thus our first task to convince the deserted person that he has grace.

First, reflect upon the days of old. Do you still remember when you were entirely in the state of nature, and neither knew God nor sought Him? Proceed and reflect upon the way which led to your change, and subsequently upon the change you have experienced. Reflect upon the prayers you offered, the tears you wept, that wrestling with and fleeing unto Jesus, that receiving of Him unto reconciliation and godliness. Furthermore, consider the insight you received concerning God and the way of salvation, and how much this differed from the knowledge of natural men. You perceived that with all their knowledge, they were as yet blind. Proceed by considering what your general objective was; how there was the fear of God, a tenderness of conscience, sensitivity toward sin, a repeated seeking of forgiveness; what a love for God, His service, and His children you then had. Furthermore, you then had an awareness in your soul of quietness, peace, hope, occasional assurance, and a sweet inclination toward God. You know these things to be true; now, set aside the sinfulness which cleaves to all God's children, consider these matters in their essential nature, and draw a conclusion from all this. Is there then no evidence that you did possess true grace? You will certainly not be able to say that it was hypocrisy, knowing that in all this you were dealing with God, and that your heart frequently bore witness that your conduct was in truth. You will also not be able to say that all this was but the result of external illumination and a mere work of nature. At that time you perceived the difference between yourself and those who had but external light. The fact that you are presently desirous to experience these motions again proves that you still deem all that to have been in truth, even though you impulsively speak and think otherwise. Would you not consider someone to be a gracious person if you were to hear, without his knowledge, how he wrestled with God in prayer, and if you knew his heart to be as such? This proves again that you consider your previous condition to be gracious. Therefore, proceed with your work in truth and conclude that the work in you has been in truth. Turn with this to the Holy Scriptures and believe that the gifts of God and His calling are without repentance, that He will also finish the good work He has begun in you, and that He will not forsake the work of His hands.

Secondly, consider your present state, and you will yet detect grace in it, as despairing as you may be of your condition. Also here you are to deal truthfully, even as if you were judging someone else.

(1) You have light, know the way of salvation in Christ, are acquainted with having spiritual communion with God, and know what it is to have true dealings with God. Not only do you know what faith is, but you also know how a believing soul functions. You are acquainted with the nature of inner, spiritual life; as well as that which differs from it. Your knowledge of all this is not due to the drawing of some obscure conclusion; that is, by concluding the one thing from the other. Rather, you are acquainted with the essential nature of these things, and your knowledge is such that it engenders esteem and love, together with a desire to possess them -- even if they are of no

comfort to you at the present.

(2) Why are you sorrowful? It is indeed not because you lack something in this world, but rather due to God being distant, Jesus having departed, and your having been forsaken. You are not merely and primarily motivated by a fear of being damned. If you were assured of the fact that you would not be damned and had everything in the world which you would desire, would you then be satisfied and would your sorrow then cease? Indeed not! This question will stimulate your inclination, and with all your heart you will declare, "I am sorrowful because I miss God, and I cannot be happy as long as I cannot draw near to Him. If that were to take place, I would be happy." However, to perceive the deficiency of life is life, and sorrow over that which is lacking is a sure evidence of love. Such mourners are pronounced blessed, and to them pertains the promise of comfort, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

(3) Add to this those heartfelt desires which go out after God. If you think upon having sweet communion with God, union with Christ, a walking in love, obedience, and the service of God; and you think to yourself, "If once again I were thus" -- doesn't that enliven your soul? Does that set your affections in motion, and would they not mount upward with wings if despondency did not hinder them in this? And as hopeless as your condition is, can you keep from lifting your eyes on high? Are you able to refrain entirely from praying? What do you then desire? This indeed shows that you desire to have something -- something from God. Your heart will confess that it is God Himself, and you are thus to be convinced that your desires are after God Himself. Desire proceeds from love, however, and the promise is: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

Thirdly, acknowledge the intermittent comforts which the Lord grants you in the midst of your desertion.

(1) Upon entering church a fitting word is spoken which touches you. You are sensibly moved, wholeheartedly receive Jesus, the wall of separation between God and you is removed, you receive an opened door and free access to God, and you have freedom to address Him as "Abba, Father!" It may be that you join the fellowship of the godly, and behold, the Lord reveals to you there that He is present, for your soul becomes lively. It is as if the darkness disappears, and as if you are fully restored.

(2) Has the Lord not occasionally visited you in your sleep so that you were awake while sleeping? You were able to pray, were comforted, became lively, and upon awaking your sleep had been sweet. Yes, do you long for such nights, because your soul is not in a better frame than when asleep? This will occur occasionally; however, also the opposite can be true, as Job testifies in (Job 7:14).

(3) It may also occasionally occur while you are in solitude -- be it in your room or in the field -- that your heart is sweetly moved by God's Spirit -- yes, the tears will flow, and there will be a calling upon and a cleaving unto the Lord. The Lord may at times visit you with comforts, assurances, and joy. You who have experienced this, however, is this not a sure evidence that the Lord neither has nor will forsake you? Strengthen yourself with this and persevere by faith when life and light are lacking, and it readily becomes dark again.

Fourthly, be it known that it is God's common way to cause His children to occasionally experience desertions -- particularly those whom He desires to give an additional measure of grace for the purpose of growth and comfort. Nothing strange is befalling you, for God does not deal with you any differently from His other children. Perhaps you do not have the opportunity to have fellowship with such, and when you meet someone who is in such a condition, you are amazed that there are more who have come into such circumstances as you. It is as if this gives you some courage, and I tell you from experience that God generally deals with His children in this manner. Every person has his cross, whether they are pious or not. However, this particular cross is reserved for the godly only. Others have no knowledge of this; they ridicule it and consider it a case of melancholy and foolishness. We may thus even conclude from bearing this cross that the Lord has bestowed grace upon us, even though this will be difficult for us to do. Therefore, be not troubled by this, but bow yourself, and humble yourself under the mighty hand of the Lord so that He may exalt you in due time.

Fifthly, the Lord will most certainly grant deliverance and restore you. He has done so to others, even though those who have not behaved themselves all that well during their trial will not be fully restored in this life. However, they will receive this in heaven. Therefore, take courage and focus upon the promises of God. "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours. ... And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:8; Isaiah 54:11; Isaiah 54:13); "For the Lord will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies" (Lamentations 3:31-32).

Therefore, neither let the consolations of God be small to you, nor ignore His promises -- they are true. Others have experienced this to be so and their faith has been strengthened that much more; the Lord will also return your sense of comfort to you. Thus you may strengthen your heart with God's promise: Though He tarry, wait for Him; because He will surely come, He will not tarry (Habakkuk 2:3).

Guidance in Desertion

It now remains to give some guidance to those who are experiencing desertion, as well as to those who are called to deal with such persons. A deserted person has to be on guard against certain things and has to practice certain things. The person who is deserted must refrain himself from:

(1) Disqualifying his preceding state; that is, his conduct Godward, and God's work in him. In so doing he would declare the work of the Holy Spirit to be a lie, which is a dreadful sin. He is not capable of judging this now as well as when he had spiritual enjoyment and light. If he cannot presently ascertain this, he must ultimately let matters be and say, "I presently cannot judge about this." In his present condition he cannot conclude that all that has transpired in the past was not right. True children of God do indeed experience desertion, as has been shown above.

(2) Being insensitive toward and hardening himself against the Lord; that is, as if he did not wish to take this chastisement to heart -- adjusting himself to the fact that if God is not comforting him, he can do without this comfort. This would greatly displease the Lord. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction:

they have made their faces harder than a rock" (Jeremiah 5:3).

(3) Murmuring and being fretful. "If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38); "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction" (Proverbs 3:11). When you are thus, the Lord will not be moved to help you, and the cross will be doubly heavy for you.

(4) Despair and despondency, thinking: "The Lord has made me the object of His wrath; it is done with me, and my hope has vanished." This in turn begets fretful, inappropriate, and evil thoughts. Do not say, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord" (Lamentations 3:18). Be on guard for the inner turmoil of Job. "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life. I loathe it" (Job 7:15-16). Rather, follow his example when he said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). Quiet patience is pleasing to God.

(5) Neglecting the means: the reading of God's Word, singing, the hearing of God's Word, and prayer. This would be identical to a person being faint for hunger not wanting to eat due to being faint.

(6) Seeking any other comfort outside of God, entertaining yourself by eating, drinking, recreation, entertaining company, etc., and thus seeking rest in that -- even though bodily refreshment can at times be a means to the enlivening of the spirit. Furthermore, be on guard against yielding to other sentiments and errors which cause one to proceed no further than judgmental knowledge, while fully neglecting a tender walk with God, and thus avoiding all spiritual struggle. The deserted person must also practice certain things. I shall not prescribe many means here, for they are as difficult to perform as the matter itself. Consider only the following:

First, strive very much for quiet and patient subjection to the Lord's dealings. To be humble, to mourn as a dove which has lost its partner, and to chatter as a swallow, coming before the Lord in such a frame while longing for Him, is the appropriate disposition in these trials, and it is a fit disposition for the Lord to work in you. "He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope" (Lamentations 3:28-29).

Secondly, if we become aware that the Lord has withdrawn Himself due to a specific sin -- some of which we have identified earlier -- then it is of critical importance that we wholeheartedly repent from that sin, deeply humble ourselves, abhor ourselves, confess it with sorrow, justify God for withdrawing Himself because of that sin, and be resolved to refrain from such sin in the future. We must then look unto the blood of Jesus in order to obtain reconciliation thereby, and pray for forgiveness. For how can the chastisement be removed as long as we do not humble ourselves over the causes and turn from them? When David was heavily oppressed so that the hand of the Lord was upon him day and night, and his moisture was changed into the drought of summer, he said, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalms 32:5).

Thirdly, continue to practice your devotions habitually as you did in former days. Do not neglect this and do it to the best of your ability. Read the Word, even if you neither have the least desire to do so, nor are moved in the least by it. Bend your knees as you are accustomed to do, and pray as best as you know how -- even if you were to read a psalm prayerfully. If your soul is overwhelmed,

do not walk away from this; and if inner strife intensifies, then endure it (as you would sit out a hailstorm). If you say, "This is but mechanical activity which cannot be pleasing to the Lord," then I reply, "Go on in performing your task mechanically." The Lord knows your motivating principle to be spiritual. He knows that you are neither satisfied with but a mechanical performance, nor a serving of Him as such, but that you are using it as the ordained means to receive help. Continue in your temporal calling and do not resign from it. Maintain fellowship with the godly, and exhort others as you have done aforesaid. If you thus perform this duty, then it will be a means to you for not becoming estranged any further -- yes, you will gradually be corrected by it.

Fourthly, become accustomed to living by faith. I am not speaking here of the exercise of faith in which there is utmost clarity, but of that faith by which we cleave to the Lord. Perhaps you cannot assure yourself that you are in the state of grace, but you nevertheless believe that the Lord Jesus offers Himself to a lost sinner, and that therefore whosoever will, may and must receive Him. Rely upon this expectantly, in a waiting frame, exercising faith, and surrendering yourself -- even though you may neither find light nor comfort. Do not say, "It is too late, and for me there is no hope." Rather, reply by saying, "It is a lie; I am yet alive, I still have the Word of God, and I am indeed willing if I could but find Him." Do not yield to unbelieving thoughts, but rely upon the Word of God and you will at last experience that the Lord will again visit you in this way.

Those who must deal with those who are in a state of desertion, must pay attention as to how they deal with them, for the Lord will take note of this. He loves His children who are in a state of desertion, and if anyone adds grief to their grief, and if anyone deserts them as well, it will displease Him. Therefore, first of all refrain from:

(1) Judging them as if they were greater sinners than others, or as if they were living in an abominable sin -- be it that you either condemn them in your heart, with your countenance and conduct, or in word. This was the sin of the friends of Job, who were rebuked by the Lord concerning this.

(2) Ridiculing and mocking with them as if they were going insane and were giving in to illusions and melancholy. This would greatly arouse God's wrath against you.

(3) Giving them evil advice, suggesting that they depart from the way of tender godliness, saying, "That is what you get if you wish to be such a wise person, be so considerate, and stand above others. Come, live as others do; give yourself some diversion, and entertain yourself together with us. Live as other people and all these illusions will disappear." Worldly people will thus deal with them. God observes this, however, and it displeases Him; they will receive their judgment upon this.

(4) Being without hope as far as their restoration is concerned, saying, "It is useless; there is no sense in trying. Whatever one does for them is all fruitless." There is indeed hope for their restoration, but the power to restore such is neither to be found in you nor in your words. Instead, the Lord uses others to restore such by means of their dealings with them.

Secondly,

(1) Join yourself to them instead, even if it were but to show your love by your presence, thereby encouraging such deserted souls.

(2) Let your sentiment concerning their sorrowful condition be tempered and let your conduct be consistent with this. On the one hand you must not be insensitive, and on the other hand, be not fainthearted, lest such a deserted soul be grieved or become even more fainthearted.

(3) Show your compassion as well as your inclination to help them bear this.

(4) Use your ability -- as little as it may be -- to comfort and encourage them.

(5) Pray for such souls, and occasionally pray with them -- as capable or incapable as you may be -- and do so daily in your closet. This will be pleasing to the Lord. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble" (Psalms 41:1).

097. Chapter 92: Concerning the Temptation Toward Atheism, or the Denial of God's Existence

----- CHAPTER NINETY-TWO ----- Concerning the Temptation Toward Atheism, or the Denial of God's Existence The just shall live by faith. Faith is that which renders spiritual life active. It is the most beneficial for a godly person. Unbelief, however, causes him most harm. Unbelief causes the internal corruptions of the heart to manifest themselves, gives the world a great advantage over him, makes him vulnerable for the attacks of the devil, hinders him in approaching unto God in prayer, robs him of all peace and inner rest, prevents all sanctification, is displeasing to God, and restrains the Lord from working within him. In one word, unbelief is the cancer of the soul and is a most wretched disposition. Since believers are at times in this condition, we shall therefore consider this disease in its harmful nature, so that everyone may be on guard against it and no one may yield to it. Furthermore, we shall endeavor to restore those who have become subject to this condition. We shall neither speak of the unbelief of the unconverted, nor of saving faith, nor of the feebleness and weakness always inherent in the faith of even the very best, nor of the short relapses during a given exercise of faith. Rather, we shall speak of the overwhelming and prevailing power of historical unbelief which causes spiritual life to decay and brings it, so to speak, to the brink of death. The focus of this unbelief is either God, the Word of God, the spiritual state of the believer, the promises, or God's dealings with the believer. The Temptation Toward Atheism Is Common The temptation toward atheism is a more common tribulation for believers than one may think -- especially for those who have a keen intellect. For many this is a concealed matter, so that they do not clearly perceive it to be the case. Nevertheless, it is the cause of not gleaning much comfort and peace from faith. Others do indeed perceive it, but conceal it, being of the opinion that no one else is acquainted with such an abomination, and that everyone would despise them for such evil thoughts. Sometimes there are the sudden interjections: "Is there indeed a God? Is there indeed a heaven or a hell? Is my soul indeed immortal? Is all this nothing more than an illusion and imagination?" Some immediately reject such interjections, without them causing much harm. Others begin to reflect upon them, whereby this bent toward atheism increases, shoots forth deeper roots, becomes a torment, and becomes detrimental to religious exercise. Others are more oppressed by this and it becomes a prevailing disposition. False arguments against the existence of God present themselves; one cannot conclude that God exists; prayer either begins to wane or lose its potency. Such thoughts immediately become an obstacle and the faith residing in the heart cannot be exercised, nor is there any benefit derived from the hearing or reading of the Word. This is followed by great anxiety of heart, grievous sorrow, fear, and trembling. This can be caused by the residual love of God in the heart which cannot tolerate this; or at other times it can be in response to the evil and abominableness of this sin or due to the prospect of eternal damnation. Such a person will wrestle against this, but will not be able to overcome it; it has the upper hand. Indeed, the soul of some becomes so worn out and despondent in this battle, that it appears that they no longer resist such thoughts. Previously there was still a desire to believe and some resistance; however, such a person has now succumbed,

and his spiritual life is, so to speak, listless. This is not because he delights in this condition, but rather due to having become despondent and powerless. This can occasionally last for a long time -- yes, even for successive years. At times there can be periods of intermission, however. The soul may then occasionally receive some strength to turn those thoughts away, prevail in prayer, and receive some sweet comforts. It thus appears as if she has overcome. Such intermissions especially occur when we are engaged in instructing, exhorting, and comforting others. Yet, this temptation has not passed, and such a person can readily succumb to it again. Sometimes such a person may gradually make some progress, but he will as yet be so weak that he does not dare to believe that such is the case. A sudden impulse and a falling into sin can cause the temptation to regain strength. The Various Causes for this Wretched Condition There are various causes for this wretched condition.

(1) Sometimes it pleases the Lord to try a person for a season by hiding Himself and leaving him over to himself.

(2) Sometimes it is the consequence of an infrequent reading of God's Word.

(3) Sometimes it is caused by a neglect of our scheduled devotions, a hasty observance of them, and a failure to acquaint ourselves with God.

(4) Sometimes it is caused by a yielding to sin -- be it in our daily walk, or when we sin expressly against our conscience, and thus done more boldly.

(5) Sometimes it is caused by our prayers not being answered. We may either be subject to a cross of exceptional magnitude, or we may have a very strong desire for a given matter. We may pray earnestly and in a persevering manner, take hold of the promises, and yet not obtain the matter. This will engender despondency or a secret fretfulness. This can then be accompanied by the following thoughts: "If there were a God, He would help me. I can see that it makes no difference whether I pray or not."

(6) Sometimes it can be caused by yielding to an intellectual desire to penetrate too deeply into the matter of God's essence, His timeless eternity, His dimensionless infinity, as well as other of His perfections. Our intellect is too puny and the infinite God too exalted. If we occupy ourselves with reflecting upon God beyond what is permissible, we shall be as those who directly look into the sun and thereby immediately become blinded, so that they are unable to see what they were previously able to see with clarity. If, however, we insist on comprehending the "how" of God's existence with our puny intellect -- that is, His eternity, omnipotence, infinity, etc. -- and we cannot do this (not being able to do this), this will beget bewilderment and doubt as to whether God does indeed exist and truly has such a nature. This then affords our heart the opportunity to proceed further and further in nurturing atheistic thoughts.

(7) Sometimes this can be caused by an excessive desire for extraordinary revelations of God and a more feeling impression of His perfections, desiring this not only for our spiritual delight, but also being secretly desirous to know with more certainty that He is. We are then not satisfied with the common way in which the Lord leads His children.

(8) Sometimes the devil instigates this by way of sudden interjections, subtle delusions, or external circumstances. He may also do so by way of secret whisperings, when he asks: "Is it really true;

should such and such be the case?" Unbelief which is nestled in the heart will then take hold and such a person will begin to reflect upon these thoughts.

(9) Sometimes we can come into such a condition by reading atheistic books, hearing atheistic lectures or argumentation, listening to the complaints of those who are in such a state, or by carelessly giving expression to our inner thoughts.

Exhortations and Helpful Counsel Not only is such a condition grievous indeed, but it is also injurious to spiritual life. Everyone must therefore be very much on guard against such situations and resist such thoughts immediately upon their arising. Here fleeing is the best way toward victory. If one reflects upon such thoughts, wishing to rebut them with reason and to respond to the counterarguments which present themselves, one will easily be captured and conquered. Therefore, resist everything, no matter how attractive and powerful the thought may be which is being interjected. And if you are already in such a condition, do your utmost to be delivered from it and attentively reflect upon the following matters.

First, in all men -- even in the most ignorant heathen -- there is an acknowledgement of Deity. Are you wiser than the entire world? Confirm this truth therefore in your own mind, even if it is all dark within and you have no strength.

Secondly, most of the godly encounter this strife, especially those who are naturally endowed with a keen intellect. Should it therefore be a surprise to you that this also befalls you? Therefore, do not lose courage, for the Lord has delivered all others from this strife, and subsequently has caused them to increase in spiritual strength. The Lord will also deliver you, and you will become stronger as well.

Thirdly, consider who they are whose desire it is that there be no God and who labor to deny His existence. This is the practice of ungodly men, who do so in order that they might practice their ungodliness all the more confidently. However, you do not wish to be associated with such; you despise them. Thus, you manifest very clearly that you believe that there is a God, for if you did not believe that, you would not be disturbed upon hearing that they deny God and speak evil of Him. You would then be pleased with them, they being of one sentiment with you.

Fourthly, consider your own heart for a moment. Is not your heart troubled when you are thus tried and when such unbelieving thoughts arise in you? Is it not your wholehearted desire to be delivered from this and to serve God in faith? This clearly proves that you believe that God exists, for otherwise you would be satisfied, and you would deem yourself happy to have been delivered from such prejudices.

Fifthly, can it be harmful to confirm that God exists? You know that the denial of God's existence can be detrimental and that a man can perish in consequence thereof. You know that believing this cannot harm you, but would engender and stimulate peace within, thus enabling you to serve the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

(1) Therefore, by renewal engage yourself in the task of seeking after and serving God. Presuppose the existence of God -- even if you are not fully convinced within -- and say, "I shall blindly make the Word of God my foundation for doing so, obligate myself to believe all that this Word says, and do what this Word prescribes."

(2) You are thus to start from the beginning. Neither reach out for lofty matters, nor exert your intellect and mental faculties; rather, stay with the Word. Read it, and in reliance upon that Word, flee to the Lord Jesus as Surety and receive Him. Do not strain yourself to get a view of Him, however, for that would be counterproductive. Rather, do so humbly and, so to speak, with closed eyes. Rely upon Him because the Word enjoins you to do so, promising that those who put their trust in Him will not be ashamed. Likewise humbly pray and hear the Word, refrain from that which is forbidden, and perform that which is commanded. I assure you that if you thus begin to engage yourself, the Lord will gradually restore you -- even though unbelieving thoughts may initially assault you vehemently, and even though you may for some time engage yourself without finding delight and sweetness in doing so.

(3) Keep your condition concealed from others, be it that they are unconverted, beginners in grace, or weak Christians -- and especially from those of whom you notice that they are also under assault. Rather than being of mutual help to each other, you would cast each other down. Instead, go to an experienced minister or another godly person who is strong in faith and reveal your condition to him. Do not contradict him, however, but listen attentively to what he has to say to you and consider quietly whether it pleases the Lord to apply these words to your heart. If not, then upon your return, use the means by renewal which the Lord has instituted in His Word, doing so quietly and without much ado. Neither by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord you will be restored.

098. Chapter 93: Concerning the Temptation Whether God's Word is True

----- CHAPTER NINETY-THREE ----- Concerning the Temptation Whether God's Word is True Man's Various Opinions of the Holy Scriptures A small ship will sail safely over reefs upon which a large ship will crash. Such is also true for people as far as giving credence to the Word of God. Some do not look beyond the surface of the Word of God, nor do they seriously reflect upon the fact whether it is God's Word. They hear and read it as something that is beneficial in nature -- and beyond that they do not know what to say about it. Such is generally true for natural men who concern themselves but little with God and religion. Others receive it as being of divine origin, doing so simply because the church and everyone else declares it to be so. They neither desire nor are able to contradict it. Such generally do not derive any benefit from the Word and leave it be for what it is.

There are people -- wretches I ought to call them -- who succumb to the doubt of Descartes and fall into his whirlpool. They are of a quick understanding in their own eyes and insist on seeing, touching, and experiencing things. Wherever some knowledge is to be acquired, they are there. They put their reason upon the judgment seat and summon the Bible before them for the purpose of cross-examination, thus demanding at the same time that God give them an explanation of what He has said. Such are punished for their blatant boldness by being given over to a strong delusion -- and frequently to eternal damnation.

Some are secretly wrought upon by the Holy Ghost (unbeknown to themselves) to believe the truth of the gospel in general and that the Scripture is of divine origin. The Word is effective upon their heart for comfort and godliness and they do not seek to know whether they are assured of its divine origin. God spares their little strength and does not subject them to these temptations. I counsel them that they proceed in their simplicity and submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. They will thus enter heaven while others are battling each other.

Many of the Godly are Subject to This Temptation

Many of the godly, however, contrary to their wishes, become subject to doubts as to whether the Bible is the Word of God. Frequently the devil is the instigator, perhaps by way of sudden interjection: "Is this really true?" Or he may conceal himself in a subtle manner and craftily create the opportunity to arouse such thoughts, bringing forth counterfeit arguments and stirring a person up to respond to these. Thus, the safest course is to despise such suggestions and flee from them. However, such doubts also proceed from our own unbelieving heart. Sometimes one may quickly set such suggestions aside without giving heed to them; and thus they do no harm. Sometimes such suggestions have more effect, however, and we begin to entertain doubtful arguments (which I do not wish to mention here lest they gain a foothold) as they present themselves, and we reflect upon them. If this causes us to be in a dilemma and stimulates us to respond to it, we have become captives. This begets all manner of undesirable frames such as darkness of

understanding, unbelief, listlessness, restlessness, fear, and impotence. Such persons will then neither be able nor have the vigor to come to Jesus to view and receive Him as Surety. They will not be able to go to God through Him in order to be justified and they will not be able to derive comfort from any promise in the Word. The Word then neither functions as a hammer, fire, sword, or balm; nor does it nourish them. Such are kept from praying; and if they pray, it is spiritless, and the exercise of faith is nearly absent in it. All religious exercises are impeded, and they would pursue an independent religion of a natural sort, if both the spiritual light and the life yet residing in the soul did not prevent this. Since, however, this spiritual life and light cannot gain the upper hand over inherent unbelief (it being strengthened by natural reason), the soul will thus be grievously tossed back and forth. There can be neither rest nor peace in the soul, but only unsettledness and sorrow. This is not only the result of being unable to believe, pray, or engage themselves, but also because of an inability to ascertain Christ to be Surety and the complete way of salvation (for this is the necessary consequence of doubting divine truths). They are then also tempted to reject Him as such. Their conscience will rebuke them for this as being a dreadful and abominable sin, and it will cause them to be fearful of being damned. This condition will thus inflict considerable harm upon the soul.

How such would rejoice if they could be conclusively and powerfully convinced that the Bible is God's voice, His declaration, and His Word! Since, however, this cannot be ascertained by either external senses or reason, but must be determined by faith alone, this must be the work of the Spirit of faith: "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6). The Spirit reveals to the conscience of believers that the Word of God has been inspired by the Spirit of God and is the infallible truth. Nevertheless, as faith in Christ is wrought by means of the Word, God likewise also uses means to convince of the truth of the Word itself. They are but means, however, and they cannot be efficacious unless the Spirit works by those means. May the Lord therefore work in the heart of such a faltering soul as I am engaged in seeking to convince and strengthen her. In the meantime, may such a person refrain from opposing us in this. Let him rather be silent and submissively allow himself to be instructed that the Bible is God's Word.

Why the Scriptures are the Inspired Word of God

Anyone who is in his right mind and knows himself to be a human being will believe in things which are beyond that which he sees with his eyes and hears with his ears. We do this daily and without misgivings when someone informs us about something. It has been drilled into our minds, and will not be erased until we die, that the Duke of Alva caused thousands of people in the Netherlands to be murdered, decapitated, hanged, and burned for the sake of religion. Furthermore, no one doubts that Rome already existed two or three thousand years prior to this date, formerly was the residence of the emperor, and presently is the seat of the pope (even though one may not have seen it). It is also an unquestionable fact that Jerusalem has been a great city and that a prominent temple has been there -- a temple first built by Solomon, and rebuilt by Zerubbabel after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. You believe that the Jewish nation resided in Canaan and that their religious practice consisted of the performance of all the ceremonies which are recorded in the Bible. You furthermore believe that this nation descended from Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham; Abraham in turn descended from Noah (in whose time the flood came upon the entire earth), descending via a series of ancestors. He, via a series of ancestors, descended from Adam -- the first man whom God created, from the dust of the earth. You believe that Moses led the children of

Israel out of Egypt, and by way of the desert, led them to Canaan, and that this Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. You furthermore believe the other books were written by other men, and that the Jewish nation, for nearly two thousand years, accepted all the books of the Old Testament as divine and as the only rule for their faith and doctrine. It is known to nearly all -- Jews, Christians, and Muslims unquestionably affirm this to be so -- that the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem 1882 years ago [Note: Considering that this work was published in AD 1700, this figure is obviously incorrect.] , was a Prophet mighty in words and deeds, was crucified on the Passover outside Jerusalem, and that the sun was darkened on that given afternoon. These matters are so well-known to everyone, that a person would first have to dehumanize himself and doubt whether he himself truly exists, whether places and people do exist outside of the reach of his vision, and whether any word is true that has ever been written by a man, before he could doubt the things just mentioned. That which troubles you, however, goes beyond all this; it relates to the way of reconciliation and salvation through Christ. In order that you may be delivered from this, stir up your heart to exercise faith as in the truths mentioned, and it will be subservient to prepare your heart to be instructed by the following argument.

Secondly, come a step closer and cast your eyes upon those Scriptures which we know to have been written two to three thousand years ago. Observe the prophecies found therein and compare them with their fulfillment; observe how evident it is that they are of divine origin. Consider these few but well-known prophecies as an example.

It was promised and foretold to Abraham that his seed would wondrously multiply, possess Canaan as their inheritance, and enter into it four hundred years later. Did it not thus come to pass? It was prophesied to the Jews many years in advance that they would be expelled from Canaan and be led away to Babylon; that subsequent to this they would be restored to their country by a king named Cyrus; and that the temple, which would be destroyed to the ground, would be rebuilt by them. And thus it came to pass. It was prophesied that after this restoration, Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed and that the entire Jewish nation would be dispersed among all the nations, living without sacrifice, without king, free from idolatry, and in contempt. Is this not true at the present time? It was prophesied nearly two thousand years in advance by Moses, and later by other prophets, that there would be a Messiah, that is, Christ, who would be Prophet, Priest, and King. It was prophesied that He would be the seed -- not of a man -- but of a woman, would be born from a virgin, from the seed of Abraham, Judah, and David, in Bethlehem, and this would occur 490 years after the restoration from Babylon.

Furthermore, it was prophesied that He would be poor and despised, bear the sins of the children of God, be rejected of the chief priests, be delivered to the Gentiles, be scourged and crucified, have the lot cast for His clothes, arise from the dead, ascend into heaven, and that the Gentiles upon the entire face of the earth would believe in Him. Were not all these things prophesied in the Holy Scriptures many hundreds of years in advance? Have not they all been literally fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has not all this been clearly recorded by the apostles and evangelists, -- mentioning times, places, and persons involved -- doing so at a time when friends and enemies were as yet living who had witnessed this with their own eyes? Must not even the Jews themselves acknowledge this today? Do not even pagan writings bear witness to this? Does not all of Christianity believe this? Add to this all the typological persons, objects, and services within and external to the temple, and observe how precisely they all match the anti-type, the Lord Jesus; and

how that He having come, all these have been nullified. When we consider all these things comprehensively, we must force our eyes shut in order not to see the divinity of the Scriptures.

Thirdly, attentively consider the contents of the Scriptures and compare them for a moment with all human writings. How obscure, crude, mundane, vain, and foolish they are! Is there any divine light which shines forth from them? Whatever is to be found in writings concerning God and religion has been derived from this Book. Whatever has not been derived from it is infantile and ludicrous. However, divine luster emanates from the Scriptures. How gloriously they speak of God and the immortality of the soul; of man's corruption, perversion, and impotence; and of the soul's communion with God, eternal glory, the righteousness of God, and condemnation! Consider the spiritual manner in which spiritual matters are presented -- how obscure and hidden they are for man, and would have continued to remain hidden if they had not been revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Furthermore, these truths, having thus been revealed, cannot be understood in a spiritual sense except the person himself be spiritual. Consider how they are all subservient to draw man away from all that is earthly and transitory and to direct him to God in order to serve and glorify Him in pure holiness, peace, and joy. What human being could fabricate such spiritual matters and present them in such a spiritual fashion? All this should convince a person that the Holy Scriptures are truly and solely of divine origin.

Fourthly, proceed by considering what effects these truths have upon the heart of man. When the apostles turned to the Gentiles, they began nothing less than a war with mankind, doing so without sword and weaponry. What other outcome could be expected but that they would be treated by everyone as fools -- yes, would be killed at the very outset? Wherever they came they found uncivilized people who had no knowledge of God, and who as roaring lions would sooner have torn them to pieces than that they would have listened to them. But behold! What irresistible power the gospel had upon their hearts! From wolves, lions, and bears they became lambs. These truths took hold of men by the thousands and led them to manifest the patience of Christ. They began to love Him, trusted in Him, surrendered body and life willingly to Him, and shunned neither fire nor sword. Instead, they persevered in professing divine truths, and thus Asia, Africa, and Europe were filled with the gospel. The more the truth was persecuted, the more it proliferated to the amazement and vexation of the persecutors. And, when the Antichrist solicited the help of all kings and powers in order to extinguish the burgeoning light of the reformation, neither their fire, sword, gallows, nor instruments of torture could avail anything -- except to torment them with vexation. For the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church and brought forth fruit a hundredfold -- to the regret of the ungodly and to the joy of the godly. Who does not perceive in all this the divinity of the gospel?

Fifthly, consider furthermore the efficacy which the gospel has upon your heart and the heart of others. This is most wondrous in its nature. Not only are they changed in their initial conversion as if a dead person became alive, but their souls are subsequently filled with wondrous light, love, sweetness, joy, peace, and liberty, so that they can do without everything, consider all but as dung, and are able to endure all things. How joyously the martyrs went to the fire and the gallows! How they sang in the midst of the flames! What bliss they considered it to be able to die a cruel death for the name Jesus! Consider the innumerable multitude of believers of all times and places. They all have the same foundational confession, the same Spirit, and the same life. If one by chance happens to meet someone and hears him speak the language of Canaan, then their hearts

will immediately be united in love -- more than brothers. Consider also that whatever is expressed to be the truth in the Word of God is also in truth in your heart.

One can perceive and sense that it is one and the same Spirit which speaks in both. You have frequently been amazed that you discovered the same spiritual frames in the Scriptures which you had previously already discovered in your heart without knowing that they had already been recorded in the Scriptures. You then remarked, "This is also recorded in the Word of God!" When you take note of all this, how can you but be convinced and exclaim, "Thy Word is the truth! Those interjections and suggestions which torment me are without foundation."

Encouragement for Believers

Perhaps you will say: "Upon all these things I must be silent; I cannot prove the opposite to be true, and that which has been said already stimulates me considerably to believe. In the meantime, however, I remain restless due to unbelief asserting itself. I do indeed wish to believe, but I cannot. Oh, what counsel can you give me? How shall I ever come to the point of having a strong and vigorous faith without doubts?" It should be known, however, that:

(1) God leads most of His children by way of this temptation -- especially those who have a keen intellect -- in order to exercise and strengthen their faith, which subsequently is indeed the case.

(2) God thereby acquaints His own with their unbelieving heart and their impotence to believe, so that on the one hand they may be humbled, and on the other hand power and sovereign grace may be exalted when He grants faith. And thus the lesson derived from this cross is more beneficial to them than comfort and rest.

(3) All believers have always made the Word the foundation of their light, comfort, and walk and have thereby overcome under all circumstances and endured all things. Are you now wiser than all of them? Do you wish to join yourself to the ungodly and mockers, even though you will rarely find one who dares to touch the Scriptures?

(4) You must make a choice between making reason or faith the foundation for your walk, rest, and comfort. If you choose reason, you will be setting the Bible aside. If it is faith, you must set reason aside in order to establish the truth of the Word of God, for faith rests only upon the words of someone else. Reason is but a means.

Evasive Argument: I am oppressed; I cannot believe. Answer: Since rejection of the Bible can be harmful to you, and the confirmation of the Bible as being the Word of God cannot harm you, it is therefore indeed the safest course to trust in the Word of God. You have no desire to live an ungodly life, and you would instead choose a virtuous life. However, all that reason can teach you, you can also learn from the Word of God -- yes, even more; that is, in a more heavenly and spiritual manner. And if you are tossed about concerning the veracity of other religions, then the same argument holds true: Whatever virtues you could learn from those religions, you can also learn from the Reformed faith in a much more heavenly and spiritual manner.

Therefore, take hold of yourself and say: "I shall thus conclude the Bible to be the infallible Word of God. I thus accept it as the foundation of my faith and life. I shall strictly observe it, continually read it, and familiarize myself with it. I shall capture all thoughts which arise against it and reject them. I read in this Word that man is lost in himself and cannot save himself; that Jesus Christ is the

Surety who, by His suffering and death, reconciles the sinner who receives Him, with God; and that the believer must love, serve, and fear God, and walk according to His will and precepts. This I confirm to be so and shall submit myself to. I shall prayerfully and in all simplicity wait until the Lord will further illuminate and comfort me, even though I am as yet not convinced of the divinity of His Word.” In this way the Lord has restored many, and He will also restore you. The Spirit will then bear witness to you that He is the Spirit of truth.

099. Chapter 94: Unbelief Concerning One's Spiritual State

----- CHAPTER NINETY-FOUR----- Unbelief Concerning One's Spiritual State

It is not difficult to convince a truly gracious person that he is displeased with his sinful heart, thoughts and deeds; that he grieves in his heart about this; that he longs for God, for reconciliation with Him, to be at peace with Him, and to walk before His countenance in humility and godly fear; that he knows Jesus as Surety and Savior, desires Him, makes Him his choice, turns to Him, receives Him, surrenders to Him, and through Him goes to God in order thus to become a partaker of the benefits of the covenant of grace. A gracious person cannot deny that he finds within his heart an aversion for sin, sin being contrary to the will of God; that he has an inward desire to live holily before the Lord in a manner pleasing to Him; that this is time and again his goal, intent, and objective; and that he has occasionally enjoyed a sweetness and resting in God. Yes, an explicit presentation of these matters will function as a clear mirror in which he can perceive that these matters are to be found in him.

However, to convince and assure the truly gracious in this way that they are in the state of grace, and to cause them to rejoice in this, cannot be accomplished easily, for the special operation of the Holy Spirit is a requisite for this. "Now we have received ... the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). The Spirit first bestows grace upon them; however, they then also need to have it shown to them that they have received this grace. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). There are many gracious souls who, with Samuel, do not know the voice of the Lord. Even if they are possessors of true grace, they nevertheless do not perceive it within themselves. If they may perceive something, they then find so many arguments to the contrary that they do not dare to come to the conclusion that they truly have grace.

Some are not very much troubled about this. This can either be due to ignorance, or because they are subject to a poor ministry and lack guidance. They therefore do not know that one can be assured of his spiritual state. They occupy themselves with prayer, longing for Jesus and refraining from sin, hoping that they may acquire salvation. Others are despondent and do not know how they may attain assurance; they travel upon their way, oppressed by the power of their corruption. Others are drowsy and lethargic, and are not very much concerned about their state. Again, others are very much concerned about their spiritual state and live in much fear and anxiety.

Regardless of how much or little one may be concerned about his spiritual state, to be without assurance concerning his state prevents him from rejoicing in God, manifesting gratitude, and glorifying God; and it impedes spiritual growth. We shall present the nature and causes of this spiritual disease and endeavor to facilitate its cure.

We wish to premise this by saying that we are not addressing unconverted people who either know that they are indeed without grace, do not think about this, or who very easily pacify

themselves and continually assure themselves of their salvation. We also are not addressing those whose conscience is under conviction but who nevertheless live in sin and do not truly go to Christ. In the meantime, such get attention by their ability to complain, and by way of subtle devices, seek to arouse the pity of good ministers who do not have a great measure of the spirit of discernment. Such ministers, due to their tender disposition toward the weak, will greatly trouble themselves to answer their objections and show them that they do indeed have grace. Instead, it would be better if they would deal roughly with them, so that they might become spiritually healthy and repent. Or, if they have been exposed as complaining for the sake of complaining, such ought to return to the world where they belong, so that they would no longer hinder the godly and cause upright ministers additional grief as they preach to and edify others. Let them say whatever they wish when they insist that such a minister neither understands the life of the soul, nor is capable of dealing with souls. When such individuals are exposed, other weak persons will be less hindered in availing themselves of the guidance of such upright ministers. We are thus not addressing such individuals; instead we are addressing those who have grace and indeed desire to be helped. These are not all in identical circumstances; the one is troubled by this and the other by something else. We shall therefore present several cases and comment upon them.

The First Cause of Doubt: Doubt About One's Election The first cause of unbelief concerning one's spiritual state is a doubting of one's election. Faith is peculiar to the elect. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy (Romans 9:16). There is a calling according to the purpose of God, and if I am then not elected, I also cannot be saved. Whatever motions of faith and repentance I may pretend to have are not right and it is thus a lost cause. The longer I think about election, the more I believe that I am not one of the elect, but a reprobate instead. I perceive this to be so in my heart, which declares most plainly to me that this is so whenever I desire to pray and flee to Jesus. This grieves me in both body and soul.

Answer: First, God rarely communicates with His dear children in an immediate sense, and would He then deem reprobates worthy of granting them such immediate revelations? Be assured that this is not God's voice, but rather your own foolish, unbelieving heart, the devil's devices being intermixed with this. You have not stood in the counsel of God and thus you ought to leave the secret things for the Lord. Be not so brazen as to pretend that you should know that which God has not revealed in His Word. Has God revealed to you the reprobation of someone else? Indeed not! What grounds do you then have to believe that God would reveal your reprobation to you? Therefore, do not live by illusions and your own ideas, but rather conduct yourself wisely.

Secondly, there have been many others who have been subject to the same temptation as you are, and have perhaps been mired in this more deeply than you. Their deliverance taught them that they truly were of the elect and that they had embraced lies by assuring themselves that they were reprobates. Thus they had only been a hindrance to themselves in the way of godliness.

Thirdly, we must not examine our faith, hope, and love in the light of election; rather we must ascend from them to election. You are thus conducting yourself in an entirely wrong and foolish manner. You would tell others not to conduct themselves in this manner, and thereby you can perceive your own foolishness in rejecting your election. God does not grant faith, repentance, life, and love to those whom He has not elected, but to the elect alone.

If the Lord has thus granted these matters to you in principle, you have reason thereby to make your election sure.

Fourthly, God has given us His infallible and sure Word, and we are to govern our faith and life accordingly. Focus upon that, and consider the exhortations, the offers of Christ, and the promises made to those who are pleased with Him; rely upon them. Are you not able to ascend to your election thereby? You will most certainly not discover your reprobation there -- yes, even if it were true that you were presently still unconverted. Even if you were the most abominable person alive, you may still not conclude that you are a reprobate and cannot be converted. Therefore, set these foolish and unfounded imaginations aside. Let them no longer trouble you and deal circumspectly according to the Word of God. The Second Cause of Doubt: Fear of Not Being Converted The second cause of doubt is that I fear that I am not converted, that thus the entire foundation of my religion is wanting, and therefore all that I perform from here on is not good. I doubt because:

(1) I do not know the time of my conversion.

(2) I did not consciously experience such an evident change from being blind to seeing, from death to life, and from being worldly-minded to being heavenly-minded.

(3) I have not been as sore broken upon viewing my sins, nor have I the sense of God's wrath and fear for damnation as I observe in Acts 2:1-47; Acts 16:1-40, and as I have heard recounted by various Christians.

(4) My beginning was prompted by self-love, and fear for damnation motivated me to seek. I was neither motivated by a love for God's honor, a love for Christ, nor the desirability of holiness and salvation. Therefore I am of the opinion that the entire foundation of my religion is wanting, that all that I have and do is only superficial in nature, and that it does not proceed from a heart which is converted and spiritually alive.

Answer: First, consider whether you wholeheartedly seek God through Jesus Christ unto justification and sanctification, and for peace, joy, and felicity. The issue here is not whether you know when and how it began. You may not deduce by way of your conversion whether your current religious activity is of the right sort or not. On the contrary, we deduce our conversion by our current religious activity.

Secondly, few know the time of their conversion. Some were already regenerated prior to that moment which they considered to be the moment of their initial conversion. In others their initial religious exercises were but preparatory exercises, and they were not converted until long after that.

Thirdly, conversion rarely occurs in such a clear manner. Rather, it transpires as gradually as the rising of the sun, so that we are able to perceive only at some later date that we have changed. Yes, some are converted in their childhood so that they cannot recall having been in an unconverted state. Their progression is not a qualitative change, but rather a progression in spiritual light and life. They who have been converted in their adult years, after having lived an ungodly life, are better able to observe an evident difference when comparing the period prior to being under conviction and the period following their conviction.

Fourthly, it is not necessary that conversion be preceded by being greatly troubled, and by fear and trembling. Some are quietly changed by the knowledge of the truth, and without much strife and comfort. Others, due to the preciousness of the gospel, are changed in a joyful manner as Zacchaeus was. Others experience this in a way of falling and rising again, and we may therefore not conclude from one type of conversion that another conversion is not right.

Fifthly, even if you were motivated by self-love, you may from this not doubt your conversion. In this respect, self-love is a virtue and is the initial motivation of many -- if not all -- converted persons. The same argument applies if terror persuaded you. It is immaterial whether Naaman's leprosy, the blindness of Bartimaeus, the curiosity of Zacchaeus, or the fear of the jailer have been the initial motives whereby you have been led to Christ. Therefore, do not occupy yourself with such thoughts. If you perceive true grace, acknowledge it and let your heart be encouraged thereby. The Third Cause of Doubt: Being Able to Believe Without Strife and Effort The third cause of doubt is the following: I am able to believe as frequently as I desire, doing so without strife and without effort. I hold before me the offer of grace along with the promises. I acquiesce in them and very readily surrender myself to the Lord Jesus. However, there is but little warmth and strength in it. I do not have a sensible sorrow for my sins, nor do I have a lively desire for peace, joy, holiness, and other benefits of the covenant. Instead, I am satisfied with the act of acquiescence itself. All this functions as weakly as a lame hand which we must place somewhere in order to grab something. The fingers are indeed in motion to take hold of something, but there is no strength to pull it to myself. On the one hand I am not troubled, and on the other hand I derive neither comfort nor joy from this feeble act of receiving. Sometimes it is an impossible task for me to believe. I can neither find Jesus nor receive Him by faith. I must be imagining things; I am but beating in the air and am not able to have a transaction with Jesus Himself. At critical moments, such as when I am in danger of death or am encountering another grievous trial, my faith succumbs and I experience great fear and anxiety. I do indeed cry out in prayer, but there is neither trust nor peace in doing so. I cannot come to Jesus; I cannot receive Him by faith; I cannot rely upon Him; and I cannot put my entire trust in Him. Sometimes it would be easier for me to keep the law perfectly than to believe in Christ. When reflecting upon how faith functions, I believe my faith to be but imaginary and the exercise of my intellect.

Answer: All this is evidence that you truly believe, and thus it ought not to deject you; rather, it should lift you up, for there is

(1) light, as well as a knowledge of misery, the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace, and of the necessity of Jesus as Surety.

(2) true displeasure about being in a sinful state outside of Christ. There is delight in and a desire for reconciliation with God and all that flows out of it: peace, joy, and godliness.

(3) a true fleeing to Jesus, an acquiescing in His invitation and offer, and a surrendering to Him to be led unto salvation in a way pleasing to Him.

(4) a consciousness of the weakness of faith and a concern as to whether you truly believe -- all this being intermixed with a desire for a faith that is true, upright, and vigorous.

(5) a separation from the world, a taking pains not to sin, and an endeavoring to be aligned with Christ, His cause, and His people. Is not all this true for you? If you can say, in the presence of the

Lord "Such is truly the case, but the difficulties mentioned make me think that all these matters within me cannot be the manifestation of true faith," then know that faith and its manifestation are two distinct matters. Faith can truly be present in someone -- and indeed, faith is present where these activities of faith manifest themselves. Nevertheless, it can be that the desired results are absent at a given time and under given circumstances. The enlightened will represents the true state of the heart, even though the affections and passions are more inactive and do not stir in a sensible manner. Even though the stirrings of our emotions make us more conscious of our desires -- and thus render more comfort to beginners and little ones in grace -- the activity of the enlightened will is generally of a purer nature. Therefore, be not despondent if your emotions do not stir themselves as passionately -- as long as you are conscious of the extrinsic activities of the enlightened will. That it is rather easy for you to acquiesce in the offer of grace and to surrender yourself to Jesus, and that you are able to do it as frequently as you desire, is a manifestation of your gracious disposition. The veracity of this is confirmed by the fact that this transpires as a conscious exercise of the will, and that it is accompanied by some inner stirring to live pleasing unto the Lord in Christ. The fact that it is done in weakness, and is without efficacy to yield comfort and joy, is frequently due to a lack of zeal; for this you are to be reprimanded. Furthermore, it is a proof that in your daily walk you are not that intent upon having intimate fellowship with God. If you are worthy of rebuke in this, it is therefore not an evidence that you do not believe in truth. Be comforted by the one fact and be stirred up by the other.

What you designate as a faltering of your faith when in danger of death and other extraordinary circumstances is not the succumbing of your faith. Rather, the fruits of faith are being hindered from manifesting themselves, such as tranquility, peace, and the assurance of attaining the desired outcome. The fact that faith is active even then is evidenced by your looking unto Jesus, surrendering to Him, and crying out for grace and help through Jesus. However, the fear of death or another extraordinary mishap prevents you from giving heed to the promises. Furthermore, unbelief also manifests itself and will let its power be felt as well. This will cause you to be full of fear and anxiety concerning either the outcome of the matter, or the salvation of your soul. The fact that believing (which at times was such an easy task for you) is sometimes so difficult and impossible is because of a difference as to what you have in view. When believing is an easy work, you will be without strife and your focus will be on the extrinsic acts of faith; or else you do not have intimate fellowship with God and are dealing with all this in a superficial manner. Believing will be difficult and impossible, however, when you penetrate deeper into things and begin to engage your reason more, for the Word of God alone must be the foundation of your faith. Or else, you are then occupied with the fruits of faith -- that is, to have them in such a measure as you imagine they ought to be -- and to have an assurance that is free from anything that could engender doubt, as well as to have a confidence characterized by peace alone, without the least manifestation of fear. No wonder that this is an impossible task for you, for this is the Lord's work, who gives to everyone as much as pleases Him. From all this you can observe that your faith is indeed feeble and deficient, but that it is nevertheless true within. This is the very purpose for having shown you all this, so that thereby you may be lifted out of your weakened condition and thus proceed in the way of uprightness with joy.

The Fourth Cause of Doubt: The Opinion that Assurance Always Accompanies Faith

The fourth cause of doubt is the opinion that assurance is considered to be of the essence of faith, or at least that faith is always accompanied by assurance. We then reason as follows: If my faith were true saving faith, I would be assured of my saving

interest in Jesus and of salvation itself. There are times, however, when I cannot even find the infallible marks of grace -- faith and repentance -- from which I would dare to conclude that I have true grace. And if I do occasionally observe such marks in me, I nevertheless cannot come to this conclusion. I fear that I do not rightly understand the spiritual meaning of these marks as they are presented in the Word of God, and that which I discern in myself is not spiritual in the sense that Scripture delineates this to be. The Lord has never sealed it to my heart nor said to my soul, "I am thy salvation." I am always sorrowful and oppressed and do not know what it means to have joy and gladness in God. I therefore fear that in the end I will have deceived myself.

Answer: Be assured that without the express assurance of our saving interest in Christ we can indeed be saved. Thousands who have never had this express assurance are already in heaven, and there will be thousands of such who will yet come there as well. To be assured is a sweet and desirable matter, and it cannot be but that a believer will long for this. If, however, it pleases the Lord to withhold this, a person is to be submissive and occupy himself with the exercise of the extrinsic acts of faith.

Secondly, assurance is not of the essence of faith. To insist on the contrary is a serious misunderstanding which is both outside of and contrary to the Word of God. The Word of God calls faith a coming to Jesus, a receiving of Him, a longing for Him, an entrusting of ourselves to Him, and a leaning and a relying upon Him. However, it never denotes faith as a being assured of having a saving interest in Him, and of attaining eternal felicity -- even though felicity is promised in consequence of faith and flows out of it.

Thirdly, the assurance of having a saving interest in Jesus can be entirely absent from faith. Consider, for instance, the cases we have discussed in a previous paragraph, such as when someone is fearful of death, is in danger of drowning, or has fallen into the hands of murderers, etc. If such a person with all his heart flees to Jesus, calls upon Him, urgently takes hold of Him, surrenders to Him, and casts himself into His hands, then there is faith. However, both the moment and the troubles at hand prevent all reflection upon self and one's deeds, and thus all assurance is gone. If one were to die under such circumstances, he would enter heaven without assurance -- yes, with great fear and anxiety.

Fourthly, there is a distinction between the assurance which generally follows upon the steadfast exercise of faith, and the consciousness of being assured. If, with steadfastness, you exercise faith in Jesus with supplications, with application of the promises, with a good conscience, etc., and you then reflect upon the disposition of your soul, you shall perceive that at such a time a lively hope, tranquility, peace, contentment, or trust was present. However, during the time of strife which followed this exercise of faith you did not expressly give heed to this, nor did you take note of these matters by thinking, "Behold, this and this is indeed what I experienced." Even though you may not have paid attention to this at that time, the manifestations of assurance were nevertheless there.

Fifthly, there is also a misconception about assurance. One designates assurance, and understands thereby the sensible enjoyment of heavenly benefits, or at least such a measure of assurance in which there neither is nor can be the least impediment. Such ought to know, however, that both the believer and his faith are imperfect, and will remain imperfect in this life. Thus, the unbelieving heart is always capable of bringing forth some doubts which would cast a

cloud upon the assurance of the best among them. They therefore reject such doubts without giving any heed to these doubts. Assurance flows out of a syllogism. The major premise is then derived from the Word of God which describes the nature of saving faith, regeneration, faith and its activity -- declaring the promises to be for such. The assured person has light in this matter and is acquainted with the truth. Irrational arguments such as: "Maybe I misunderstand the Word of God and it possibly intends these things in a more spiritual sense than I do," are rejected out of hand, knowing that the Word expresses itself succinctly and clearly, and that we are not to understand it in a natural, but in a spiritual sense. The minor premise is derived from our own heart and its inner motions as viewed by an omniscient God. We shall then declare that such and such is our condition, our consciences bearing witness to it. We indeed perceive and acknowledge the imperfections of the disposition of our heart and of its actions; nevertheless, we likewise perceive the genuineness of the graces which the Holy Spirit has planted there. From this we then draw the conclusion: "I am therefore in the state of grace, am born again, and have faith." This is assurance. Sometimes these first two arguments can be clearly discerned, but the conclusion is nevertheless shrouded in darkness and yields but little strength and comfort. Sometimes the conclusion is also clear and yields comfort due to being assured of being a partaker of grace. Sometimes the Holy Spirit works more powerfully than is normally the case and gives an impression of these three arguments which is as clear as the one made by a seal in soft wax or lacquer. This is the sealing of the Spirit. Sometimes, in addition to this, the Holy Spirit will grant extraordinary illumination, and will not only grant assurance of being partakers of these matters, but also the sensible enjoyment of the sweetness and felicity of them. Believers would be delighted to have the latter and would be desirous that this were always so. We shall not oppose them in this desire; however, we do oppose them in their insistence that only the latter -- or at least the degree before this -- is assurance, thus deeming themselves to be without assurance if they miss this. Here is the snare which deprives them from being encouraged and joyful. Such ought to know, however, that God does not work these last two matters in everyone, nor does He do so at all times. The fact that a believer can derive neither comfort nor encouragement from the syllogism is not due to a lack of assurance, for the ability to develop this syllogism is assurance itself. Rather, it is due to a lack of historical faith whereby we fail to have a lively and clear perception of the Word as being the infallible truth -- even though we do not perceive this to be the difficulty. It can be due to an extraordinary darkness which has come upon the soul, rendering one unable to see the glorious matters and our blessedness. It can also be due to a deadness which has overtaken the soul in consequence of being too intent upon the immediate sealing of the Holy Spirit and the sensible enjoyment of grace itself, deeming this alone to be assurance and thereby despising the day of small things. You may indeed long for such immediate sealing and such revelations of God to your soul, as well as for the spiritual joy and gladness issuing forth from this. Know, however, that God in His sovereign good pleasure neither grants this to all, nor does so at all times. Be satisfied with the normal way in which God leads His children. Can you say, upon careful reflection, that you have never been assured? Have you never enjoyed tranquility and peace in your conscience upon the wrestling of faith? Have you never felt that God forgave you your sins? Have you never experienced that God was your God? I believe that you will not dare to deny this; or else you have been negligent in observing these matters. If you say: "I have had this in some measure, but I believe this to have been imaginary; else I would have retained this," then I counsel you to stir up yourself by reflecting upon the days of old and keep yourself assured that God neither has

changed, nor is able to change, in His grace toward you -- even though it is His normal way not to always allow His children to feel this. The Fifth Cause of Doubt: Being Overwhelmed by the Magnitude of Being a Recipient of Divine Grace The fifth doubt is engendered by the consideration of the magnitude of the matter. Some find true evidences of grace within themselves by which they could be assured that they are children of God. On the one hand, however, they receive a deep insight into the totality of their sinnership, and on the other hand they receive a deep insight into the magnitude of this matter. They consider what it means to be eternally loved by God; for Christ to have died for them out of love; and to have the Holy Spirit dwell in them as in a temple. They reflect upon what it means to be a child of God; to have God -- the majestic, holy, and glorious Creator and Lord of heaven and earth -- as their God; and to be heirs of eternal and incomprehensible felicity. When they then consider that God leaves nearly all men in their misery, condemns them due to their sin, makes but few the objects of His grace, and that they are among those few, they will deem this to be too great and unbelievable. They consider it to be too presumptuous for them to number themselves as one of them. This prevents them from coming to a conclusion about themselves and remaining assured of being in the state of grace -- a conclusion which they otherwise would make on the basis of the grace which they perceive within themselves.

Answer: It is a pity that you draw such a wrong conclusion from the perfections of God. How can we refrain ourselves from rebuking such? Since, however, it issues forth from feeble humility, we shall instruct you, hoping that you who are capable of being assured may, with joy and love, serve God as your God and, with a joyous hope upon eternal felicity, finish your course with joy and to the glory of God.

Therefore, you are first of all to know and be assured that even though it is too great for you to receive, it is not too great for the infinite One to give to you. You deem it to be presumptuous to assure yourself of being in a state of grace, even though you could come to this conclusion from clear evidences. Instead, it is an act of pride not to assure yourself; as if you would not want to receive more than you are worthy of, and would not want to place yourself under any obligation upon the receipt of benefits. In reasoning thus, you are grieving the very Benefactor who wishes to delight Himself in granting benefits to you. Therefore, receive it with joy and thanksgiving, and acknowledge the great goodness of God in bestowing incomprehensible benefits upon you, a wretched one.

Secondly, you must know that no one receives anything because they are worthy, or due to some good disposition, frame, and qualification which would move God to bless them. Others are as unworthy as you are. Nevertheless, they are willing to receive infinite benefits from God and to place themselves under eternal obligation. They are amazed about this, acknowledge the Lord's goodness, and thank and glorify Him for it. They are glad that with Jacob they may say, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant" Genesis 32:10, and with David, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" (2 Samuel 7:18). You ought to do likewise.

Thirdly, prior to calling you, God knew indeed who you were and what you would do; and yet He sent the gospel and His messengers to you. He called you, drew you, led you to the Mediator, granted you faith, converted you, granted you spiritual light and life, and has frequently comforted

you and shown you that He loves you. If therefore, at the outset of your spiritual life, you did not deem it too great a matter to be saved, and you dared to flee to Him with many tears for His grace, would you then now (He having granted His grace to you) refuse this grace because it is too great a matter for you? Or are you of the opinion that God would change after all the benefits bestowed upon you, since He already knew you so well prior to this, as well as how you would behave yourself toward Him? Therefore, honor the Lord, and joyfully acknowledge the grace bestowed upon you.

Fourthly, God's objective in bestowing grace and granting such great and infinite felicity -- doing so to but few and in contrast to many others, and to the greatest and most unworthy of sinners -- His objective, I repeat, is the glorification of Himself, so that in the revelation of His free grace, His infinite and incomprehensible love, and the riches of His mercy all the angels and all the elect would be amazed and rejoice, and that in beholding and magnifying this, their felicity would thus be increased. Observe this in the following passages: "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6); "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Timothy 1:16). In order for the Lord to achieve this objective, there indeed had to be a great distinction between the sinner and the gifts of His grace. If you therefore perceive this great disparity within yourself, you must not be hindered by this in the acknowledgement of God's grace. Rather, this ought to motivate you to acknowledge this and to be assured by the evidences of true grace, so that you would thus glorify God, and angels and men would glorify God concerning His grace in you. The Sixth Cause of Doubt: Not Being Able to Pray; and Prayer Not Being Answered The sixth doubt is engendered by being unable to pray and by not being heard. The argument is as follows: Believers have the Spirit of Christ, who is the Spirit of prayer, causing them to cry out, Abba, Father. He prays for them with groanings that cannot be uttered. However, I cannot pray. When I engage myself to pray, my heart closes up and I can hardly bring forth a word -- yes, my thoughts even begin to wander. And when I say something, it is but the work of my lips. My heart is not moved, my prayer does not penetrate, and it is as if I am speaking in the air. I cannot bring myself into the presence of God to address Him in an intimate manner. Much less am I able to do so with the appropriate humility, reverence, and faith that I shall be heard. And even if I am moved by a given matter, pray earnestly and repeatedly, I am nevertheless not heard and do not receive what I desire. However, God hears His elect and answers their prayers. This makes me despondent and causes me to think that I am not in the state of grace.

Answer: First, at one time or another, all God's children are in this condition. Ask every believer who for some time has been a Christian and they will affirm it. Therefore, neither consider it to be strange nor conclude from this that you are without grace. If others encounter this, why would you not experience this? Job, David, and other saints have complained about this.

Secondly, it is indeed a grievous condition and a cause of backsliding in spiritual life. However, the grief over a negative frame, the desire to be permitted and to be able to pray, and the desire to be heard, show that there is yet life in the soul.

Thirdly, in retrospect you will have to acknowledge that it has not always been this way. Previously you were able to pray with strong crying and tears, and to persevere in doing so. Furthermore,

God has occasionally demonstrated that He was pleased with your supplications and tears, and at times has also granted what you prayed for. However, the fact that you are presently not able to pray in this manner is perhaps due to:

- (1) a desire to enjoy a high level of spirituality and intimacy at the very outset of prayer;
- (2) beginning in your own strength -- not coming as a destitute sinner, praying for the ability to pray and for the Spirit of prayer so that you may be enabled to pray;
- (3) being desirous to do or receive something extraordinary at your scheduled devotional time, even though in the meantime you can be very much engaged in ejaculatory prayer in the performance of your calling;
- (4) spiritual darkness having come upon your soul, so that you cannot perceive the preciousness of the matters toward which your desires would otherwise be kindled;
- (5) your affections being divided and there being too much cleaving to the things of this world;
- (6) being lazy and unwilling to exert yourself to seek the Lord and to exercise yourself in prayer. Therefore, seek for the causes, and as much as is in you, remove them. Be diligent in acquainting yourself with the

Lord with a perfect heart, so that you will not be further estranged from Him and become more entangled in the creature.

Fourthly, do you dare to say that the Lord has never heard you? Your heart would rebuke you. The fact that you do not receive that which you have prayed for is due to:

- (1) being listless in prayer;
- (2) praying for matters which the Lord has not promised to give;
- (3) asking for matters which the Lord has promised to give under the condition that it be of benefit to your godliness and salvation -- not what is best in your judgment, but what is according to God's wise government relative to your life;
- (4) it being the Lord's intent to humble you and to show you that you are but a worm. Thus, you have nothing to say if God would not be pleased to give it to you -- and you must deem it a manifestation of inexpressible goodness to be permitted to pray.
- (5) the Lord being desirous to perceive what your desires are, to see your tears, and to hear your voice;
- (6) the Lord intending to prepare you so that you become the more fit to receive the desired matters, and make better use of them;
- (7) the matters you desire being such that God does not grant them to you all at once, but gradually;
- (8) the possibility of the Lord having answered your prayers and having granted you your desire, and you not having perceived it.

Indeed, the fact that you can neither pray (about which the soul is grieved) nor receive your desire upon your prayer ought not to cause you to be unbelieving, despondent, or fretful; for it is not a sign of being without grace. Rather, it is evidence of God's wise and good dealings with you, thereby seeking your advantage. If you are insignificant in yourself, then remain as insignificant as a worm. Pray frequently according to the measure which the Lord is pleased to give you, and exert yourself even if you were to do this work but in a natural manner. It will, however, take on a spiritual dimension while you are thus engaged. Persevere in this way and the Lord will again visit you, teach you how to pray, answer your prayers, grant you the desire of your soul, or cause your desire to be satisfied by being content with His will. The Seventh Cause of Doubt: My Religion Proceeds from an Enlightened Mind The seventh cause of doubt is the following: I fear that all my religion only proceeds from an enlightened mind. I have been born and raised in the church; I know the doctrines and therefore only subscribe to them out of custom. Nothing deeply affects my heart, moves me, nor proceeds to bring forth a sensible sorrow, a lively sincerity, and comfort. My heart is not in anything, and nothing proceeds from my heart.

Answer: Such doubt is purely the result of ignorance concerning the functioning of the mind, the will or the heart, the affections, and man in general. Therefore, some instruction in this respect will suffice.

(1) We understand, comprehend, and know a matter by way of the mind, and judge as to whether it is true and whether it is good. This determination is not made in a vacuum, but rather as it relates to us; that is, whether we should pursue or avoid the matter, do or refrain from doing it.

(2) The heart or the will relates to the pleasure or displeasure toward, aversion or love for, and the desire or lack of desire for a given matter.

(3) The affections are the passions, the vehement emotions which manifest themselves in either fleeing from or pursuing a matter.

(4) When man engages himself, then it is the mind which is first activated, and man performs whatever he performs with his mind. The mind, in turn, renders the will active, and the will activates the affections.

Secondly, apply this now to yourself and observe the manner in which you function. The mind in and of itself only observes and judges something to be good or evil. It knows of no displeasure, sorrow, or longing; leaves the matter as it is; and is satisfied with having knowledge of the matter. If such is the case with you, you have reason to think that things are not right with you. If, however, the mind is joined by the will; that is, if you grieve over that which you miss and have a longing to enjoy or do a matter, then your heart is engaged. The heart is the will enlightened, and as such is displeased with sin, and finds pleasure in Christ and the way of salvation. It is thus that one takes the initiative to flee, seek, and be active. If you conduct yourself thus, you need not be concerned that you have nothing more than an enlightened mind.

Thirdly, your concern stems from the fact that your affections and sensible passions are mistaken for the heart. If these are absent, then you are of the opinion that the heart is not involved. However, this is a serious misunderstanding. One's passions are frequently the result of his physical constitution. One person is much more vehement in his affections than another. Our passions are generally malevolent guides. He who engages himself very passionately is not

necessarily engaged in a more sincere manner than he who is active by way of his enlightened will. A vehemence of passion generally manifests itself at the outset of conversion due to having much fear. Subsequently, however, the passions are in general not so vehement, there being a secret belief of having a saving interest in Christ. It can also be that the soul, so to speak, functions autonomously and with great exertion of mind reflects upon the mysteries of faith, embraces them with the will, and in such a frame finds its delight. However, sometimes the absence of affections is indicative of a lack of earnestness which is engendered by a familiarity with the matters at hand, by darkness, by despondency, or by laziness. From that perspective, this absence of affections is an undesirable matter, and one must strive to lift himself out of this. The absence of affections may, however, not be the cause of disowning your spiritual state, for your passions are not your heart; the heart is the enlightened will. If there is the inclination of the heart and you are conscious of the fact that it is Christ you seek after unto justification and sanctification; if in that frame you are fleeing unto Him, receiving Him, surrendering yourself to Him, and, motivated by the fear of God, you pray, flee, oppose evil, and pursue that which is good out of love to be pleasing unto the Lord -- then you may unreservedly be assured that you have grace, and should rejoice in this. The Eighth Cause of Doubt: A Being Fearful of Hypocrisy The eighth doubt pertains to suspecting ourselves of hypocrisy. We then reason as follows: "It cannot be that I have grace, for in nearly all my actions my conscience accuses me that I am being hypocritical. It appears as if I am serving God, but in reality I have myself in view. Whenever I sing, pray, lead in prayer in the presence of others, or do anything else while being observed by men, my heart immediately begins to reflect upon the people; that is, to gain their esteem, love, and praise. That is the wind which blows in the sails of my soul, activates me, and causes me to be zealous. Having performed something, I seek to know what people think of it. I like to hear that I am praised, and it makes me happy. This seeking after the favor of men is such a habitual tendency in me. Yes, even when I am alone and do something godly, my heart is reflecting upon how the people will react. Am I thus not an outright hypocrite? Furthermore, a double-hearted man is unstable in all his ways, whereas a steadfast disposition is reserved for the righteous. However, I am very unstable. At one moment I am zealous, and then lukewarm; at one moment I make progress, and then I stand still -- yes, I even regress; at one moment I have courage, and then I am despondent; at one moment I am elated, and then I am depressed; at one moment I have a tender conscience, my words and deeds being governed by the fear of God, and then again my sinful passions are on the run with me. Such is truly my condition, and therefore I cannot but think that I am a hypocrite, and a hypocrite is the object of God's wrath and will have a most dreadful hell as his portion."

Answer: First, all the foregoing matters are sins which are evil and worthy of rebuke. Without reservation you ought to humble yourself about this before God.

Secondly, it can be that you are too hard on yourself due to your hatred for hypocrisy, and due to your fear of being without grace. However, let us assume that all is as you have said it to be, and we shall consider you to be such. We would like you to answer the following questions.

(1) Are these ulterior motives your joy and delight, or are they a burden to you and a matter of grief and displeasure?

(2) Are these your true objective? Do they motivate you in your actions, and upon having achieved your goal, do you delight yourself in their having been your objective? Or do these ulterior motives

slip in through the back door -- contrary to your wishes and intentions -- and do you pray to be delivered from them? Do they rob you of all the peace and joy you had upon having done a good work?

(3) Do you function better when you are alone and your transactions are between God and your soul; or are you better off spiritually when you are in the presence of people? In answering these questions sincerely in the presence of the Lord -- that is, without flattering yourself, or being detrimental to the condition of your heart -- you will be able to perceive what the motivating principle of your heart is: uprightness or hypocrisy. If it is your intent to seek yourself and you reflect upon how you may accomplish this, and if it is your joy and delight to do all this preferably in the presence of men rather than alone, you ought to admit to being a hypocrite (which you are), and repent. If, however, the seeking of self is a burden to you, grieves you, and you pray against it; if such ulterior motives slip in through the back door; if they trouble your soul and spoil what you have done; if you are much more intimate, spiritual, and upright when you are alone than when you are among people -- then you, upright ones (which you are), take courage from this, and do not disown your spiritual state.

However, you should know, first of all, that believers are only sanctified in part and that the seed of various sins still remains in them. No sin can ever be mortified so completely that it can never surface again. This remaining corruption will manifest itself outwardly, this being contingent upon the condition of the body, opportunities, and other circumstances. Therefore, the one godly person will fall more into a given sin than the other. For you the seeking of self is the chief sin. However, it is evident from that which has been said that it does not have dominion over you, but is resisted. You can thus observe that this sin is your enemy -- and if hypocrisy is your enemy, uprightness has become your natural disposition by the grace of God.

Secondly, it should be known that the fear of seeking self frequently causes us to think about the seeking of self. This will suggest to us that it is so, and the devil creates the illusion in our minds that we are seeking self. Some, not being aware of this, unjustly accuse themselves of this, whereas in truth it was nothing more than an illusion, an accusation, an enticement, or a fear that this is so. You must thus conclude that you are not a hypocrite, even though you are occasionally besieged by ulterior motives and occasionally fall victim to this contrary to your will.

Thirdly, instability is not a sign of hypocrisy when, upon faltering in this area, our heart principally is and remains knit to the Lord; when our failures are, so to speak, but momentary enchantments about which we are sorrowful; and when we are completely out of sorts upon deviating here and there from being steadfast of heart before God and in His way. Instead, this instability is indicative of the warfare between the spirit and the flesh -- a battle in which at one time the Spirit, and then again the flesh, has the upper hand. This proves that we are steadfast in principle, since the spirit, time and again, prevails and is grieved over the aberrations of the flesh. Therefore do not succumb so readily, but rather stand fast in the faith, conduct yourself manfully, and you will increase in strength. The Ninth Cause of Doubt: The Power of Corruption and Sin The ninth cause of doubt is the great corruption within and the power of sin. A person plagued by this doubt thinks: "Justification and sanctification always go hand in hand. When holiness is absent, regeneration, faith, and justification will also be absent. An unsanctified person is not in the state of grace. Not only do I find holiness to be absent within myself, but instead I perceive nothing but sin. I have

such an evil, abominable, and defiled heart, which makes me believe that there is no one who has such an evil heart as I. From this heart issues forth all manner of vain and filthy thoughts about sin. I sin continually, and the sins within me are of such an abominable nature that I don't even dare to mention them. I do not occasionally fall into these sins, but rather they have the upper hand and have dominion over me. When the inclination but arises, I immediately stand ready and commit these sins -- yes, I even stir up this inclination myself and reinforce it. What is even worse, it all occurs against a speaking conscience, indeed, against the realization of the presence of God, and against the express warnings of the Spirit in my heart. Thus, I can only conclude that I have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, which will not be forgiven to all eternity. Therefore, all the hope which I entertained at one time is gone and I now number myself among the damned."

Answer: First, be ashamed before God, the holy angels, and before men. Shame on you, oh sinful man! Truly, if all this is to be found in you, and there is nothing else besides this, you have every reason to believe that you are yet unconverted and without grace. Therefore, depart and repent with haste, for I have no comfort for you.

Secondly, it does occur that someone who truly has spiritual life is for a season overwhelmed and overcome by the power of sin -- as has just been depicted. However, even during such a season, spiritual life yet manifests itself. Yet, it is not detected when one is overwhelmed by corruption; and thus one falters in regard to faith and his spiritual state. We shall therefore demonstrate to such persons wherein spiritual life yet manifests itself, and thereby encourage those who are despondent, lift them out of this sinful condition, and restore them to a godly walk. The power of corruption as being a spiritual disease, and the regression of spiritual life, will be discussed in the following chapter. We shall therefore be brief on this subject and only show, to the encouragement of those who are despondent about their spiritual condition, what measure of grace still manifests itself in this battle, even though it suffers defeat at that moment.

Thirdly, give therefore your careful attention, do not argue; acknowledge that which is truthfully to be found in you.

(1) Do you have an inward aversion for the inner dimension of spiritual life, as well as for those who are truly godly; and are you with your whole heart attached to sin and to ungodly and unconverted decent persons, this being your only joy and delight? Or is the opposite to be found in you? Is there heartfelt aversion for sin as sin, as being contrary to the will of God, as well as for sinners and worldly people? Do you find delight and a love for a wholehearted uniting with the will of God and with the godly?

(2) Is there a deliberate intention to commit sin -- also when the passion for sin is not raging within -- without there being any opposition of the heart? Or are you inclined not to commit sin when the vehemence of passion is absent, and do so with a view upon God and Christ?

(3) When you are in such a sinful condition, are you then joyful and cheerful, or are you grieved, restless, and of an anxious spirit?

(4) Are you insensitive when sin is committed, or does it wound your soul and cause you grief?

(5) Are you content to remain in this condition, or is it your wholehearted desire to be delivered from this, and to serve the Lord with freedom and joy?

(6) Are you always in such a sinful condition, or are there times that you are able to deeply humble yourself with tears before the Lord, supplicate for grace, and flee to the Lord Jesus to obtain forgiveness by His blood -- by which you are united to God in Christ, though not yet in an assured sense? Do you at such a time make spirited resolutions to be on guard against those and all other sins, heartily crying out unto the Lord for strength, being presently convinced of your own impotence? Are there seasons which are characterized by a cleaving unto Christ, the fear of God, and having strength against sin? Calmly answer these questions. If you are convinced that the good which is presented in these questions is to be found in you, it is evident that there is still life in your soul and that sin does not have the dominion. Rather, spiritual life -- however feeble it may be -- desires the contrary, groans, supplicates and engages in holy warfare. As long as we are still struggling, sin has not yet gained a complete victory. The following proverb applies here: He who is down is still fighting. This also proves that you have not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, for:

(1) man as such is not the object of this sin, but it is professed truth, and those people who confess and experience this confessed truth. There is in this sin an unyielding hatred for the entire cause of Christ.

(2) this sin is not opposed by an internal principle of spiritual life.

(3) such persons will never have remorse, nor ever desire forgiveness. It is true that sin is greatly aggravated if it is committed against an illuminated and lively conscience, and against the sensible warnings of the Holy Spirit; one ought to humble and abhor himself greatly concerning this. However, that is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, but the corruption of the residual old Adam who is to be distinguished from the new man. The old Adam is designated as the enemy, and the new man must be considered as the person one is. Paul did this: "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:20).

If there is yet spiritual life in you, keep courage, lift up your head from out of your infirmities, and begin your battle by renewal in the power of God who, having begun a good work in you, will also finish it in the day of Christ. He does not forsake the work of His own hands, but "giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:29). Just as the Lord beholds the good which He has worked in you, you must do likewise. Acknowledge it to be of the Lord, and encourage yourself thereby. The Tenth Cause of Doubt: Unbelief Concerning Fundamental Doctrines The tenth doubt has its origin in unbelief concerning fundamental doctrines. Someone may say, "Wretch that I am, there is neither hope nor counsel for me, for I do not even believe that there is a God or that the Scriptures are divine truth. I doubt the existence of heaven and hell, the immortality of the soul, and whatever else is deemed to be invisible. Yes, I have blasphemous thoughts about God. All of this certainly cannot coexist with regeneration."

Answer: Please refer to chapters 14 (Vol. #1, p. 381), 92 (p. ###193), and 93 (p. ###199) of this work. This is indeed a very grievous condition; however, it is not a sign of being unconverted. This befalls most of the godly, especially those who have a keen mind. You are therefore not to be without hope about your condition. You can very readily perceive that these doubts are but interjections, for:

First, you have not always been in this condition, and there are still intermissions in this condition, during which the love for communion with God manifests itself. He is your desire and in Him is all your delight. When He hides Himself, you are sorrowful; when you receive hope, you rejoice, and when He reveals Himself, you are delighted. To fear the Lord, do His will, and walk before His countenance in humility is the life of your soul; Christ is precious to you. Was it not thus in the past, and is it not thus intermittently? Therefore, reflect upon your previous experience.

Secondly, even when thus assaulted, evidences of spiritual life nevertheless manifest themselves. Why are you not at peace? How can you have a problem if the invisible is nonexistent and if there is no such thing as immortality? Therefore, eat, drink, yield to your lusts, for if there is no immortality, there is no sin and you do not have to anticipate judgment. When you hear such arguments, does not your love then surface? Wouldn't you then begin to weep? Does this not demonstrate that you believe all this to be true and that these are but assaults of your corrupt heart and the devil? Consider especially how your heart is troubled about blasphemous thoughts. Why is this? Is it out of fear for punishment? You will perceive that this is not the primary cause, but rather that your being disturbed proceeds from the love of God, and this love cannot tolerate that we would think or speak anything that is unbecoming of God. Therefore, endure the storm patiently, for the Lord will rebuke Satan; these blasphemous thoughts are not your sins, but Satan's. You merely hear them and this troubles you. The Lord will, by renewal, reveal Himself to your soul and declare that He exists, and is as He declares Himself to be in His Word. The Spirit will surely witness to you that the Spirit which speaks in the Word is the Spirit of truth. The Eleventh Cause of Doubt: Spiritual Darkness and Deadness The eleventh doubt arises from spiritual darkness and deadness. Such a person will say: "Oh, my condition is even more wretched than all the previous ones, for I deem those happy who have feeling and who endure strife. I, on the contrary, am dead. I indeed believe everything, but it is entirely without feeling. I am not sensible of either the favor or wrath of God, nor am I sensible of heaven, hell, godliness, or sin. Everything seems to me as if it had been but a dream. It is so far out of my reach that I can no longer see it; I am in Egyptian darkness. My devotional exercises have ceased; neither the Word of God nor the sermons affect me; rebukes do not trouble me; comforts render me no joy; nor do exhortations stir me. In one word, I am more dead and insensible than the most ungodly person, and thus I have neither spiritual life nor grace. My case is more hopeless than that of the most ungodly sinner."

Answer: Your complaint is reasonable and your condition to be pitied; however, it is not beyond hope. We shall deal with this condition in depth in chapters 98 and 99. Here it presents itself to us as a reason for doubt as to whether we are in a state of grace. My response is as follows:

First, a great number of eminent saints have been in the same condition as you currently are, and you will not be the last one. Let this support you in your hope that you will be delivered from this.

Secondly, your state is not as dead as you imagine it to be. You deem the sensitivity of your affections to be the same as spiritual life itself; this is a serious misunderstanding. The enlightened will in its functioning toward God, and the way of God unto salvation through Jesus Christ, is the primary motion of spiritual life whereby the soul seeks union with God. If you now impartially judge yourselves, you will yet find this to be present.

Thirdly, a spiritually dead person is attracted to spiritually dead persons. Birds of a feather flock together and hate whatever is not like them. The ungodly seek the company of the ungodly; cultured people seek out cultured people; those who are externally religious seek fellowship with those who are like-minded, and collectively their hearts are opposed to those who are godly within. If you were dead indeed, you would love and hate as they do. However, the contrary is true for you, for the reprobate are despised in your eyes and you honor those that fear the Lord, and your heart is knit to them in love. Is this therefore not an evidence that you have been translated from death to life?

Fourthly, if you were as dead as you imagine yourself to be, from whence then does this displeasure with your condition, your sorrowful brooding, and your languishing proceed? A dead person does not have any feelings. However, the fact that you are sensible of your insensitivity shows that there is life, though it be feeble.

Fifthly, when spiritual life is held before you in its preciousness, consisting in sweet union with Jesus, a leaning in love upon Him, peace of conscience in light of the forgiveness of sins, and a humble and tender walk before the Lord -- aren't you then acquainted with it? Does not your previous experience come to mind? If it could be given to you with one word, wouldn't you then wholeheartedly and eagerly choose for this, there being love for such a disposition? These are indeed clear evidences that in all your deadness there is yet life, and that therefore you ought not to disown your state due to your deadness. The Twelfth Cause of Doubt: Daily Crosses The twelfth doubt is engendered by a bodily cross. Whoever is not tried in this respect does not know all that can transpire when everything is against him. It can be that we must see parents or children in all manner of misery or be rendered all manner of grief and sorrow by them; that we are ridiculed and despised by everyone; that we come into poverty so that we do not know how to maintain an honorable existence, pay our debts -- yes, where we shall obtain bread in order to keep ourselves and our families alive. It can also be that we are afflicted with lengthy periods of pain and discomfort, and are thus overwhelmed by crosses from all sides. If the Lord then hides Himself and we thus find neither comfort nor help, this would even cause a strong Christian to shake and tremble. Furthermore, if all this is conjoined by the subtle assaults of Satan, and in addition to this, our unbelieving, unmortified, and fretful heart manifests itself, our faith will readily falter as far as assurance is concerned. We are then ready to think that all these things come upon us in God's wrath, and that we are not children of God, for we shall then think that if we were children of God, God would not desert us but would help us. Yes, we are then ready to doubt God's providence, and many other thoughts and assaults will proceed from this.

Answer: First, this also is no reason to disown our state. Were not Job, Joseph, David, Jeremiah and all they of whom the Scriptures speak, true believers and in the state of grace? Does not the Lord Jesus give us an example of a gracious person in poor Lazarus? Nevertheless, his cross was both heavy and lengthy. How frequently Job and David sinned in such circumstances! Would you condemn all whom you have known and whose histories you have heard recounted, who have been in much more wretched circumstances according to the body than you; who have had to deal with and manifested impatience and unbelief concerning the cross -- would you condemn all of them as not having grace? Indeed not -- and thus you have no reason to disown your spiritual state.

Secondly, add to this the numerous declarations of God that it is His way to lead His people to heaven by way of manifold crosses: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psalms 34:19); "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22); "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Hebrews 12:8). From this you may perceive that chastisements and crosses are not a token of His wrath toward His own, but a token of His love. You may perhaps retort, "Toward His own -- but I do not believe that I am one of His own." To this I respond that it is then an established fact that by the magnitude and the duration of the cross you cannot determine that you are without grace. Nevertheless you do so -- and improperly so.

Thirdly, the grace which is to be found in your heart will yet manifest itself in the midst of your cross-bearing, and this you are to note to your encouragement.

(1) What grieves you more: the cross, or the fact that you do not bear the cross well; that the cross is heavy and of such long duration, or that you are so impatient and fretful, fail to patiently humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, have doubts concerning the providence of God, and think, "Does God indeed take notice of man, consider his misery, and hear his prayers"?

(2) What do you desire more: reconciliation with God and the forgiveness of sins, or deliverance from the cross? What is more prominent in your seeking: to be content and to be submissive to the will of God, or merely to be relieved of the cross?

(3) What do you choose: that the cross be removed or that you be sanctified thereby -- yes, that the cross be not removed until it has accomplished its purpose, namely, the sanctification of your heart?

(4) If it were your choice either to be fully delivered from the cross, or to give it into the hands of the Lord, would you then choose the former or would you say, "No, I do not choose to be delivered from it, but I shall give it over entirely into the hands of the Lord"?

(5) Does it lead you further away from God? Do you cease to pray, supplicate and seek; or do you increasingly flee to the Lord, frequently bowing yourself silently under His chastisement, and humbly beseeching Him that -- in His favor -- you might receive some relief and deliverance in your perplexity, which you lay before the Lord as a child who unburdens himself? When you calmly examine these matters, cannot you then discern grace? If such is the case, hold fast to your spiritual state. The cross will then appear lighter to you, it will sanctify you more, and you will discover the good hand of the Lord to your comfort and deliverance. With David you will say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes. I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" Psalms 119:71; Psalms 119:75. The Thirteenth Cause of Doubt: A Lack of Spiritual Growth The thirteenth doubt issues forth from a lack of spiritual growth. Such will argue as follows: "I have been a Christian for so many years already and it is so long ago since I first came under conviction and entered into the covenant of grace. However, I cannot perceive that I have grown in any way. I am the same old person I have been for many years -- yes, I cannot perceive anything else but that I have backslidden and that I backslide daily hand over foot. In the beginning I was lively and zealous. I could persevere in overcoming my lethargic flesh, was occupied day and night in prayer, could not

get enough of reading the Word of God. The sermons were sweet to me; the company of the godly was a delight to me; I had a sensible love for the godly (who were especially precious and glorious in my eyes); I walked with a tender heart before the Lord, and I was on guard against unrighteousness. However, it is now so entirely different. Everything is so cold, lethargic, listless, sinful, and vain. What else can I conclude from this but that I have never had true grace? For the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18). The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God (Psalms 92:12-13). However, I do not perceive this to be true within myself; the contrary is true. I may therefore not number myself among those who are partakers of grace. Yes, I am thereby tempted at times to believe that the regenerate can apostatize.”

Answer: First, the thoughts concerning the apostasy of the saints is but a fleeting temptation. You know better than that, and if you desire more instruction in this regard so that you may be steadfast, turn to chapter 100. [p. ###303]

Secondly, the promises concerning spiritual growth are always fulfilled -- be it to a greater or lesser degree -- according to the measure which the Lord has appointed for everyone. If a tree is planted in fertile soil, receives an appropriate amount of sunshine and rain, and is in the appropriate climate, it will grow. Such is also true of grace in a believer. If, however, a tree is continually carved or cut, or if people or animals continually shake it back and forth, or if insects are gnawing at the root, its growth will be prevented. Such is also true for a gracious person.

Thirdly, growth cannot be measured by the vehemence of passions. These have been more vehement in former times when the change initially occurred; when from dead we became alive, and when from darkness we came into the light. They were of a less spiritual nature, however, and you would not be as delighted with them as you now imagine; that is, if you were again in your initial condition. Rather, growth is to be discerned by being increasingly united to Christ, and by the activity which flows out of this union (cf. chapter 90, p. ###159).

Fourthly, it can be true that you are backsliding, for a believer can backslide -- not only as far as the outward manifestation of grace is concerned, but also as far as his habitual graces are concerned (cf. chapter 91, p. ###171). However, even in the state of backsliding he remains a believer, and grace is not withdrawn from him. Thus, there is indeed reason for sorrow when you backslide, but there is no reason to believe that you have been without grace prior to this.

Fifthly, upon evaluating yourself in an impartial manner, you will yet perceive that:

(1) you have spiritual light enabling you to know God and Christ; that you are acquainted with spiritual life and the benefits of the covenant of grace in their essential and spiritual nature; and that you discern that all knowledge of the natural man is nothing but darkness when compared to your own.

(2) there is grief and sorrow over your deficiency. Wherever there is feeling, there is yet life.

(3) there is a longing, yearning, and supplicating for the Spirit, comfort, and strength in order to live in a spiritual manner. Wherever there is hunger and thirst after righteousness -- after food -- there is yet life in the soul.

(4) upon perceiving the eminence of gracious souls, esteeming them, and siding with them and the cause of Christ in opposition to the world, there is yet the manifestation of the nature of a regenerate person. Is not such the case with you? Therefore, acknowledge that which is yet to be found in you. Esteem it as having been given you by God out of pure grace, and that it will also be preserved in you on the basis of so many precious promises, as well as God's immutability and omnipotence. Therefore, do not capitulate by your backsliding, but hold fast the grace which you have and lift up again the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.

We have thus presented to you the primary causes which trouble believers, causing them to doubt their spiritual state; and we have given our responses to them. There are certainly others, but they are of less importance. They can readily be resolved by what has been said in response to the doubts that have been dealt with.

100. Chapter 95: The Assaults of Satan

----- CHAPTER NINETY-FIVE ----- The Assaults of Satan The devil is a murderer from the beginning. God has put enmity between believers and the devil, who goes about among them as a roaring lion, using every imaginable device and act of violence to harm them -- and if it were possible, to kill them. This we now wish to discuss.

Satan Assaults Believers It can be confirmed irrefutably from God's Word that the devil assaults believers.

(1) This is to be observed in God's declaration: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (Genesis 3:15).

(2) This is also evident from the names which are given him in light of this, such as, the enemy Matthew 13:39, the tempter Matthew 4:3, the wicked one Matthew 13:19, and the adversary (1 Peter 5:8).

(3) It is conveyed by the description of his work among believers: "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). His works are called "the wiles of the devil" Ephesians 6:16, buffeting 2 Corinthians 12:7, shooting of fiery darts Ephesians 6:16, and beguiling (2 Corinthians 11:3).

(4) Then there are the exhortations to arm ourselves against him and to resist him. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11); "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about" (1 Peter 5:8); "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

You should know, and be prepared for the fact, that the moment you are inclined to repent and begin to turn to Jesus, even if it is but from afar, the devil will exert himself with a vengeance to use all his wiles and wickedness to prevent this. If he cannot prevent this, he will endeavor to torment and trouble you, and thus keep you from living a holy and joyful life. Therefore, from your side you are also to exert yourself fully. Gird yourself with strength and resist him courageously.

It is needful for you to be acquainted with his devices and operations, so that you will be the less offended and be engaged in battle with all the more valor. We shall therefore present several of his common methods to you. He generally presents himself in a threefold manner: as an angel of light, as a devil, or by concealing himself -- thus creating the illusion that we ourselves are involved. It is his latter guise which is most injurious.

Satan as an Angel of Light That he occasionally approaches us as an angel of light is taught by the apostle: "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). This is not truly the case, but it appears to be so in respect to his operations, for he often approaches the godly under the lovely pretense of godliness.

(1) Sometimes he brings to your attention matters which are good in and of themselves, such as a sweet passage of Scripture, or some sweet experiences and motions of the past; and he will endeavor to cause you to reflect upon them. He does so with evil intentions, however, and at an inappropriate time. He does this, for instance, when we are engaged in a specific matter, or if he knows that whatever will be preached will be most beneficial to us. He does this to short-circuit the earnestness with which we are engaged at that moment and to cause us to desist, as the preached Word will then pass us by unnoticed. Having thus been diverted, we shall miss certain things and will come away empty.

(2) He can make use of the fact that someone, whom he cannot mislead in any other way, is very intent on being virtuous. Yes, he may even stir someone up to this (even though a love for holiness proceeds from the heart of the godly person himself). His objective, however, is to render this person unwilling to be subject to God's dispensation, and cause him to strive continually for greater and loftier things, thereby making him sorrowful, discouraged, and unbelieving, or inducing him to pride.

(3) He may even encourage someone to be virtuous -- yes, to the most careful observation of his thoughts, words, and deeds. However, he does so in order to draw him away, so that he might be involved in things which are external to his calling or station in life. Under a sweet pretense, he will even allure him to things which are contrary to the commandment of God (which is nothing but fanaticism), the person thinking that all that comes to mind is from God. There are then no limits to what he can entice a man. He may also cause one's conscience to be very sensitive, so that a person perceives himself as offending in everything he does, causing him to go his way in much spiritual anxiety. Or he may cause him to see how far he falls short and thus cause him to disown his spiritual state, holding before him that such a life cannot coexist with grace.

(4) He may also stir someone up to be virtuous for the purpose of making him satisfied with the activity itself, keeping him from Christ and the seeking and exercise of justifying faith. Thus, he will subtly rob him of his comfort and that genuine sanctification which flows out of justification -- and if someone is not born again, will keep him out of heaven. These matters everyone must keep in mind in order not to be deceived by Satan. He Presents Himself as He Is: A Devil Sometimes the devil comes as a devil in order to inflict terror.

(1) This may occur by way of apparitions, sensations, noises, or in other different ways. This occurs rarely, however, and is generally imaginary, as some are not able to distinguish this from reality.

(2) This may occur when he stirs someone up to surrender himself to him, or something similar. How far he can go in this they only know who have experienced it.

(3) This may occur when he threatens to kill or inflict suffering upon someone, whereby the assaulted person lives in much fear.

It is thus that he torments as a devil. If, however, in addition to this, he is not able to carry out some of his secret designs, he does but little harm, even though he prevents much that is good.

Most of the time the devil conceals himself and seeks to convince man that he has no hand in what transpired, but rather that it is the person himself and that such things proceed from his own

heart. Thereby he seeks either to prevent that which is good and to corrupt it, to bring about the commission of sin, or to bring the soul into a state of bewilderment. In order to prevent that which is good he has many subtle devices, leveling his assault either on faith, prayer, the hearing of the Word, or sanctification.

His Primary Target: Faith and its Exercise

First, he knows that faith is the fountainhead of spiritual life, and he therefore seeks to obscure faith in all its activity.

(1) He suddenly interjects irrational suggestions, such as, "Is all this in truth? Is not all this imagination?" He will then continually stir you up to mentally reflect upon these suggestions and to search them out. If we then begin to listen, he gets hold of us and begins to present arguments upon which he demands an answer. And if he gets you that far that you begin to respond by reasoning, he will proceed with his argumentation and will, time and again, present new proofs. When the ability to reason fails, he then proceeds to bring you from fleeting atheistic thoughts to embrace atheism itself. You will then be grievously caught in the net and be incapable of having either comfort or peace, and will not be able to be encouraged in whatever you are doing. Therefore, be on your guard against giving heed to these initial fleeting interjections. Let them pass by, and proceed as before, relying upon the Word of God.

(2) Sometimes he unexpectedly interjects: "Are you really a child of God? Is it really in truth? Have you not deceived yourself? Come, examine yourself, for that which is good can endure a test." At times he does this when we may live sweetly by faith, in the exercise of its extrinsic acts, and when we may have fellowship with God. Or he will occasionally do so when we are least capable of making a judgment about ourselves. If we do listen to him, our faith will receive a setback at the very outset and we shall be prevented from proceeding in this good frame. When it comes to the examination whether our foundation is right, he does his utmost to obscure that which is good and hold before us our corruptions with utmost clarity. He will then suggest: "The godly are such and such, but you are far removed from living such a life! Thus, you have deceived yourself; you have nothing more than an enlightened understanding, and you have nothing but head knowledge. You are a temporal believer and a hypocrite." It is thus that you begin to totter. Therefore, do not listen to those interjections, but proceed with the extrinsic acts of faith, which cannot deceive. For even if you had deceived yourself, it is nevertheless at this point that you must make a beginning. It is safest to practice self-examination when wrestling in prayer; that is, when you are speaking to and transacting with the Lord.

(3) Sometimes he makes your bodily cross to appear much heavier than it is. It then seems as if there is no deliverance, but that it will become heavier and heavier. He will also suggest that this has not come upon you in God's favor, but as a manifestation of His wrath; that it is all because of your sins and is but the beginning of eternal damnation. He knows how to impress this upon you sentence after sentence, doing so in an authoritative and overpowering manner. If you listen to him, his interjections will begin to have their effect, faith will begin to falter, you will easily become despondent, and your cross will press you down. Therefore, reject all such interjections. Take your cross upon you and follow Jesus; adhere to the promise that you will be sustained and that the outcome will be well. His Second Target: Prayer

Secondly, since the devil knows what strength, comfort, and benefit may be derived from prayer, he uses all the power and subtlety at his disposal either to keep you from praying or to trouble you while praying.

(1) He will suggest as many other activities as he possibly can, diverting your thoughts elsewhere, and inducing you to postpone prayer to a given time (having something else to do first). He thus seeks to make a person run around from one thing to the next; and if you follow him in this, you will lose your desire and lively frame to engage in prayer. If you encounter this, be on guard and know that your mortal enemy, the devil, is in pursuit. You must be all the more earnest in your striving to overcome all these obstacles and say to yourself: "It is presently my duty to fight against this, and I desire to be victorious over him in this."

(2) Sometimes he suggests that prayer is such a difficult work -- a work that is not possible to do, for which you are entirely unfit, are presently in too sinful a condition for, and that you should thus wait for a season when you will be more fit for it. If this causes you to look up against prayer, he has gained the advantage over you. Therefore, proceed and do not permit yourself to be hindered. Begin, as incapable as you are, and after your prayer consider whether it was difficult and whether you were incapable of it. You will then judge differently.

(3) Sometimes he gives a deep impression that prayer is both ineffective and fruitless. He will then interject the following: "You neither pray in faith nor do you clearly perceive who God is; instead, you are praying to an unknown God. You do not have a right perception of yourself, do not perceive your sinfulness and unworthiness, nor are you as humble and brokenhearted as a suppliant ought to be. You do not earnestly desire the matters for which you are praying, nor do you have those holy objectives which are requisite for prayer. Therefore, desist, for it is not pleasing to God. You will not receive this matter, for God does not hear such prayers. Have you not sufficiently experienced that all your prayers are in vain? What did you ever receive as an answer upon your prayers?" If to some degree you give heed to such interjections, he will succeed both in impairing the exercise of faith as you engage in prayer, and in decreasing your measure of earnestness and perseverance. Therefore, be acquainted with his devices and strive all the more earnestly to overcome. Adhere to the promises of God and always remember that the Lord does not hear because of the worthiness of prayer, but upon prayer as being a means ordained by Him. He will grant your desire at His time, in His manner, and according to His measure -- and you have indeed experienced this to be so.

(4) Sometimes the devil, as if throwing in a handful of dust, is also busy casting other thoughts into our minds while we are praying. He will also try to bring our soul into a hurried and rushed frame; that is, making it seem as if something needed to be done that could not wait. He will stir up a desire for the activity in which we are currently engaged, cause our hearts to be troubled, or suddenly bring matters to mind of which we have not thought in a long time. Be also acquainted with this device and reject it as not worthy of your attention. His Third Target: The Means of Grace

Thirdly, the devil knows that the Lord commonly blesses the assembly of believers, the ministry of the Word, and the partaking of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, he goes along to church and will seek to implement his practices upon you there also. He may suggest reasons to you why you ought not to attend, suggest all sorts of thoughts to you, stupefy your mind with sleepiness (if he is permitted to do so), or do a thousand other things to rob you of the Word or to render it ineffective.

Remind yourself of this, be acquainted with his devices, be on your guard, and out of hatred and enmity for him, do not in any way cooperate with him. Remind yourself that at such a moment you must do battle and strive for a victory. His Fourth Target: The Life of Sanctification

Fourthly, since the devil knows that sanctification is so precious to you and in a special sense honors God and edifies your neighbor, he will lay snares everywhere to keep you from its exercise. He may suggest that you are first to be holy within, or that such and such is not your duty. He particularly knows how vividly to hold before you (and to exaggerate) those ulterior motives which he knows are yet to be found in the heart of an imperfect man, and which will readily surface in the best of deeds -- yes, even if you were free from them prior to this moment, he will suggest, "See, that is your purpose." When you sing, pray in a gathering or in the presence of others, drop a tear during a sermon, give a gift, or rebuke and exhort others, he will immediately suggest: "You did that to be seen of men." He will thus either prevent you from proceeding, or will rob you of the comfort you would otherwise have derived. Therefore, be acquainted with his wickedness, pay no attention to his interjections, proceed, and exercise this virtue deficiently and yet to the best of your ability -- and the Lord will render you stronger in this area. His Major Objective: To Bring About the Commission of Sin The devil is neither satisfied with preventing you from doing good nor spoiling what you are doing, but also endeavors to bring you to the commission of all manner of sin. At one time he will stir up David to be proud and thus to count the people; then he will cause a beautiful Bathsheba to be present in order to entice to fornication. At another time he will give opportunity to be envious, backbite, lie, indulge excessively, or to commit some other sin. It makes no difference to him, as long as he can cause you to fall. He will pursue you at great length and will use a thousand means and devices.

(1) He frequently begins in a remote fashion, concealing his objective and goal. He will create the wonderful illusion for you that you need to relax and will thus seek to make you idle, thereby making you a suitable object for him. He will create the illusion that something is lawful entertainment, and will thus seek to make you elated. He will then suggest various things like a salesman who asks, "Would you like this?" He will go from the one thing to the other to see if there is something in which you might become interested.

(2) He begins with small things which initially do not appear to be sinful, thus concealing their sinfulness. As the soul yields to small sins, she will lose her tenderness and the tender fear of God. He will thus proceed from small or moderate sins to a reflecting upon vain things, thereby endeavoring to present these things as being delightful -- and thus the soul will assume a sinful disposition. Therefore, be careful and do not yield to anything, regardless of how small a sin may appear to be.

(3) Then again he will seek to stir you up to the commission of great sins -- particularly those sins to which you are naturally most inclined. It is true, he does not know the heart, but he has taken notice of the sin which you commit most frequently, and the sin to which he previously has most easily enticed you. He also listens to the confession of your sins and takes note of all the attending circumstances. From this he concludes what your secret and bosom sins are. These he pursues, and sometimes can present sin so suddenly and as being so delightful to the flesh, that it ignites instantly, as gunpowder. That sin we thought to have under control will then suddenly become lively again. He will then, so to speak, cause the soul to reel, which may result in a persevering in

this sin. Therefore, be on your guard.

(4) When you then perceive too late what you have done, and desire to return to the Lord to have your inner peace, former tenderness, and purity of heart restored, he will then turn the tables and will strive to lead you into the commission of other internal sins: impatience, fretfulness, unbelief, and despair. Therefore, remain steadfast.

Possible Objection: These are my sins; they proceed out of my own heart. Answer: Some blame the devil too much in order that they may excuse themselves, and others do not blame him enough. I maintain that your own heart is evil enough to bring forth all these things. Consider this to be a most certain truth: Wherever your own will and affections are involved as far as reflecting upon or executing a given matter -- this is your own sin, for which you are accountable.

However, it is also true (a fact of which you should clearly and continually remind yourself) that: First, the devil seeks to meddle in everything, is continually on the alert to get the better of you, and will, under whatever pretense it may be, either rile you up or push you onward in the commission of certain sins. Secondly, you may indeed believe the devil to be the instigator:

(1) When the above-mentioned matters occur suddenly to you with unusual clarity, appearing to be most advantageous, sweet, and delightful. (I repeat, they appear to be so, for the devil cannot affect the will, and is not able to render them sweet.) (2) When motives are suddenly joined to this which are even contrary to your judgment and will.

(3) When in addition these matters are forcefully and authoritatively impressed upon you, in order thus to overwhelm the will by such dominating directives.

(4) If the heart is brought into turmoil, and there is an extraordinary lack of composure, and a driving passion. If you are thus guilty of a sin of commission or omission, then recognize the hand of Satan in this; he is both tempter and instigator. And if some of these sins make some inroads, be it known that he himself will also join in. Thus, you are to understand the devil to be the instigator and you the follower. Be on the alert, and hate the devil so much that you would neither give him a hearing nor obey him.

Satan's Interjection of Sinful Thoughts

There are also other strifes of which he alone is the author, having as his sole objective to torment God's children. God's children are not partakers in these sins, except when they permit themselves to be incapacitated to serve God in faith, hope, and love. Only their negative frame is their sin. They should be stronger and thus not permit themselves to be troubled in a sinful manner by his turmoil. However, the interjections themselves are not your sin, but the devil's. Nevertheless (take note of this) he will continually seek to convince you that it is your own sin. If you indeed begin to believe this, his interjections will have their effect upon you and bring you in a grievous condition. If, however, you recognize the devil's words as being his language, you will then be able to resist them that much more readily and be less troubled.

These assaults occur in so many different ways and relative to so many different matters, that it is impossible to recite them all. I also do not desire to present them all and would rather be entirely silent on the matter. In order that his wickedness may be exposed, however, and God's children be armed against the insinuation, "You are the culprit and it proceeds from your own heart," I shall

present some matters in a general sense.

(1) Some interjections appear to be entirely infantile and ludicrous; however, they are of a far-reaching nature and generally have painful consequences. For example, he can suggest, "Say this, or say that." He may go a bit further and add, "If you don't say this, and if you don't deal with this, you are damned; if you do it, all is well." This goes a step further, if, in a compelling manner, he demands that you acquiesce in this or that, and thereupon seeks to unsettle you, insinuating that you were the one who acquiesced. Thus, that which appears to be so infantile culminated in much agitation.

(2) Sometimes he quickly interjects a passage of Scripture which is difficult to understand, and he will force that upon us either to charge God foolishly or to disown our spiritual state, stirring us up to respond to this. Once a person begins to defend the truth, God, and his spiritual state, the devil will get an increasing hold of him, for he is a devious deceiver. Therefore, one must not respond -- no matter how it may go -- but allow it to pass by.

(3) Sometimes he will direct a person's attention to eternal election; that the one person is called and converted instead of another person, thus resulting in the damnation of so many people. He will do this in order to accuse God. Once one begins to reflect upon this and desires to defend God, he is caught in the snare. Therefore, resist this and do not respond, for you will thereby become all the more agitated. The Lord's will is holy.

(4) Sometimes he makes use of a bodily or spiritual cross to accuse God concerning His dealings by interjecting all manner of things which weigh the soul down incomparably more than the cross. However, be on guard against such interjections and ignore them. Adhere to the fact that God is sovereign. He does whatever pleases Him, and will not give an account to man of His doings.

(5) Sometimes he knows how to lead someone, whom he has been sifting for some time, round about in such a manner, that the person, when desiring to come before the Lord or when beginning to pray, appears to be focused on an object other than God. Due to obscure thoughts and the devil's mysterious operation upon the imagination, it will then appear as if he were praying to that object rather than to God. This is a great impediment to prayer.

(6) Sometimes he acts as a prophet and interjects: "Such and such will befall you; you will turn out thus, and you will yet come to the commission of such deeds." He does not only interject this, but he will forcefully impose upon the person that it will certainly come to pass in such a manner. He will repeat this over and over again so that there comes no end to his prophesying. Sometimes he will previously begin to show such things in a dream and would wish this dream to be perceived as being of divine origin in order that he may make it more emphatic. Subsequent to this he will again make use of this dream and will impress the imagery of these matters in such a manner that it causes much agitation. And thus he afflicts the body and the soul by generating fear for future matters which he has foretold.

(7) Sometimes he comes with fiery darts and evil thoughts about God, doing so with such vehemence and persistence, that the soul has no rest day or night. The poor soul is then mortally wounded, and can neither endure nor resist those thoughts. They return with increasing force, and it appears as if those images are his own thoughts -- which aggravates his misery. In these and similar assaults the devil operates under cover. His entire effort and device is to suggest that it is

not he who interjects such thoughts, but that they proceed from the heart of the assaulted person himself. He will suggest that such sins cannot coexist with grace, and that therefore the person will be eternally damned. And when would there come an end to these assaults if the Lord at His time did not intervene and rebuke Satan?

How Interjections of Satan May Be Distinguished from a Person's Own Thoughts

Question: Do not these thoughts originate with the person himself? It seems to me that all this proceeds from my own heart. If I only knew that they were the sins of the devil and his interjections, I would already be half delivered. Can we know that this is so -- and if yes, whereby can we know this?

Answer: First, all sinful frames of unbelief, despondency, fretfulness, and despair are a person's own sins, even though they at times are caused by the assaults of Satan. The initiative did not come from the person, but from the devil. You have given him too much room to operate, and you have become excessively troubled by it. You should not have paid so much attention to it.

Secondly, let us assume that all the things described came forth out of your own heart. Then what? Is it unforgivable? No; Christ stands ready to receive all those who are heavy laden with sin -- also the chief of sinners and blasphemers (1 Timothy 1:13).

Evasive Argument: I have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that is unforgivable.

Answer: This is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, for there is no remorse over that sin. Instead, it grieves you, you are oppressed by it, and you pray. Thirdly, you should know that these and similar experiences are the lot, by far, of the majority of God's children. Should it therefore surprise you that it also befalls you?

Evasive Argument: My disposition is entirely different, however. I have not found it in the things mentioned, and I have never heard nor read of a similar disposition.

Answer: Perhaps you know but little of what others have experienced, and thus you cannot say, "Others do not experience this." If you therefore calmly examine the cases described above, I believe that you will find your case there. I did not want to deal with them more distinctly and comprehensively than that. He who experiences these things will be able to detect his own case from these implicit presentations.

Fourthly, that the interjections mentioned are not yours, but rather the sins of the devil, can be ascertained when:

(1) They occur suddenly, unexpectedly, and as lightning -- even when one is involved in the performance of a good and holy work. For all that proceeds from our own heart gradually takes shape by way of reasoning, and generally is triggered by a given occasion.

(2) They are forcefully imposed upon us against our will, and in a manner whereby we cannot avoid it. The soul rejects it and wishes neither to think upon it nor to approve of it in the least. Nevertheless these thoughts return time and again. It is thus evident that we are merely suffering as someone who is being beaten, and that these arrows are being fired from without. Therefore, use your mind and judge accordingly.

(3) They are accompanied with terror so that the soul immediately loses its composure, becomes very agitated, and becomes incapable of reasoning rationally. The very opposite is the case when sins proceed from a person's own heart.

(4) The interjections are unnatural and are thus repulsive to our nature. If this is your experience, you may and must be assured that they are not your sins, but rather the devil's. Therefore, you ought not to be that troubled by them, but resist the devil with contempt.

Question: There are some with whom the thought may yet occur: "There are times when I can truly feel that they are not of an external source, but are my own thoughts."

Answer: A person is frequently ignorant of the manner in which his soul functions, and he is therefore unable to distinguish what proceeds from the representation or interjection of Satan, or from himself. Since, however, we are of the opinion that we do understand this, we are of the opinion that they proceed from the soul herself. When another person utters dreadful things, you will also understand what he is saying. It troubles you, and yet you know that they are not your sins, but rather those of the one who is speaking. Such is also true here.

Secondly, you must also know that when the devil has been driven away from you, you will yet maintain a fearful disposition for some time as a result of what had previously been interjected. These things have also not been erased from your memory as yet; however, it is nothing more than a memory. However, this fearful disposition and the memory of it is not the sin. Indeed, this fearful disposition even proves your love for God, for you wish neither to hear nor think any foolish things about Him. The Lord Enjoins His People to Battle Against the Devil

It does not suffice to know that those fiery darts have been shot by the devil, for we shall thereby not be delivered from them. Rather, it is the Lord's will that we shall battle against the devil, and in the way of strife He will give the victory. You may ask: "What shall I do?"

(1) The best you can do in this respect is to ignore, resist, and make no response; let it all pass by. Consider this to be similar to someone standing by your window and continually yelling these things at you, which would be very troublesome and grievous to you. However, you would not be as upset as if you yourself were speaking these things.

(2) View this as an affliction -- just as if you had bodily pain. Remain quiet, possess your soul in patience, and always consider the hand of God to be in it. The Lord has decreed it to be so, wants to keep you humble, and has determined how far it will go (Job 1:12).

(3) Hold fast to your faith. Even though it is not in lively exercise, let it nevertheless be at the bottom of your heart. Therefore, ascertain by way of your previous experience that you are a child of God; however, for the moment refrain from examining yourself.

(4) Know that the Lord Jesus has conquered the devil and has crushed his head (Genesis 3:15). His dominion has been eradicated Hebrews 11:1-40. Therefore, be of good courage, considering that he is a conquered enemy.

(5) Consider the intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32).

(6) Believe that the outcome will be good. This is according to the promises, and has been confirmed by the examples of others and your own experience during other seasons of strife. The more severe your trials are, the greater will be the measure of comfort, peace, joy, and strength the Lord will grant you. You yourself will realize that during such strife you are kept from many other sins and manifestations of pride.

(7) Be much in prayer. If you feel that you have but little strength to persevere earnestly and to enlarge upon your request, then look time and again to the Lord. Let the Lord see and hear your turning to Him, as well as your sighs and your ejaculatory prayers. Therefore, wait also upon Him from whom your help must come, and do not neglect your devotional exercises.

(8) Persevere during this season of darkness and agitation. Follow the Word of God, and direct your goings accordingly -- both in living a godly life as well as in the performance of your calling. Always keep yourself occupied therein, for things will never be more difficult for you than when you are idle.

(9) If you can avail yourself of an experienced minister or another strong Christian, reveal your strife to them and do not try to grapple with it alone. The opportunity to pour out your heart to them, their support, as well as their intercession will be a suitable means to be encouraged -- and from the moment you may receive some courage, you will increase in strength.

Believers Exhorted to Render Strong Resistance to Satan

Therefore, be determined to give strong resistance. To be encouraged in doing so, stir yourself up to reflect upon these matters.

First, it is the will of God that His children would jointly form an army under their Prince and King Jesus, in order to battle against the devil and his angels. Such a battle is expressed in the following passages: "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels" (Revelation 12:7); "Behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. And the armies ... followed Him upon white horses" Revelation 19:11; Revelation 19:14. The Lord Jesus has destroyed the devil by His death; that is, He has removed from him all power he had over His people. By making satisfaction for their sins by His death, He has delivered them out of the hands of the tyrant to whom they had become subject through sin, so that he has no dominion over them whatsoever -- nor ever will have. In His wisdom and goodness, however, God has granted him some limited power to assault the army of Christ as an enemy, so that His children may be exercised in battle and may achieve victory over him while thus engaged -- to their glory and his shame. Since it is thus a fact that you have joined an army at war, it behooves you to fight valiantly, for all who are in this army oppose this enemy -- doing so under the supervision of our General and the holy angels. Therefore, be willing and valiant.

Secondly, when we consider the nature of this enemy, we observe that he has a deadly and dreadful hatred for our beloved Lord Jesus, and for all who cleave to Him -- and particularly for you. This hatred causes him to rage vehemently, and he, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He is subtle, cruel, and tireless in seeking to rob you of your advantage, to harm you, and to hinder you in your conversation. This must arouse your hatred against him in return. Observe this in David so that you may emulate him: "Do not I hate them, O

Lord, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies” (Psalms 139:21-22).

Such hatred will not allow him to have the pleasure to prevail over you in a given matter, and to triumph over you. This hatred will even motivate you not to permit him to remain near you. It will motivate you to chase him away so that he will flee from you. This hatred will cause you to rejoice when you trample him under foot and thwart his actions. God has given you the ability to hate. It is a natural propensity, and therefore use it most vehemently against him.

Thirdly, it is a very shameful thing if you permit him to gain the victory over you by carelessness, unbelief, or by yielding to your lusts -- lusts which he stimulated and stirred up in you. For be assured that in a subtle manner he has his hand in everything. How shameful it will be when you, upon returning to the Lord, are rebuked by Him for having been so fainthearted by either having yielded to him immediately or by having rendered him but little resistance! On the other hand, it is a glorious matter if you have valiantly fought against his assaults, even if you were wounded in doing so.

Such valor will give you much freedom to approach unto the Lord. How sweet it is when the Lord shows that He takes pleasure in your having been engaged in warfare (even if you did so with but little strength), since you have battled with all your strength and in the uprightness of your heart! How sweet it is when the Lord, in response to this, grants you some of the hidden manna, which He has promised to those who overcome! How sweet it is when He says, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!” (Matthew 25:21).

Fourthly, the devil is a conquered enemy, and therefore the victory is certain. The Lord Jesus, as the Seed of the woman, has bruised his head Genesis 3:15, and has destroyed him by His death (Hebrews 2:14). He has spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, and has triumphed over them by way of the cross (Colossians 2:15). He would indeed be a fainthearted warrior who would not dare to attack a mortally wounded enemy who is already down and yet struggles a bit. God has permitted the devil to still struggle in order to grieve him by having a poor son of man despise, trample upon, and inflict deadly wounds upon him. He will never again regain power over a child of God. He may inflict some wounds, but every believer will ultimately conquer him in the power of Christ and then they shall jubilate: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). “They overcame him (the accuser of the brethren who has been cast down, the devil) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11).

Therefore, be valiant against him. Be aware of your weakness, however, and do not trust in your own strength, for this could suddenly cause you to fall. Stay close to the chief captain, Jesus. Take refuge by Him, take hold of His strength, and fight by His strength. Pray without ceasing: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Be careful and take unto you the whole armor of God, gird your loins about with truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness; let your feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; and take the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. “Praying always with all prayer and

supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Ephesians 6:13-18).
Therefore, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

101. Chapter 96: The Power of Indwelling Corruption

----- CHAPTER NINETY-SIX ----- The Power of Indwelling Corruption

Indwelling corruption is the most powerful of all causes of backsliding. In regeneration God grants His people spiritual life by uniting them to Christ. This life is predisposed toward growth -- and indeed it does grow. You would be able to observe this if you would compare your current condition with your condition when you were first changed. As it is true in the natural realm that the one person becomes taller and stronger than another, so it likewise occurs in the spiritual realm. In the natural realm a person will grow until he reaches full maturity, and then his growth ceases. However, in the spiritual realm perfection is reserved for eternity. Here one longs and strives for it, but in this life he does not attain it. In the natural realm one person will mature in a healthy manner, increase in strength, and retain his strength as it increases. Another person will, however, be hindered in his growth by many trials; and by way of illness or other occurrences he may lose his strength. A man may even become as weak as a child. Such is also the case in the spiritual realm. The one is as a plant which matures in its youth. He is as a shining light which arises until it shines forth at full noon. He goes from strength to strength, and flourishes like the palm tree and a cedar in Lebanon. Another person, however, encounters many things that impede him, and he loses his strength. Indwelling corruption, which at times gains much strength, is among the causes of a decrease in strength. It is this we now wish to discuss.

It Torments and Grieves Believers That indwelling corruption greatly torments and grieves believers is evident from:

(1) The complaints of the saints: "O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our heart from Thy fear?" (Isaiah 63:17); "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am!" (Romans 7:23-24).

(2) Such texts in which believers confess the power of indwelling corruption: "Iniquities prevail against me" (Psalms 65:3).

(3) Such texts in which saints pray to be kept from this. "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me" (Psalms 19:13).

(4) Related warnings. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30); "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

It Does Not Have Dominion over Believers

Since regeneration is imperfect, the old man always remains present in the regenerate person. The old man retains its nature, ignorance, will, affections, and delight in sin -- all this under the pretense of being honest, prudent, and delightful. In reality, however, the old man abhors that which is good, considering it to be aggravating, disadvantageous, distasteful, and impossible. It is

thus that the warfare between the flesh and the spirit is engendered. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). In this battle, at times the one wins and at another time the other wins. To the extent that the one wins the other loses. The spirit will never expel the flesh entirely. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after" (Php 3:12). In turn, the flesh will never expel the spirit entirely, nor have dominion and be triumphant over it. "His seed remaineth in him ... because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9); "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). To have dominion is to have fully prevailed over a given party, so that the conquered one surrenders and subjects himself to the conqueror, thereby rendering obedience. This will never be the case here. The flesh does receive such a measure of strength that it can activate both the natural faculties of the soul as well as the members of the body. This enables it to execute its desire in a manner which cannot be prevented by the spirit. However, the regenerated man can never be brought to the point -- not for one moment -- that he would subject himself to the will of the flesh for the purpose of rendering obedience to it, either willingly or unwillingly. The regenerated man will always oppose, even if it were but by sighing against it -- thus showing his aversion and crying out as if violence were done upon him. A man can take a child by the arm against his or her will and cause the child to walk rapidly alongside of him. The child will indeed move his or her feet; however, not for the purpose of walking, but rather to avoid falling. Every step is an act of resistance. Such is also true when the spirit is overwhelmed by the power of indwelling corruption.

Causes Whereby Indwelling Corruption Exerts Great Strength at Times At times indwelling corruption functions in its customary manner; that is, by enticing and drawing to that which is evil, and hindering and defiling that which is good -- all the while enduring continual resistance from the principle of spiritual life. Occasionally it will receive greater strength, however, and will gain a greater advantage over the spirit. This can be caused by:

(1) God withdrawing His normal influence in a small measure in order to try a person, to humble him, to make Jesus more precious to him, and to cause him to rely more on the strength of the Lord. When this occurs, spiritual life cannot withstand the great power of indwelling corruption.

(2) The occurrence of certain circumstances -- be it a fear for one's life, or the loss of honor and belongings -- which previously did not exist, causing the lusts to be stirred up, and to become capable of seducing man into the commission of certain sins. This can happen by way of a sudden and unexpected incident, or by the duration of a certain situation -- and thus results in spiritual life being subdued.

(3) A change in the condition of the body whereby a person becomes more capable of a given sin. The body will then be more stimulated and stirred up to be entertained by such a sin. The condition of the body will trigger many sins, thereby igniting the lusts of the soul, and the soul in turn will indulge in her lusts by way of the body.

(4) The devil being given a greater measure of freedom whereby he assaults a person with new devices against which such a person is neither armed, nor yet has had any experience. A person will be readily overcome by this, and spiritual life will be in such bondage that it can hardly move one way or the other.

The Effects of Indwelling Corruption The effects of the extraordinary power

of indwelling corruption are both sinful, grievous, and dangerous, for indwelling corruption affects all the faculties of the soul and the body.

First, it activates the intellect. This faculty is the first and essential beginning of man's activity. The lusts of the old man are, however, frequently stirring at an early stage already; they will affect the intellect and even stupefy it. We shall thus neither see the sinfulness of sin and its harmful consequences, nor consider the omniscience, omnipresence, goodness, and righteousness of God. We shall then quietly forget the Lord; or if the Lord manifests Himself to some degree (or if the new nature by faith views itself as in the presence of God), this view will make no impression nor yield any power to resist sin.

Secondly, even the will can be assaulted. The new man abhors that which is evil because of its hostility toward the will of God, and finds delight in that which is good as being pleasing to God. However, the old man has a will contrary thereto. This so overpowers the faculty of the will that the new man does not have the power to activate either its aversion for sin or its desire for virtue. Even when, in spite of the vehement manifestation of lust, the new man manifests itself in some measure and strives to break through, it will succumb when a sinful desire violently draws the person away to the commission of sin. The act itself is then committed, so that it appears that the will in its entirety had no other desire but to commit evil. Even when we are not in the violent throes of our lust, we often cannot make a complete and heartfelt resolution from that moment on to depart fully from this sin, never to commit it again, but to be on guard against it and to battle it with all our might. Occasionally we shall make such a resolution, but it is feeble, superficial, does not encompass the very recesses of the heart -- and thus wavers. Yes, we shall even accuse ourselves of not dealing with God in an upright manner. Nevertheless, there is some uprightness, but its efficacy is such that it is not capable of banishing the lust and sensibly taking control of the entire will. As far as remaining steadfast, there is an added feeling of hopelessness, knowing that all previous resolutions have proven to be unfruitful.

Thirdly, this indwelling corruption vehemently stirs up the affections, and once the affections have been set in motion, they can tolerate neither consultation nor delay, but as madmen they will run to execute that sin. They set the entire mechanism of man's inborn tendencies in motion and will drive a man on with insane intensity. The affections thus set everything in motion for the satisfaction of our lusts, and if the new man in any way opposes itself to this, he will be assaulted with all their might. Observe this in the following passages: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15); "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

Fourthly, the inner man having been overcome by indwelling corruption, this corruption now permeates the motions of soul and body. It sets our thoughts in motion to reflect upon the sin at hand and to find delight in such thoughts, knowing that such a thing either never will come to pass, could come to pass, or that we would not want to commit the deed. Yet, one will stir up his lusts toward the commission of that deed. Indwelling corruption will also move us to the commission of the deed itself. It will activate the members of the body, and for that purpose will utilize the eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet, and all members which are involved, in the commission of a sin. It is not satisfied with having committed the sin at hand only once, but it wants to commit this sin by

renewal.

Believers Will Commit the Same Sins Again

There is no sin from which a regenerated person is safeguarded in an absolute sense. No one can say: "I shall never fall into that sin." A person will never be delivered from the indwelling corruption of his nature. It will always prevent and defile that which is good, always stir up lusts, and daily cause a man to offend in many things, doing so either out of carelessness, or due to the sudden occurrence of an event. At times there is a very besetting sin, however, which is triggered by the disposition of the body or because the body is repeatedly stimulated due to there being continual opportunity for this sin. The power of this is such that we repeatedly fall into it. This can particularly be true of a sin which occurs in secret, and thus without the knowledge of any other person. It can also happen that one falls into a heinous sin which is punishable by civil law, being accompanied with great offense. However, such a great fall generally causes us to have a greater aversion for that sin than other sins, so that we shall no longer be tempted by this sin our entire lifetime. It can nevertheless happen -- and occasionally it does happen -- that such a person by renewal falls into such heinous sins, particularly such sins which are triggered by the disposition of the body. This does not only relate to the renewed commission of this sin in its prevailing intensity before a heartfelt repentance from this sin has occurred (so that it is more to be considered a continuation rather than a succumbing); but one may also fall again into this sin after having mourned over it in a heartfelt manner, having received Christ unto reconciliation, and having made a resolution against that sin. Sometimes this occurs shortly thereafter. It may appear at times as if that sin has been overcome -- yes, even mortified -- so that we no longer fear it. And yet, it can nevertheless happen that we fall into it by renewal.

(1) The examples of Abraham, Isaac, Lot, and Peter teach us that there is a falling into the same sin.

(2) The seed of all corruption is still within a person -- and thus also of that sin.

(3) There is no promise in God's Word that someone will not fall again into that sin into which he has once fallen.

(4) Believers are capable of falling into other sins; why then can they not fall into the same sin again?

(5) When God withdraws His Spirit, spiritual life will be too weak to resist that same sin when it resurfaces. This is particularly true when there is every opportunity for it, the body is stimulated, and the devil assaults. The Response of the Converted Person to His Indwelling Corruption

Objection: This is the true condition and life of an unconverted person, and such persons must therefore not be considered as being converted.

Answer: If someone were thus inclined to all manner of sin at all times, and would be without strife in this regard (there being no conflict between light, the conscience and the lusts, but rather between will and will, affection and affection); and if all this would transpire without a sorrowful languishing under it -- without seeking, supplicating, weeping for forgiveness, receiving Jesus unto sanctification as well as justification; without repeated restoration and a walking in the fear of God -- then I will admit that such a person is not converted. He ought not to comfort himself with his

weakness and the fact that saints fall into sin. Wherever true grace is to be found in the heart, however, and when such persons come into the above-mentioned condition, the following matters will manifest themselves -- sometimes more, sometimes less.

First, their indwelling corruption is not so powerful relative to all sins. The reason the regenerate forego many sins is neither because their nature is disinclined toward them, nor due to the absence of temptation, nor because they find no delight in besetting sins -- as is true in the life of the unconverted. Rather, they resist other sins, opportunities, and stimuli due to being united with God; they fear God, and have love for the will of God. They are thus not vulnerable to every type of sin. However, this particular besetting sin has too much power. Spiritual life battles against this sin, (as has been shown above) but it cannot prevail. It is overpowered and taken captive, but it will never be dominated and brought into subjection.

Secondly, indwelling corruption does not always exert its power toward a given besetting sin. Spiritual life battling against it frequently has the upper hand, arises from falls, resists temptations, avoids opportunities, prayerfully takes hold of the Lord's strength, and remains close to the Lord. One thus proceeds sweetly, carefully, and in the fear of the Lord, and thereby is kept from that sin for a longer or shorter time, even though it will manifest itself again and will seek to resurface.

Thirdly, when indwelling corruption has the upper hand, the believer is neither joyous nor happy -- as an unconverted person would be when he may indulge in his lust without harm or shame. Instead, there is much sorrow and heartache. He languishes and spends his life in sorrow, since (due to this sin) he must miss communion with God, peace, and the sensible assurance of being reconciled. Furthermore, his spiritual life weakens, and he cannot glorify God in his station in life. The more vehemently his lust appears to have free reign in this trial, the more the grief of his soul is multiplied. Furthermore, when the temptation is most vehement, and if he is prevented from committing his sin, he will not be irritated as the unconverted are, but will rejoice and thank the Lord for it. Hereby we thus discover the distinction between the commission of sin by the unconverted and the power of indwelling corruption as it strives with grace in the converted. Add to this what we have said in chapter 14 concerning prevailing and incidental sins. From this, one can be clearly convinced whether sin has dominion over him. If sin still has dominion over you, let this convince you that you are yet in an unconverted state, and that if you remain thus and die in that condition, you will be damned eternally. Let it therefore stir you up to flee from the wrath to come by a speedy repentance and exercise of faith in Christ -- doing so while He is yet offered to you and before it is too late.

If you may perceive that sin has no dominion over you, but that there is spiritual life in you which strives against indwelling corruption -- even though it frequently suffers defeat -- acknowledge the grace of God, be grateful for it, rejoice over it, and let it be a means to strive against indwelling corruption with renewed courage.

For, on the one hand, you taste how bitter it is to be a captive to sin; how you are continually living in bondage, restless, grieved, and full of fear; how God, in whose communion there is joy and life, hides Himself from you. You taste how vulnerable you are to all manner of temptations by the flesh, the devil, and the world; how the habitual disposition of spiritual life weakens; and how impossible it is for you to root out this indwelling corruption, which so often flourishes and increases in strength when spiritual life is weak. You taste how incapable you are to attain to the

purpose of your calling: the glorification of God; and how fearful you are of death and the prospect of expiring in darkness and misery. On the other hand, you do know that your inner spiritual life craves help to be delivered from this prison and to be set at liberty; and how it cries out for such help. You are acquainted with the immutability of the love of God toward you, which you can conclude from the conviction that the Holy Spirit of grace is within you. You know the fullness of the Lord Jesus, who is ready to communicate to you grace for grace out of His fullness. You know how becoming it is for you, being the temple of the Holy Ghost, to cleanse that temple and to expel indwelling corruption. Oh, how delightful it is to repent! It renders joy to God, the Lord Jesus, angels, ministers, other believers, and to you yourself. Sin will then lose its potency, all tasks will seem easier to you, and you will increase in strength.

102. Chapter 97: Spiritual Darkness

----- CHAPTER NINETY-SEVEN ----- Spiritual Darkness In regeneration man is drawn out of darkness into marvellous light. He receives enlightened eyes of the understanding and perceives invisible realities. Those matters, which are hidden for the natural man and viewed from a natural perspective, are viewed in an entirely different manner by the person who has been illuminated. He who was darkness itself becomes enlightened in the Lord, and the Holy Spirit shines in his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This light gladdens the heart, warms the soul, causes it to burn with love, and changes and sanctifies the entire man. Therefore, they who begin to see this light become so enamored with it that they desire to be led further and further into this light. Indeed, in doing so they do not take note of the distinction between the light of beholding (which may and must be desired here below, but is reserved for heaven), and the light of faith, which is bestowed upon those who walk upon earth, enabling them to make their way through darkness with joy. By not considering this distinction, they are not satisfied to walk in the light of faith, but wish to live here in the light of beholding. They thus bring trouble upon their soul and begin to think that they are yet entirely in the dark and unconverted. Yes, this can cause great darkness to come upon them, so that even the light of faith becomes so dim that they cannot perceive any light. This spiritual darkness is not identical to what the unconverted have, who are yet entirely blind. This also does not compare to what beginners in grace experience, in whom there is a glimmer of light. We also do not understand by this the waves of darkness which occasionally come upon a believer and readily dissipate.

Spiritual Darkness: The Spiritual Disease of a Christian This darkness is, however, a spiritual disease of a person who has made some progress in the Christian life. In the absence of the normal illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit, and due to the residual darkness of his old nature, the light which is in him becomes so dim and is so obscured that he now beholds the spiritual matters, which he previously perceived with clarity, as a distant glimmer and only depicts what has transpired in the past by way of memory. This causes him to be without joy, warmth, and direction; and to live in fear and anxiety, causing him to wander about aimlessly, as in a desert. Not only does experience teach that the believer does come into such darkness (so that many do not need any other proof except their own case), but the Word of God shows us abundantly that this is so. Those who are in such a condition need to take note of that, since they generally come to the conclusion that they are without grace, being of the opinion that the godly do not come into such a condition. That which befell Abraham, the father of the faithful, also befalls his children. "And, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him" (Genesis 15:12). Job testifies of this concerning himself: "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him" (Job 23:8-9). The church complains of this: "He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light" (Lamentations 3:2). The Lord threatens this: "Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness" (Jeremiah 13:16). The prophet gives counsel to those who are in such a state: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant,

that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah 50:10). There are seasons of darkness as a result of persecution and the absence of comfort, as well as due to blindness. However, these generally coexist in God's children, for external darkness does bring forth internal darkness. The Causes of Spiritual Darkness

Natural vision can be obstructed by various causes: the disappearance of the sun, the thickening of clouds, the interference of opaque objects, disease of the eyes, or staring at the sun. Spiritual darkness likewise has various causes:

(1) the disappearance of the Sun of Righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the withholding of the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit;

(2) the devil obscuring this light by clouding the issues, generating the smoke of error and heresy, generating false light, obscuring the truth, and seducing a person by way of deceivers;

(3) a person not giving heed to the light of faith, considering this to be too insignificant; a weakening of love for the truth, a striving for something higher; an insisting on being illuminated by the light of beholding, and by being desirous of receiving light other than that light by which the Lord commonly leads his people;

(4) the turning away of our eyes from the light by yielding to our lusts, by closing our eyes, and by strewing sand in our eyes -- whereby the truth in her efficacy and preciousness is not perceived;

(5) exerting our spiritual vision too much to comprehend the perfections and incomprehensible ways of God. This, rather than yielding us more light, will bring us into more darkness. For when we depart from the light of God's Word and cannot attain to an immediate beholding, our corrupt intellect and irrational reason [Note: Dutch: "redelooze rede."] will come to the foreground, deceiving the soul with false contemplations whereby true light is increasingly obscured. The Consequences of Spiritual Darkness This spiritual darkness brings believers into a sorrowful and sinful state, for: First, there will be despondency. The light of the eyes is good and rejoices the heart. Dark days, on the contrary, are days of sorrow; the night encloses everything and oppresses the heart. Such is also true for believers who have seen the light, who were accustomed to walk in the light of God's countenance, and did rejoice in the light, but now must miss that light, and are surrounded by thick darkness. All of this will distress the heart, and a dismal sorrow overcomes them, so that everything, so to speak, grieves them. They think about former days when the Lord caused His light to shine upon them, and they traversed through darkness by His light. This has now disappeared, however, and there is grievous darkness.

Secondly, during darkness the wild beasts come forth out of their holes. Likewise all manner of sinful motions manifest themselves in this darkness, such as unbelief, despondency, fretfulness, and murmuring. Even fleeting atheistic thoughts arise in the heart, as well as all manner of sinful reasoning to bring the soul into additional darkness.

Thirdly, darkness is a fearful thing. There is a terror by night, and an arrow which flies by day (Psalms 91:5). Such is also the case here. We shall hardly be able to discern what grace is, and are not able to perceive it in ourselves. We shall be fearful of the wrath of God and damnation. The devil shoots forth his terrifying arrows; our thoughts and dreams will terrify us, and we shall neither find rest nor a place of refuge anywhere.

Fourthly, he who, in the dark, walks across a moor in which there are many trails, will easily go astray. Such is also the case here. "He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12:35). When he is alone, his thoughts will wander, and when he is among people, he will stumble in his words. If he must undertake something or if a decision needs to be made, he will err in his choice, and the outcome of his endeavor will be wrong. Everywhere he is ensnared, and he is in bondage in whatever he undertakes.

Fifthly, he who walks in darkness will readily stumble over something that lies upon his pathway, not being able to see it -- and irregularities cause him to stumble readily. Such is also true here. God's ways are no longer in his heart and he walks upon rough ways. Here he sees something and there he hears something, and it offends him immediately. Here there are temptations to err in doctrine, there to sin, and there opposition reveals itself. Everywhere there are snares, but he does not see them. This causes him to be easily ensnared, and the more he moves about, the more he becomes ensnared. He cannot deliver himself, for he knows not where he will place his foot.

Sixthly, darkness is an unfruitful season. In the darkness of winter, trees stand there barren and as if they were dead. Near the south and north poles hardly any vegetation or grass grows, and whatever is sown or planted in a place which cannot be reached by the sun, cannot grow and will be in a sad condition. Such is also the case here. When a thick darkness envelops the soul, she does not bring forth any fruits worthy of repentance. She is barren and weak, does not give the Lord who has planted her any delight, is not an ornament to the church, and this planting of the Lord is neither a matter of joy to other godly persons nor attractive to the unconverted. During that season she will thus not answer to the purpose for which she has been appointed.

Seventhly, during darkness it is cold. During the winters and beneath the pole-caps everything becomes immobile due to the frost. Such is also true here. When someone comes into a state of darkness, he will readily slip into a state in which he is cold, stiff, and insensitive. We shall shortly discuss this state of insensitivity more comprehensively.

Means to Avoid Spiritual Darkness

Since the state of darkness is of such a harmful nature, everyone must see to it that he does not come into such a condition, and therefore:

- (1) Be on guard against those things whereby you come into such a condition -- as has been shown earlier.
- (2) Highly esteem the light you have, however little it may appear to be in your own eyes.
- (3) Rejoice in the fact that you are acquainted with God, Christ, and the way of salvation. Furthermore, rejoice that you understand the Word of God in its spiritual sense, since you see so many who are without this light. "Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (John 5:35).
- (4) Give heed to the light which shines forth in the Word of God, direct your goings accordingly, and walk in it. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you" (John 12:35).

If you have been overcome by darkness, do not give up courage, for many of the godly come into this condition. It is not a sign of being without grace. You still know the Lord and His way, though

from afar. This darkness is a burden to you and all your desire is for the light -- not merely to be able to see, but in order to be gladdened, warmed, directed, and sanctified by it. The Lord will by renewal lighten your darkness and will again lift up the light of His countenance over you. You will experience that this season of darkness has been a school for you in which you have learned much. Especially do not yield to this darkness, but endeavor to be delivered from it. I do not need to hold before you the repugnant nature of darkness and the delightfulness of light to stir you up thereby, for you have experienced both conditions. I merely wish to give you some direction.

Directions for Those Who Struggle with Darkness

First, be assured that you will not immediately return to the light which you have previously enjoyed. The fleeting rays of light which fall upon you in the midst of your darkness are divine comforts to strengthen you for the darkness which is yet to come. A habitual disposition is only to be attained by way of much exercise. Therefore, be not discouraged if you do not regain this condition at the very outset.

Secondly, be satisfied with the little light that you may yet have, which enables you to understand the Word in its spiritual sense -- even if it neither yields delight nor warmth. It is sufficient to give you direction.

Thirdly, refrain from exerting yourself to have views of lofty matters, but cling humbly to the Word of God. Whenever you read it and whenever a passage of Scripture occurs to you, then think: "This is the truth." If it is a promise, esteem it as such, and do not lift your heart above that Word. At the same time reflect upon God Himself, but do not go beyond what His Word describes Him to be. If there is an exhortation to believe or to practice another virtue, then think: "This is my rule of conduct, and according to this I wish to walk in all simplicity." Thus, by keeping a low profile you will come to the light in the most prudent manner.

Fourthly, deal faithfully with the small measure of light that you have. Do not begin to reason with your natural intellect. Acknowledge it by faith and follow it. In humility and uprightness walk in that light. Do not focus upon your stumblings, esteem yourself to be but a small child. The ordering of your way according to that small measure of light will most certainly be a means to receive a greater measure of light. "If any man will do His will, he will know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John 7:17); "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32).

Fifthly, maintain your scheduled devotional exercises. If you discontinue these, you will come into more darkness and become more estranged; however, if you maintain these, you will increase in light. Do not pressure yourself to be occupied with this for a long period of time, but do it in upright simplicity. Do not do so to add it to the register of your virtues, for then you would soon become discouraged. Instead, do it with the steadfast objective to use it as a means to receive more light. Read the Word of God, and supplicate and cry to the Lord who hears and sees you -- even if you do not behold Him. You nevertheless know Him by means of His Word. Particularly, pray for light, for light proceeds from Him alone. He can open the understanding with one word so that you will understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). He promises to give light and wisdom to those who pray to Him for it (James 1:5). And that which He is able and willing to do, He also will do, and you will yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. One day you will behold His face in righteousness

and then you will be satisfied. Amen.

----- 1 Dutch: “redelooze rede.”

103. Chapter 98: Spiritual Deadness

----- CHAPTER NINETY-EIGHT -----

Spiritual Deadness[Note: The Dutch word is “dodigheid,” which refers to a deathlike state of insensibility, rather than the state of death.]

Believers are subject to many changes in all aspects of spiritual life. This is also true in respect to a lively or lifeless spiritual frame. By nature, man is entirely dead and estranged from divine life. He has a heart of stone, and at the very best has a stony heart which is not capable of bearing fruit. Some harden their heart and render it more insensitive than was previously the case. By continually heaping sin upon sin and going contrary to their conscience, they sear, so to speak, their conscience with a hot iron, and cause their heart, now having become fully calloused, to be immovable. In regeneration God removes that heart of stone and grants a heart of flesh in its stead, making it both tender and sensitive. As spiritual life, however, can at times be feeble, likewise there can be but a small measure of spiritual sensitivity in the beginning of spiritual life. One will then not be troubled about many of his secret faults, and there will be but little grief about the absence of great spiritual blessings. Thus, when comparing an immature Christian with a mature Christian, one would think that the immature Christian is in a lifeless condition, whereas comparatively speaking they (when considering their level of maturity) are more lively than mature Christians at certain occasions. For those who have made some progress in spiritual life do backslide in regard to their liveliness, and at times become subject to deadness. Even the most eminent Christian sometimes experiences this for a brief season. It can be that at the outset of his prayer he is in an entirely dead frame -- insensitive and without inner motions. As he perseveres, however, he regains his prior liveliness. It can also be, after beginning in a lively manner, that toward the middle or the end he is overcome by such a pervasive deadness that he must desist. This can also take place in regard to the Lord's Supper and other circumstances. Occasionally deadness will prevail for a long time, however, and become the habitual disposition of the soul. It is this disposition that we wish to discuss here. Five matters will be discussed: 1) the fact that believers do come into such a condition of deadness; 2) its causes; 3) its nature and consequences; 4) a word of encouragement for those who are in such a condition; and 5) some guidance relative to this issue.

Believers Do Experience Deadness That believers do come into such a condition is evident:

(1) From specific passages in which this condition is identified by various terms, such as:

- (i) hardening: “O Lord, why hast Thou ... hardened our heart from Thy fear?” (Isaiah 63:17); “Have ye your heart yet hardened?” (Mark 8:17);
- (ii) slumber: “I sleep, but my heart waketh” (Song of Solomon 5:2); “They all slumbered and slept” (Matthew 25:5);

(iii) heartlessness: "... therefore my heart faileth me" (Psalms 40:12); "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart" (Hosea 7:11);

(iv) barrenness: "My heart is smitten, and withered like grass" (Psalms 102:4);

(v) deadness: "I am as a man that hath no strength: free among the dead" (Psalms 88:4-6).

(2) From the prayer of saints for liveliness: "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word" (Psalms 119:25).

(3) From warnings relative to this: "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

(4) From exhortations: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14).

Add to this the experiences of so many of the godly concerning whom you have either read or heard. From all of this you can perceive that no one should consider it strange when he also comes into this condition. So many of God's children have experienced this, as it is God's way to lead His children by way of deadness to a lively condition. Its Causes

There are various causes for this. First, deadness sometimes issues forth from the indwelling corruption of the residual old nature. There is much of the stony heart that still resides in the regenerate, and the old nature is averse to spiritual life and its activity. The regenerated man subdues this and proceeds with his activity. However, at times a man's dead nature will again assert itself, and bring spiritual life into bondage. It will pervade all the faculties of the soul and overwhelm the soul with its deadly stench. And thus both life and liveliness rapidly lose ground and are weakened as far as their disposition is concerned. Wherever spiritual life declines, deadness will increase.

Secondly, when we do not rightly value spiritual life -- however feeble it may be -- nor cherish it, but yield to lusts; when we do not give proper attention to lesser sins; when we fall from the one sin into the other; and when we frequently commit the same sin so that we become accustomed to it, our conscience will then become more insensitive, and that insensitivity will expand more and more. Furthermore, if more blatant sins are committed by which the conscience is ravaged, deep wounds will be inflicted upon the soul which will cause her to be mortally ill -- particularly when the Lord withholds His gracious influences because of these sins. All of this cannot but engender deadness, which frequently is not noticed until we have come so far that we have lost our strength to recover and we become sensible of our insensitivity.

Thirdly, unbelief concerning our spiritual state causes despondency, despondency listlessness, and listlessness discouragement. By these steps we arrive at deadness. We often actively stimulate unbelief and oppose faith. We advance every argument to come to the conclusion that we are without grace, acting as if we had then gained a victory. We then neglect to receive Christ in all simplicity and to entrust our soul and salvation to Him. Since faith is the means whereby one lives spiritually, one shall most certainly be overcome with deadness if faith, instead of being exercised, is suppressed.

Fourthly, erroneous ideas concerning spiritual life are very conducive to bring about deadness. Some are not aware of the fact that spiritual life consists in the enjoyment of union with God through Christ, and that it manifests itself in the conscious yearning of the heart after God, in being united with His will, and in conducting ourselves as being in the presence of God. Instead, such only take notice of the emotions and the sensible motions within, and the clear revelations of God to the soul. They consider only this to be the manifestation of life. If they do not perceive this -- which will very frequently be the case -- they then imagine themselves to be dead (or at the very best suffer from deadness), whereas it is possible that neither of the two is the case. However, the cherishing of such thoughts will indeed cause them to come into a state of deadness.

Fifthly, deadness is frequently caused by neglecting to acquaint ourselves with God and continually staying near to Him as being the only delight of our soul -- by the neglect of or a casual observance of our scheduled devotional times, doing so more to satisfy the conscience, than to exercise fellowship with God and to strive for increase in spiritual life. Also a spiritless ministry contributes to this in no small measure. Such a ministry leads us astray more than leading us further; it leads to the espousal of error. It can also be due to a lack of direction from and having no fellowship with, the godly. When glowing coals are joined together, they will show forth a lively glow. Upon being separated from each other, however, they will be extinguished and will find themselves in the midst of ashes. This is also true here. Someone who has a melancholy and despondent disposition will also be very vulnerable to spiritual deadness. This will also occur when we are too busy and have too many temporal concerns in either our family or vocation. This will be true when we are overwhelmed by an enduring cross; when we cleave too much to the creature, the godly, ministers, and the goods of this world; or when we are too prosperous in this world.

Sixthly, it pleases the Lord, who is sovereign and holy in all His ways, sometimes to withdraw the normal influences of His Holy Spirit whereby we are made lively. He never engenders hardness of heart, as this would be contrary to His holiness, and He never removes the propensity of spiritual life. He does withhold His operations, however, leaving a person, so to speak, to fend for himself, although He secretly preserves and sustains spiritual life. Furthermore, He gives the enemies within and without free reign to assault spiritual life. He then brings a person in such circumstances that his life is besieged round about, loses its vigor, and the residual hardness of the heart gains the upper hand. Its Nature and Consequences The nature and consequences of deadness are as follows:

(1) Its nature pertains to spiritual matters. We can be in a lively frame, perform our calling in a lively manner, interact with people, and be busy with all manner of temporal affairs -- and yet be dead and insensitive to spiritual matters.

(2) Such deadness and insensitivity are not a total deprivation of spiritual life and feeling, for spiritual life will permanently remain in believers. Rather, it is a partial deadness, and that in respect to both measure and time. The one may recede to a lower level than the other, and the same person may at one time be more lifeless than at other times. Yes, there can even be brief intermissions in which someone, who generally suffers from deadness, can be very tender, sensible, and lively, and is thus of the opinion that he has been delivered from it. It is, however, but a ray of sunlight on a dark and cloudy day in order that he may be supported for that which he must still endure.

(3) This deadness does not consist in an absence of sensible emotions, but in the coldness and lethargy of the intelligent will. The person who suffers from deadness retains his spiritual knowledge; he perceives spiritual matters in their essential nature -- however, from afar. He wishes to be lively and sensible, but that is then nearly all. As long as someone is able to exercise his intelligent will with composure, he ought not to complain about deadness. Even though there is not a sensible involvement of the affections, his activity may nevertheless be of a more spiritual nature than when his affections functioned in a much more feeling manner. If, however, his acquaintance with spiritual matters does not stir up love in his heart; if the heart closes up when he either thinks of spiritual matters or decides to practice them; if he is listless and lethargic in the performance of a duty (or consequently neglects it); if everything is but as a daydream and, so to speak, but a mental image; and if this is not only true for a short season, but rather is a long and prevailing tendency; if he thus has forgotten all that is good, there only being left a sensitivity about his insensitivity, and a spending of his days in a languishing frame -- that constitutes deadness and insensitivity.

Fourthly, let us consider the consequences of deadness. Those who previously had a tender heart; who were able to weep sweet tears before the countenance of God either due to love, a yearning within, the missing of God's lovely countenance, or their corruptions, have now a cold heart. The eye cannot shed one tear. The heart cannot bring forth one feeling sigh; instead, everything is, so to speak, of stone. They who previously could live only in the friendly presence of the Lord are now roaming about far from what was their life and love. When they come to the Word of God, which previously was so lively and efficacious, it appears to be but a dead letter. The promises do not encourage, and the threats do not trouble them. The rebukes only make them harder, and the exhortations do not move them. Under the ministry of the Word they are not attentive, and their thoughts flit about from one thing to the next -- yes, focus even purposely upon some vain thing near at hand. Whatever they hear does not penetrate their heart, and they leave church as they came -- yes, even worse than when they came. If they set themselves to pray (which previously was a delight), they collapse as a wet rag. There is neither reverence before God nor humility toward Him. Or else they will arise and depart, as they cannot utter a word. Or it can be that some matters are brought forth void of any earnestness or longing to attain them, doing so more intellectually than with the heart. It seems as if heaven is no longer desirable, damnation no longer deters, and the matters of inner peace, comfort, love, a watching over their souls, sin, and virtue no longer have any effect upon them. The company of those godly persons who are lively is a burden to them, and love for the godly has grown cold. They want to be alone and avoid company. They only want to be with those who are also in a state of deadness, so that by each other's wretched complaints they even increase their deadness. Not only is there no desire for the Lord's Supper, but they are fearful of it. They either abstain, or, by much wrestling of the conscience, are brought that far that they are resolved to attend. They are not able to prepare themselves, even though the greatest inner stirrings will occur around this time. Hardly any hunger or thirst is to be detected. When they receive the Lord Jesus by faith -- yes, surrender themselves -- they do not believe that they have been received by Him. Upon having attended the holy table, the fruit will be that they frequently think that they have eaten and drunk damnation unto themselves. If they have been somewhat enlivened during either the preparation or reflection, they readily return to a barren and dead frame. They hardly find delight in anything, except their insensitivity. They are as those who become faint and at that time would rather wish that they be

left alone. The means which are used either to prevent further fainting or to revive them cause them to grieve. They also do not react very well to being aroused out of that sleep. They do not believe that restoration is to be expected for them. They deem themselves not to have been elected, to be without either life or grace, and to be subject to the wrath of God. They believe that they will perish forever. This closes up their heart even more, even though there is apprehension and fear. In one word, it is a deplorable condition -- a condition which is even more wretched since all the means of grace are ineffective for them, and all the help of men is vain. However, the Lord knows, secretly sustains, and will once more revive them.

Encouragement for Those Who Suffer from Deadness Fifthly, we shall encourage those who suffer from such deadness.

Even though all the means are ineffectual due to their lack of strength; and even though those who are in a dead frame have a secret aversion for all comfort and encouragement (as a sick person for medicine), the Lord nevertheless uses means when He is pleased to revive a person suffering from deadness. Furthermore, there is yet a desire in such a person to be restored if there were, somehow, counsel and hope for him. The most effective method is to show him that being in such a condition is not a sign of being without grace, and that marks of grace are also to be detected in that condition.

First, to that end it ought to be known that the Lord permits many of His dear children to come into this condition. Those whom He wishes to establish most and use to the benefit of others are made subject to the severest trials and led by Him into this condition. He does this to make known to them what they are and what their ability amounts to when the Lord withdraws His Spirit; thus He will always keep them small and humble. He does this so that they may esteem grace all the more, and not be too dependent upon feelings. Rather, He wants them to live by faith, deem the Word of God more precious, and rest upon it with more confidence. He wants to teach them not to judge others who come into such a condition, but conduct themselves wisely toward those who are in such misery by supporting them. Therefore, do not consider it to be strange when you come into such a condition, but rather that it is the Lord's way, and that He will cause it to be to your best advantage.

Secondly, if you come before the Lord with composure, being fearful of ungratefully denying received grace (which is a blot upon the goodness of God), you will yet be able to perceive that you have grace. Therefore, consider the following matters together, and you will be able to come to a conclusion about yourself.

(1) Reflect for a moment upon former days. Consider your previous convictions, sensitivity, earnestness, tears, and supplications; your looking unto and receiving of the Lord Jesus, sorrow over sin, sweet enjoyment of the Word of God, tender walk before the Lord -- and perhaps also your peace, joy, and assurance. You know indeed that you have enjoyed all these things prior to this, and you know furthermore that all God's callings and gifts are without repentance. Even if you are not able to reflect upon these matters in as lively a manner as when you previously enjoyed them, you know nevertheless that all these things cannot proceed from nature and that therefore they are the operations of the Spirit. You would believe with all your heart that they in whom these matters are to be found in truth are in a state of grace.

(2) And regarding the present, are you not acquainted with the Lord as He reveals Himself in the work of redemption? Are you not acquainted with the Lord Jesus in the execution of His suretyship? Are you not acquainted with the frame of a gracious person; that is, the light he receives, the functioning of his faith, his aversion for sin, his love for God, his godly walk before God's countenance, and his desire to serve God in a manner pleasing to Him? Are you not acquainted with all this, approving of and esteeming it -- and are you not desirous to be thus? When you compare natural men at their best, and gracious persons at their worst, do you not know this difference to be as great as day and night? Does not your heart go out after the little ones in grace, and does not your soul have an aversion for natural men -- even when they are at their very best? Judge now whether someone can perceive of this approvingly in the absence of spiritual light.

(3) Even if your inner motions are presently sluggish, lethargic, and barren, are they nevertheless not there -- namely, displeasure about your condition, and a desire to be lively in all spiritual exercises, and for the benefits of the covenant of grace? Are you not sensitive to your insensitivity -- not primarily because you fear judgment, but because you are so barren and dead in spiritual things? Is not your deadness your greatest burden? What is able to comfort your soul -- something temporal, or is it only God in Christ? Wherever there is feeling, there is life. Since you are therefore sensitive to your spiritual deadness, is not this then an indication that you have life? We are not examining you as to how strong and lively all this is, but rather as to the genuineness of it all.

(4) Are you entirely void of the activities and exercises of godliness, or are there yet sighs, prayers, and a fleeing to Jesus for reconciliation and power to be invigorated again? Do you yet have intermittent seasons when you are sensitive and utter heartfelt prayers with strong crying and tears? If you have to respond in the affirmative, albeit restlessly, due to the small measure, and this liveliness readily disappears, you must nevertheless conclude that there is life. When a sick person still moves his hand and head, yet breathes, and still has a pulse, then he is yet alive. Such is also the case here. Consider all this together and draw the conclusion from this that you possess life; and if you possess life, have courage, for it will not perish. The Lord will by renewal make you lively. A Final Directive for Those Who Suffer from Spiritual Darkness The sixth directive for those who are in a dead frame is that restoration is not to be accomplished by might or power. Such a person is also not capable of exerting himself. Therefore, I can only suggest such matters which are able to enliven the heart by a calm reflection and meditation of the heart.

First, you are acquainted with the sorrowful condition of lifeless insensitivity. You still can remember and bring before you a lively and active frame, and it is thus not necessary for me to deter you by the one and to stir you up by the other. I only counsel you to consider both conditions quietly. As you focus upon this, permit it to stir your heart; that is, as much as it pleases the Lord. You are but to observe.

Secondly, listen to the knocking and arousing voice of the Lord Jesus and reflect upon the words of the bride: "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled: for My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night." She, being in no condition to arise, says, "My beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him. ... My soul failed when He spake" Song of Solomon 5:2; Song of Solomon 5:4; Song of Solomon 5:6. This means that the

reflection upon His friendly invitation, to which I did not respond, causes me to faint, considering the trouble I experienced due to my sluggishness and His departure. Subsequently she begins to seek. Imagine within yourself that the Lord Jesus were saying to you, "My child, I have loved you with an everlasting love. I love you and shall love you; I have become Surety for you, have drawn you out of the world, and shall keep you. I shall take you to Myself in felicity, and therefore neither turn away from Me, remain discouraged, nor respond in unbelief. I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals (Jeremiah 2:2). I remember the initial manifestation of My love and kindness toward you at the outset of your conversion. This motivates Me to stir you up again. You ought also to remember this My first love and acknowledge that those first motions, which still refresh you when you think upon them, were wrought in you by Me out of love. I am the same, and therefore, awake and arise My fair one." I repeat, take the time to reflect upon this attentively and without resisting in unbelief; let this stir up your soul as much as the Lord will permit.

Thirdly, esteem very highly the least stirring of the Holy Spirit, as well as those stirrings you have enjoyed previously. Do not strive against it; it will cause such stirring to cease. Rather, acknowledge that this has been true grace, for that will invigorate this spiritual motion. It can indeed not harm you if you acknowledge this to be grace, for it leads you to the Lord. Also highly esteem the least motions which you still detect daily. Consider them to be the supporting and stirring workings of the Spirit, as well as the activity of spiritual life which is suppressed within you and wishes to break through. Thank the Lord for it. You were the unwilling one; otherwise you would have had these stirrings, and would still have them. Quietly yield to them as much as the Lord enables you to.

Fourthly, persevere in the use of the means, even if you do not benefit from them at all; it will not be fruitless. Even if you do not notice this, it still sustains spiritual life, and it occasionally begets sweet and sensitive motions, keeps you near to the Lord, and will yet be a means to your restoration. Listen, read, pray, sing, and have discussions, doing so as one who is powerless and entirely destitute, and as a means which the Lord has sanctified to work thereby. Even if you find this to be difficult, and the flesh would prefer to perpetuate the slumber, pull yourself together and engage yourself in this manner. Permit the Lord to work by means of these things and you will experience that the Lord will make His promises true to you. He will make you glad according to the days wherein you have been afflicted, and the years wherein you have seen evil. And your doxology will be, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Psalms 40:1).

104. Chapter 99: The Perseverance of the Saints

----- CHAPTER NINETY-NINE ----- The Perseverance of the Saints

Having considered sanctification, growth in grace, and its decline due to spiritual maladies, it is necessary that we add to this a consideration of the perseverance of the saints in grace. When considering this from God's side, it is called a keeping (terein) John 17:15, phulassein John 17:12, phrourein 1 Peter 1:5, sterizein, that is, to strengthen 2 Timothy 3:3, and bebaion, that is, to confirm (1 Corinthians 1:8). When considering this from the side of believers, it is denominated, hupomone, that is, to continue Romans 2:7, and steadfastness (Luke 8:15). In considering this matter, four things are to be noted: 1) in whom something is preserved, 2) what is preserved in them, 3) the cause and means whereby preservation occurs, and 4) its purpose.

Believers are the Objects of Divine Preservation

First, believers are the persons who are preserved; and it is in them that something is preserved. God maintains and preserves everything He has created. God also preserves good angels in their confirmed state -- they being referred to as the elect (1 Timothy 5:21). Our reference here is, however, to the preservation of the elect, the regenerate, the true believers -- viewing them as being in the church militant upon earth and as being under assault by their enemies: the devil, the world, and the flesh. Since the believer's renewal is but in part, he sins daily. These sins, strictly speaking, are worthy of reprobation, and believers, when left to themselves, do not have sufficient strength to preserve themselves, their faith, or their spiritual life. They would succumb to the assault of the enemy. Nevertheless, they are preserved, but by a strength which comes from without. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:5); "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down" (Psalms 37:24). By this power spiritual life and faith, bestowed upon them by the Spirit of God in regeneration, are preserved. It can be that spiritual life is so besieged by opposition and becomes so weak, that for a season it only manifests itself by a looking on high, a sigh, an inclination toward God, or an affection for God. Yes, a believer can faint, so to speak, so that spiritual life does not manifest itself at all for a season. However, spiritual life in its essence that is, union with Christ, will remain. It will never disappear. "Whosoever is born of God ... his seed remaineth in him" (1 John 3:9). The only cause of their steadfastness is the omnipotent and faithful God. That God is able to preserve spiritual life in them is a certainty for all. Of His willingness to preserve them, the Lord Jesus assures us: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39). That He will do so, is evident from the promises: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation" (Hebrews 6:17-18). Peter states that God in actuality does so: "Who are kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5).

Means Employed by God for Preservation

Just as the Lord works all things in the realm of nature by way of means, God likewise uses means in the work of grace. He also does so in preserving His saints. This is not to suggest that there is efficacy in the means or in the use of those means by believers. Rather, both the use of the means and the outcome of their use are dependent upon the Lord alone. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:13); "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). The means God uses for the preservation of His own are, among others:

(1) Instruction and direction by means of the Word: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:9;Psalms 119:105);

(2) Comforting and quickening promises: "This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy word hath quickened me. Unless Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction" (Psalms 119:50;Psalms 119:92).

(3) Stirring exhortations: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22); "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41).

(4) Admonishing reproofs: "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (Titus 1:13); "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3); "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Romans 8:13).

(5) The rod of chastisement: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes" (Psalms 119:71); "... He (chastens us) for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness ... afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:10-11).

(6) Sacramental sealing: "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4); "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

(7) The use of the keys of the kingdom when they grievously depart from the way. "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5). The purpose for which believers are preserved is salvation itself. "Moreover whom He did predestinate ... them He also glorified" (Romans 8:30); "Who are kept by the power of God ... unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:5). God's ultimate objective is the manifestation of His goodness, longsuffering, faithfulness, immutability, wisdom, and power. "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (2 Thessalonians 1:10). From that which has been said it is evident that the perseverance of the saints is a gracious and powerful operation of God whereby He preserves the spiritual life and faith in the truly converted in such a fashion that it can neither self-destruct, nor be extinguished or removed by their enemies: the devil, the world, and the flesh. Instead, they will most certainly attain to eternal felicity.

Just as other truths have always had and still have their opponents, also this doctrine, so full of comfort, has its opponents. Yes, all parties within the church which to a greater or lesser degree deviate from the truth -- such as Papists, Socinians, Anabaptists, Arminians, and even Lutherans

-- are opposed in one way or the other to the perseverance of the saints.

Question: Can those who are truly regenerate and are true believers apostatize as far as spiritual life and faith are concerned, and perish?

Answer: All other sects resolutely answer in the affirmative. The Lutherans confess that true believers can completely lose spiritual life and faith; however, God will restore them from this state of death and most certainly save them. They hold to a full apostasy, but not a final apostasy. The others hold to a full and final apostasy of the saints. We reject both the full and final apostasy of the saints, and confess that spiritual life in its essence, even though its manifestation may for a season be impeded to a greater or lesser degree, always remains in believers, and that they will most certainly be led to the state of felicity.

Proof #1: The Saints' Perseverance Proven from Scripture We derive this proof from specific texts.

A. "Though he (the righteous or godly man) fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand" (Psalms 37:24). A godly man is here referred to as falling and sinning, as he still offends daily in many things. If he were to be cast away, it would have to be for the sake of his sins. The text says, however, that he will not be cast away for that reason. The reason is then added: It is not that he will restore himself and arise, but because the Lord sustains him and keeps him from falling. He will thus most certainly remain standing.

Evasive Argument: The text speaks of a falling due to temporal trials, and not of a falling into sin. Not to be cast down refers to a not perishing in these afflictions.

Answer (1) The godly generally have more afflictions than the ungodly, and they do indeed perish in them. "The righteous perisheth" (Isaiah 57:1). Thus, the promise, in the absolute sense of the word, cannot primarily be applicable to the temporal.

(2) If it were so that the godly would always be, and remain, blessed in a temporal sense, they would certainly also persevere in godliness. That which brings forth a positive effect thereby becomes more positive itself.

(3) And if the reference here is to a falling into wretched circumstances, then this is a powerful proof for perseverance, for the psalmist confirms what Paul writes: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation ...? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God" Romans 8:35; Romans 8:38-39.

(4) The psalmist speaks in this psalm of the exercise of godliness and that the Lord will bring forth their righteousness as the light (vss. 3-6), while declaring in verse 24 that they are yet imperfect and do stumble and fall. Nevertheless, they will not be cast away, because the Lord upholds them.

B. "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). This chapter makes reference to a twofold violence inflicted upon the elect: persecution and deception. However, it indicates the impossibility of the elect being drawn away and deceived, and thus their spiritual state is sure.

Evasive Argument #1: "Impossible" here implies "difficult" (cf. Matthew 19:26; Matthew 26:39; Acts 20:16; Romans 12:18).

Answer: "Impossible" never means "difficult" -- also not in the quoted texts.

Evasive Argument #2: This text speaks of what false prophets are not able to do, but not what they themselves are able to do.

Answer (1) Believers are then most certainly set free from all external influences. All this then cannot have as its result, that with their intellect, will, and in very deed they would relinquish Christ, the faith, and godliness -- and thus that they would apostatize from all these. It is natural for man's desires to have an object which is external to them, and it is this object which sets desires in motion. Since there is then nothing from without which can set the desires of believers in motion and cause them to fall out of grace, they are thus in a state which is certain and sure.

(2) The text says that eternal election is the foundation of their spiritual state, making it impossible for them to be deceived unto apostasy. It is therefore an impossibility from every perspective -- for others as well as for themselves.

Evasive Argument #3: Christ speaks of the work of false prophets and what their objective would be -- not concerning the outcome; that is, whether or not the elect will be deceived thereby. Thus, the issue of certainty or uncertainty is not discussed here.

Answer: This flatly contradicts the text. It speaks of the result of this deception in respect to the elect, stating that their apostasy is impossible. It is therefore also recorded as a parenthetical argument.

Evasive Argument #4: This text speaks of some eminent Christians, and not of all Christians.

Answer (1) The text makes no exception, but speaks of the elect, which includes them all.

(2) There are thus some who cannot be deceived.

(3) It is not the strength or weakness of believers which is here defined as the foundation for this certainty, but rather election.

Evasive Argument #5: The elect can be deceived prior to their conversion, and thus also after their conversion.

Answer: No one is deceived prior to conversion, for one is then in sin, proceeding from sin to sin as others do.

Then there is nothing good within him which needs to be preserved. After conversion believers have both spirit and life, however, and preservation is predicated upon that life -- and that life will not be able to be removed.

Evasive Argument #6: The elect cannot be deceived; that is, upon condition that they perform their duty and persevere in faith and godliness.

Answer (1) No condition is mentioned here. The promise pertains to being preserved in faith itself.

(2) That is as much as to say: They cannot be deceived when they are not deceived, and they will persevere in faith, hope, and love when they persevere. Likewise, a man will not die when he does not die. This is nonsense.

C. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" Romans 8:35; Romans 8:38-39. This text speaks of the elect, stating that neither a creature, nor any event precipitated by them, will be able to remove the love which they have toward Christ and God, and which God and Christ have toward them.

Evasive Argument #7: Paul speaks of tribulations and not of sin. He does not say that sins are not able to separate believers from the love God has toward them and make them subject to the hatred of God. Rather, it states that tribulations are not capable of doing this.

Answer (1) Paul states that all tribulations are not able to take away the love they have toward God; that is, they cannot lead them to apostasy. That the apostle is speaking of the love of believers toward God is evident from the fact that these tribulations are against the godly which could cause them to succumb in faith, hope, and love, and thus separate them from God. These tribulations do not pertain to God Himself, and thus the thought cannot be entertained here that God would thereby change in His love toward them. The apostle says in verse 37 that believers in all their tribulations will be more than conquerors; thus there is not even a remote possibility that tribulations would separate them from their love toward Christ. The apostle therefore refers here to sins, declaring that all tribulations cannot cause believers to sin unto death -- which a forsaking of the love of God would be.

(2) If one understands the love of God here to refer to the love He has for His elect, and if it is here stated that no tribulations can remove the love of God toward His elect and change it into hatred, then this could only occur if, by reason of these tribulations, they would fall into sin, for there is nothing that removes God's love except sin. Since God's love for His elect cannot be removed, however, tribulations cannot bring believers to such a condition and to such a sin.

(3) No matter how one may view the love of God, the text says that this love remains immutable, and that all that is in heaven and earth cannot change that love.

D. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). The apostle wrote to the congregation (where the wicked are always intermingled with the upright) to warn the members that they are not to deceive themselves by imagining that they will be saved anyway, even if they yield to sin. Instead, the truly regenerate neither sin nor can sin, for the seed of God is in them and will remain in them, and they are born of God. Thus, they who are born of God are in a state which is both certain and immutable in respect to the spiritual life which is in them and remains in them. This does not mean that they neither offend nor are able to offend, for the apostles confirm this to be so (cf. 1 John 1:8; James 3:2). Rather, "to sin" here refers to "living in sin," that is, to find delight in and to relish sin. This is true for the ungodly, concerning whom he says in verse 8, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." This refers to being under the dominion of sin, and such cannot be true for a regenerate

person. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Thus, the apostle strongly argues here for the perseverance of believers when he says that 1) the believer "doth not commit sin," 2) "his seed remaineth in him," 3) "he cannot sin," and 4) he cannot sin "because he is born of God." The papists, Arminians, and Lutherans each have a different response to this.

Evasive Argument #1: The Papists respond to this, saying that those who are born of God cannot sin insofar as they are born of God, but that they can yet fully and completely fall into sin when they neglect and do not preserve the seed of God which is in them.

Answer: If one understands the words "insofar as they are born of God" to refer to the regenerate part of the believer, then this evasive argument is not against us, but rather in our favor, for no sin can proceed from the regenerate man. If one understands "insofar as" to refer to a condition -- namely, if they persevere -- then this is contrary to the text and contradicts the matter itself. It is contrary to the text, for there is not the least indication of a condition. It is not stated here: "They cannot sin if they retain the seed of God and if they continue to be born of God." Instead, it is written: "... because the seed of God remains in them and because they are born of God." Here we have an absolute proposition: They do not sin and they cannot sin. This proposition is confirmed by arguments which are both absolute and established: for the seed of God remains in him, for he is born of God. It is also self-contradictory, for it is nonsense to say that he cannot sin if he does not sin.

Evasive Argument #2: The Arminians claim that this text only intends to say that to sin is contrary to the inclination and habit of the truly regenerate; they have an aversion for sin. The phrase "to be born of God" does not refer to a characteristic of true believers which would prevent them from sinning, but is identical to what is expressed in the words "not to commit sin," that is, to be conformed to God in their life. Furthermore, the remaining of God's seed in them is as much as to say that the seed of God is in them. Thus, the meaning of the text comes down to this: The propensity of grace cannot coexist with the propensity of sin, and when the propensity of sin prevails, the propensity of grace will be lost. It is therefore not the apostle's intent to say that believers cannot apostatize, for he says in Romans 6:14 that believers can also come under the dominion of sin and apostatize.

Answer (1) All these misinterpretations are obviously contrary to the text, and therefore we reject them as quickly as they are uttered. The apostle does not speak of an inclination, but rather of deeds -- of sin. He does not say that sin is contrary to their inclination and that they have an aversion for it, but that they neither sin nor are able to sin. This is not due to their aversion for it (which is a fact), but because the seed of God remains in them, they having been born of God.

(2) To be born of God expressly refers to a characteristic which has been brought forth in man by way of regeneration, for thereby he becomes a new creature 2 Corinthians 5:17, and thereby he becomes a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

(3) The verb "to remain" expresses more than simply "to be." It expresses a being steadfast and durable -- something that neither departs nor is removed, and something that endures to the end. A small child knows this to be so. It is to be observed in the following passages: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him" (John 1:32); "Abide in Me, and I in

you ... continue ye in My love" John 15:4;John 15:9.

(4) The apostle does not only say that the propensity of reigning sin cannot coexist with the propensity of grace, but says that wherever the seed of God (the propensity of grace) -- the new creature, being partaker of the divine nature -- is present, the propensity of sin cannot exist there, and thus he cannot sin.

(5) We deny strongly that true believers can become subject to reigning sins. The passage, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" 1 John 3:14, is no proof for this. The reference here is to the unconverted, and they are thereby distinguished from the truly converted who love the brethren. They who do not love the brethren are said to abide in death, and thus they had never been brought to life. We do indeed admit that true believers can fall into great sin; however, sin does not have dominion over them. There is and remains a warfare, and even if the regenerated man has been subdued for a season, he nevertheless renders no obedience to it as his lord. He will always reemerge and the seed of God will remain.

Evasive Argument #3: The Lutherans hold to full apostasy, but not to final apostasy. They say about this text that the believer's inability to sin means that he can neither yield to ungodliness nor find delight in living in sin to the extent and for the duration that the seed of God is in him. They say that the word "for" is not suggestive of the reason why he cannot sin, but is merely indicative of a restatement; it means "as much as and as long as the seed of God remains in him and he is born of God."

Answer (1) We admit that a regenerate person does not sin in the manner mentioned; that is, insofar as the seed of God is in him and he is born of God. For sin does not proceed from the spirit, but from the flesh (cf. Romans 7:1-25). It is also true that he does not sin as long as the seed of God remains in him and he is born of God. The apostle says, however, that the seed of God remains in him, will not spontaneously expire, and will never be removed from him. Thus, a regenerate person will never live under the dominion of sin.

(2) It is nonsense to maintain that he will not sin to the extent that the seed of God remains in him, and then quietly conclude from this that when it dissipates, he will sin. This would be as much as saying, "Fire heats insofar as it does not chill."

(3) The word "for" does not mean "and," but points to the cause why a regenerate person neither sins nor can sin. It thus remains an immovable truth that the regenerate cannot apostatize.

Proof #2: The Saints Persevere by Virtue of the Immutability of Eternal Election This proof we derive from the immutability of eternal election. This decree of the only wise and omnipotent God is immutable: "... that the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Romans 9:11); "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel ..." (Hebrews 6:17); "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19). Therefore the apostle connects glorification to eternal election with an unbreakable tie: "Moreover whom He did predestinate ... them He also glorified" (Romans 8:30). God neither will nor can change this decree due to His immutability. "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6); "... the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Man will not be able to annul God's counsel. He has not been chosen on the basis of any condition, but unconditionally -- in the absolute sense of the

word. The Lord will save him in a way in which He himself will lead him. No creature will be able to annihilate this decree. "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" (Isaiah 14:27). Since God wills and shall give salvation to His elect by an immutable, eternal decree, and will make them partakers of salvation in the way of faith and repentance, then those who have been called according to His purpose can neither become apostates as far as spiritual life and faith are concerned, nor perish. (Cf. chapter 6, vol. #1, p. 211.) Proof #3: The Saints Persevere by Virtue of Christ's Satisfaction, Intercession, and Preservation This proof we derive from the efficacy of Christ's satisfaction, intercession, and preservation.

(1) The satisfaction of Christ is perfect both in regard to original and actual sins -- all sins which are committed until the day of one's death. This is true for all His elect, and for them alone; it is not for others. There is absolutely no condition whereby it would be contingent upon man. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). By His satisfaction God is reconciled with His elect. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10). They are perfect in Christ Colossians 2:10, and the "righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is of eternal duration: "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14; cf. chapter 22).

(2) The intercession of Christ is efficacious and cannot be resisted, since it occurs by the efficacy of His satisfaction. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1). Therefore He said, "I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John 11:42). The Father promises to give what He demands: "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance" (Psalms 2:8). However, Christ demands preservation and salvation for His elect: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me. ... Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (John 17:11; John 17:24); "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). Since Christ prays for their preservation and salvation, and He is always heard, they cannot apostatize.

(3) Preservation by Christ is a certainty. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:27-29). They who hear Christ's voice and follow Him are His sheep. Hearing and following come naturally to sheep. Those sheep the Lord Jesus knows, He grants them eternal life, and they will not perish. No one either will or is able to pluck them out of the hands of Christ and the Father. Their spiritual state is thus certain and well-preserved, and they cannot fall away. It cannot be stated more clearly than this.

Evasive Argument: They will be preserved as long as they remain sheep.

Answer (1) Christ says that they will remain sheep. Those who once are sheep; that is, those to whom He grants eternal life and who will not perish, will remain sheep.

(2) Christ says that no one -- whoever he may be -- and therefore also they themselves will not be able to pluck them out of His hand. There is no condition here: If someone has become a sheep, his preservation is certain.

(3) Christ is the good Shepherd. He is not a good shepherd who only protects his sheep against the wolf and the thief, but does not protect his sheep when they of their own accord would wander away from the flock and go astray. Therefore, the faithful Shepherd Jesus will keep His sheep from all evil, for to that end -- that He would keep them and give them eternal life -- they have been given to Him by the Father: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39).

Consider all this together. Those for whom Christ has made full satisfaction, for whom He prays that they may be kept and may have eternal life, and whom He Himself powerfully preserves -- they cannot lose spiritual and eternal life, apostatize, or perish.

Proof #4: The Saints Persevere by Virtue of the Abiding Operation of the Holy Spirit This proof is derived from the operation of the Holy Spirit in believers.

(1) The Holy Spirit abides with them eternally. "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16).

(2) The Holy Spirit is the earnest of their salvation. "... in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:13-14); "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

(3) All the operations of the Holy Spirit in them are of a permanent nature. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29).

Evasive Argument: This text refers to the conversion of the Jews. Answer: This text refers to eternal felicity by virtue of the election of grace Romans 11:5, upon the manifestation of mercy (vs. 32). He is speaking of the gifts of grace which were bestowed upon the elect Jews. Whatever is permanent for the elect Jews is permanent for all the elect. From that which has been said we conclude the following: He in whom the Holy Spirit resides eternally, for whom the Holy Spirit is an earnest of eternal felicity, who has been sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption, and in whom the operations of the Holy Spirit are of an irrevocable and permanent nature, cannot apostatize, but will most certainly be saved. All this is most certainly true for believers, and thus they will most certainly be saved.

Proof #5: The Saints Persevere by Virtue of the Immutability of the Covenant of Grace This proof we derive from the immutability of the covenant. First, this is evident from the following passage: "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed" (Isaiah 54:10). Evasive Argument: This text pertains to the immutability of the covenant from God's side; God from His side will not break it. It does not follow from this, however, that believers will not break it from their side.

Answer (1) It is a covenant of grace in which God has promised to give and do all that was to be accomplished for His children. Thus, in regard to man, this promise is not conditional: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). It is therefore sufficient that the covenant is immutable from the side of God. It is therefore entirely

immutable, for the Lord Himself will cause them to walk upon the way in which He leads His own unto salvation.

(2) The covenant of grace is as steadfast as the covenant with Noah (Isaiah 54:9). This latter covenant cannot be changed by either man, sin, human will, or human might. Likewise, the covenant of grace cannot be changed, for it is said to be as steadfast as the covenant of Noah.

Secondly, the immutability of this covenant is also evident in the following texts: "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33); "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jeremiah 32:40). This covenant neither can nor will be broken. This is true from God's side, for He, who is the faithful One, promises this, and it is a purely gracious covenant which was not established upon any conditions. Man will also not break it, for the Lord has promised that He will prevent them from doing so, and cause them to do according to His will -- even though their conduct is not a condition. This covenant is not in force for some days or years; it is an eternal covenant, and therefore it will remain steadfast.

Evasive Argument #1: These texts relate to the restoration of the Jews in Canaan but not to eternal felicity.

Answer (1) Jeremiah 31:33 very clearly refers to the days of the New Testament, as is evident from (Hebrews 8:8).

(2) Even though Jeremiah 32:40 also pertains to the restoration of the church in Canaan, it nevertheless primarily relates to the spiritual and eternal benefits of the covenant of grace. Out of this issued forth the restoration of Canaan, since the Surety of the covenant had to be born in Canaan. There is but one covenant: the covenant of grace. To this, temporal blessings are appended as a means and way to bring the elect to the promised salvation.

Evasive Argument #2: This promise was given to the entire Jewish nation. Since it is known that they are not all saved, it cannot be a promise concerning perseverance.

Answer (1) All Jews were never restored to Canaan. By reason of the same argumentation we would then also be permitted to say that this promise does not pertain to the Jewish nation. This is absurd, however, as is the evasive argument itself.

(2) There is an express reference here to the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace: to have God as a God, to have the fear of God, not to depart from the Lord, and to have the law of the Lord written in the heart. Repeated mention is thus made of the benefits of the covenant and of their perseverance in it.

(3) When God makes promises to His church, these promises do not pertain to persons who merely "run along," but to true believers alone, who constitute the church. "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:6-8). Even if it is true that all Jews will not be saved, God's covenant with His church will nevertheless

abide -- whether it consists of Jews or Gentiles. It is one church which is steadfast and indestructible.

Evasive Argument #3: Here something is promised which had no prior existence. It can therefore not refer in any way to the perseverance of saints, since in our opinion perseverance has been part and parcel of believers from the very beginning.

Answer (1) This immutable covenant is in essence the same from the beginning unto the end of the world. There is, however, a difference in administration, and in that respect it is called new.

(2) God frequently promises the fulfillment of promises at a future date which he already had fulfilled in believers at an earlier date in order to further assure believers of a later date that He would also fulfill these promises for them. The repetition of promises is not a denial of promises made previously. It thus is and remains an immovable truth that believers cannot apostatize.

Objection #1: "Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while" (Matthew 13:21). It is thus evident that believers can apostatize.

Answer (1) All that is denominated as faith is not saving faith. Otherwise Agrippa would also have been a believer, for he believed the Holy Scriptures (Acts 26:27). Likewise, these temporal believers also had historical faith accompanied by a confession, but they did not have true saving faith. This is clearly to be observed in the contrasts made between true believers (the good earth) and the beaten path, as well as between the earth beneath the thorns and the good earth.

(2) Their heart was not right, they being represented by the stony ground. This heart of stone is removed from believers (Ezekiel 36:26).

(3) They were without root, whereas true believers are rooted in Christ (Colossians 2:7). (4) They bore no fruits, and thus their faith was a dead faith James 2:17, for believers bear manifold fruit Matthew 13:23, and their faith worketh by love (Galatians 5:6).

Objection #2: "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: ... If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered" (John 15:2; John 15:6). Here mention is made of branches which are in Christ, branches which due to their fruitlessness and not abiding in Christ, are cast out. True believers can therefore apostatize.

Answer (1) The congregation is the Lord's vineyard Isaiah 5:1-30. Many unconverted join the church and thus appear to be incorporated into Christ. We readily admit that such can fall out of this state and that they will be cast out. However, this does not relate to our point of contention.

(2) Those who are here said to be cast out were never true believers, for they bore no fruit and therefore their faith was dead.

(3) This is a parable and we must not make all details applicable at will. Rather, our focus must only be on the objective, and the objective is very clear. It is an exhortation to believers to be fruitful, and a warning to everyone not to be satisfied with only the external relationship to the church and a mere confession of Christ. For all who bear no fruit will be eliminated -- here from the church, and hereafter from heaven.

(4) It does not say that such persons were ever truly in Christ; rather, it speaks of those who are in Him but bear no fruit, as is true for all the unconverted who never bear fruit in Christ and who never have been in Christ. The fact that they do not abide in Him is proof that they have never been in Him and have never been true believers. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us" (1 John 2:19).

Objection #3: "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (1 Timothy 1:19). It is thus evident that they who have faith and a good conscience can lose them and in that respect can become apostate.

Answer: The apostle exhorts Timothy to remain steadfast and to adhere to the true doctrine of faith and of a good conscience. True doctrine is here referred to as faith, which is frequently the case. This is to be observed in the following passages: "Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1); "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" Jude 1:3; "Who ... overthrow the faith of some" (2 Timothy 2:18). Many others -- also Hymenaeus and Alexander -- had this faith, this true doctrine of faith, in common with Timothy. However, they did not have that true saving faith in Christ unto justification and sanctification which Timothy possessed. Otherwise they would have persevered in it (1 John 2:19). Timothy had a good conscience which had been cleansed in the blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:14). Such a good conscience they did not have, even though they could have had a natural sincerity, conducting themselves according to their conscience without hypocrisy -- as was true of Paul prior to his conversion (Acts 23:1). Such a faith and such a good conscience the unconverted can readily cast away, reject, and let go if it happens to be in their interest. Furthermore, relative to themselves they are capable of spurning true saving faith and a good conscience by the blood and Spirit of Christ, so that they do not become partakers of them -- just as the Jews rejected the gospel (Acts 13:46). Paul delivered those who had fallen away from the doctrine of faith and from having an upright conscience to Satan as a means to their conversion -- as he did with the incestuous person (1 Corinthians 5:5). It is thus evident that we do not have a shred of evidence here for the apostasy of the saints.

Objection #4: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6). All these things are applicable to none other but truly converted people and true believers. Such are able to apostatize and crucify the Son of God afresh. It will then be impossible for them to come again to repentance.

Answer (1) Paul uses conditional language here: "... if ...". A condition does not establish anything as a fact, however, nor does it suggest that it will be thus and can transpire as such. Paul speaks in this fashion: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Such conditional propositions are but urgent warnings and exhortations to refrain from sin.

(2) It is very evident that Paul is speaking of such who have never been converted and who in their heart were without virtue. For as he continues to speak of such, he says, "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is

dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." Apostates are like soil which is not good and brings forth thorns and thistles. Our point of contention does not relate to them and thus this text is not contrary to our view.

(3) All those things mentioned are no marks of true regeneration and faith. They can very well be, and frequently are, present in the unconverted. An unconverted person can be illuminated to the extent that he understands the truths of the gospel. Balaam said, "He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty ... having his eyes open" (Numbers 24:4). He whose eyes have been enlightened can taste of the heavenly gift (Hebrews 6:4). Paul recounts such gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. The unconverted can also find delight in tasting such gifts. To receive revelations concerning future things, wisdom, gifts to heal the sick, and the ability to speak, understand, and interpret various languages are delightful things, even for the flesh. These gifts are heavenly and are sent from heaven by the Holy Spirit, for "all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:11). In this respect also the unconverted become partakers of the Holy Spirit. The unconverted also taste at times "the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come." All knowledge of matters of which one had no prior knowledge is delightful. This is particularly true if one may be acquainted with the glorious state of the children of God, the benefits of the covenant of grace, redemption in Christ, the standing at the right hand of Christ in the last judgment, and being taken into eternal glory. To taste these blessings by way of reflection is to have delight and sweetness in them. This is true for many unconverted persons. Temporal believers received the Word with joy Luke 8:13, and Herod heard John gladly (Mark 6:20). Thus, all these matters can very well be known by unconverted persons -- and frequently are. It is an entirely different matter to be a partaker of the Holy Spirit unto regeneration, faith, hope, and love; and to be assured of being a partaker of all the benefits of the covenant of grace, and to rejoice and delight in the hope of glory, of which some believers do have some foretaste. This was, however, not the portion of those of whom the apostle speaks here.

(4) The words "to renew them again unto repentance" do not imply that they were ever truly converted. Rather, they imply that it is impossible to lead such to true repentance because they have been hardened. Furthermore, God generally withholds His grace from such, for otherwise it would not be impossible with God. "To renew" does not imply that something will be restored to its former condition; that is, to bring something which is old and dilapidated into a better condition. Rather it implies to bring something into a condition which is superior to its previous condition. Such is the meaning in the following passages: "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2); "He saved us by ... renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). The word "again" also does not imply that something will be restored to its previous condition, but implies a change to a condition in which it previously was not. The same word *palin* is used for the initial translation of a person from spiritual death to spiritual life -- regeneration. This is to be observed in the following passages: "He saved us, by the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5); "... that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration" (Matthew 19:28).

(5) If one insists that "to renew again to repentance" means restoration into the previous state, then it means restoration into the state of a temporal believer. For repentance is not always indicative of regeneration, but can also signify only an external change. "The men of Nineveh ... repented at the preaching of Jonas" (Matthew 12:41).

Objection #5: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29). Such as have been sanctified by the blood of Christ do tread under foot the Son of God and do despite unto the Spirit of grace.

Answer (1) Paul speaks conditionally, from which nothing else can be concluded but that it is an exhortation.

(2) If one determines that such indeed occurs, then the entire strength of the argument appears to be in the words "to be sanctified by the blood of Christ," as if "to sanctify" only signifies true sanctification by the Holy Spirit, since it also signifies separation unto holy usage, and an external sanctification by an external entrance into the covenant. "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6); "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Corinthians 7:14). Before one can conclude from Hebrews 10:29 that there is an apostasy of the saints, it must first be proven that the word "sanctified" here signifies true sanctification only, that is, the renewal of God's image in man. This simply cannot be done. Rather, it is evident that here it must be understood as referring to external sanctification, for the saints cannot apostatize.

Additional Objection: To be sanctified by Christ's blood is true sanctification.

Answer: We deny this. By His blood Christ has received the right and the authority to use all creatures and all men -- both good and evil -- according to His will, to the glory of God, and to the benefit of the elect. By His blood He has been authorized to be the Judge of heaven and earth John 5:27, and to damn the ungodly in judgment. Since He has been obedient to the Father, even unto the death of the cross, all knees must bow before Him (Php 2:8-10). It is for this reason that all power has been given Him in heaven and upon earth (Matthew 28:18). Thereby He has also received power to bestow many external blessings upon the non-elect: to heal their bodily diseases, to proclaim the gospel to their soul as prophet, to call and bring them externally into His church, and thus to externally sanctify and separate them from others. Thus, to be sanctified by Christ's blood neither signifies true conversion, growth in grace, nor the possession and manifestation of the image of God. Rather, it signifies a being brought into the church externally, and to have escaped the pollution of the world and gross sins through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. That such can apostatize is a matter beyond controversy.

Objection #6: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1). To be bought by Christ is to be delivered by Christ's blood from guilt and punishment and to be His property (Revelation 5:9). Such persons can, however, apostatize and go lost.

Answer (1) Such persons have never been true believers, for they were false teachers who subtly introduced damnable heresies. Therefore this text does not relate to this controversy.

(2) Christ purchases His own unto salvation, and purchases others to be used for His purposes. This we have demonstrated relative to Hebrews 10:1-39 in the fifth objection. One purchases vessels both to honor and to dishonor. These false teachers who pretended to be partakers of the merits of Christ were bought in order to be ministers, but not unto salvation. There can be various reasons for purchasing something.

Objection #7: Many examples of apostatizing can be produced to counter the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, such as the angels who have become devils, as well as Adam. If they have apostatized, then the godly can also apostatize.

Answer (1) We are not discussing here what could happen potentially to the godly as they are in and of themselves, and if left over to themselves, but what cannot happen, since they are kept by the power of God.

(2) The angels and Adam had no promises relative to preservation; however, the godly have promises that are sure.

Additional Objection: David fell into such sins which are not compatible with the preservation of faith and spiritual life, such as adultery and premeditated murder.

Answer (1) His repentance, restoration, and perseverance are clearly documented in Psalms 51:1-19 -- as well as in the description of the end of his life.

(2) Even though faith and spiritual life are in a state of lethargy when such gross sins are committed, the seed of God nevertheless abides in believers.

Additional Objection: Solomon fell into idolatry at the end of his life.

Answer (1) Solomon was called Jedidiah, the beloved of the Lord. However, the love of God does not change (Jeremiah 31:3; John 13:1).

(2) It has not been recorded to what extent Solomon fell into idolatry. It could be that it was only a yielding to the insistence of his idolatrous wives or that it was but an external act of worship, for he is not listed among the ungodly kings, but among those whose hearts were not perfect before the Lord as the heart of David (1 Kings 11:4). Thus he did not depart from the Lord.

(3) Subsequent to his death he, along with his father David, is recognized as an example for others. "For three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon" (2 Chronicles 11:17). It is thus evident that he died as a godly man.

(4) Everything has not been recorded, and one is thus not to conclude that he persevered in sin simply because no express mention is made of his repentance.

Additional Objection: Peter denied Christ thrice, and the denial of Christ cannot coexist with grace.

Answer: The Lord Jesus told him expressly that Satan would sift him, but that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:32). Furthermore, he quickly arose from his sudden fall, went outside, and "wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75). A believer is indeed capable of committing an act of outward denial.

Additional Objection: Judas was an apostle and he became a traitor. Furthermore, Christ said in John 17:12 that He had kept all the apostles, except Judas. Thus, one of those whom the Father

had given to Christ did perish.

Answer: Judas was never given by the Father to Christ in order to be redeemed by Him, for he was not one of the elect. "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen" (John 13:18). Prior to becoming a traitor he already was a devil (John 6:70), and a thief (John 12:6). He had never been converted. In John 17:12 Judas is excluded from the number given by the Father unto salvation, and those who had been given are contrasted with Judas; Jesus preserved those who had been given to Him. Only Judas, being the son of perdition, did perish. Those who had been given to Jesus did not perish; however, Judas did. Judas' only purpose for being among the apostles was that God's decree might be executed.

Additional Objection: Demas left Paul and by renewal loved the present world (2 Timothy 4:10). They who love the world, however, do not have the love of the Father in them (1 John 2:15).

Answer: It must first be proven that Demas had indeed been regenerated; there is no evidence of this in the Word of God. The fact that he joined Paul is no evidence of conversion, for many who followed Christ departed from Him (John 6:66).

Alexander and Hymenaeus departed from the true doctrine of faith. They have been discussed previously.

Additional Objection: The incestuous person was a believer, which is evident from his repentance (2 Corinthians 2:7). He had fallen so deeply that he had been delivered up to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5). A believer can thus fall away completely.

Answer (1) There is no evidence that he was a believer prior to his offense. This would have to be proven first.

(2) By reason of illumination and remorse of conscience someone can be overwhelmed with sorrow, upon which an excommunicated offender may be readmitted by the church.

(3) Excommunication could have been a means unto his true conversion.

(4) If he had been truly converted prior to that, the seed of God would have nevertheless remained in him. One cannot conclude total apostasy from the falling into one sin. To fall into one sin does not presuppose being under the dominion of sin. Excommunication brought him to repentance and caused him to forsake sin.

Comforts of this Doctrine

Having confirmed the truth regarding the perseverance of the saints, we shall now discuss the efficacy of this doctrine as far as comforting and stirring believers up in the way of sanctification.

It is this doctrine which underscores all comforts which believers derive from the other doctrines of the faith. For what comfort can be found in the fact that one is regenerated, has been adopted as a child of God, and has received the forgiveness of sin, if he knows that tomorrow he may be a child of the devil and of hell again? If, however, along with the reception of grace, one is assured that he shall be kept by the power of God, that the covenant is immutable, and that he shall most certainly become a partaker of eternal felicity -- only then will grace truly yield him joy, will he be quickened in love, and can he forget what is behind him and reach forth to that which is before him, pressing

“toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God” (Php 3:14). Believers have many grievous and sinful encounters in this world; however, if this doctrine of perseverance is understood well, and is both believed and practiced, it will yield encouragement in the midst of all this. It is a serious deficiency in the godly to be so inclined to focus upon themselves, desiring to derive all their comfort from the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, and to have such an excessive desire for them. If they then are deprived of this (for it is not God’s way always to give them the sensible enjoyment of this), they are discouraged. This is the reason why the godly are often so melancholy. Instead, they would run their course with joy if they would focus more upon the immutability of God, the covenant, and the promises. Their life would be more to the honor of God and to the edification of their neighbor. Therefore, train yourself to be fully assured of this doctrine and to use it continually to your comfort. Then the efficacy unto sanctification will immediately issue forth from it.

Here there is a remedy against spiritual desertions. Believers do not always have the privilege to be on the holy mountain with the disciples, to be in the third heaven with Paul, and always to live in the enjoyment of the embraces and kisses of the Lord Jesus. Rather, the Lord frequently hides His lovely countenance from them, stands afar, covers Himself with a cloud so that not a single prayer can penetrate, remains silent as if He were not concerned about them, withholds the motions of His mercy toward them, brings thick darkness upon them, seemingly casts them away, and appears to be wrathful toward them. This doctrine is, however, the foundation of your comfort, true believers, for God’s love toward you is immutable, and His calling and gifts are irreversible. Therefore, exercise faith, and consider the Lord to be to you who He was when He visited you in the very sweetest manner -- yes, infinitely more. He will most certainly return to you, for He says: “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee” (Isaiah 54:7-8); “But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands” (Isaiah 49:14-16); “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6).

Here there is a remedy for the assaults of Satan. The Lord has established an irreconcilable enmity between the seed of the woman -- Christ, and all His members -- and the seed of the devil, the ungodly. As soon as God’s children are set free from the snares of the devil and are translated into the kingdom of Christ, so soon the devil will persecute them. One time he will use subtle delusion to entice them to sin; then again he will use fiery darts to frighten them; and then again he will buffet them in order to injure and prevent them from having peace. These assaults are capable of tossing a believer to and fro, causing his faith to totter. However, in spite of all the violence of this evil, powerful, and subtle enemy, the devil will not succeed in causing the apostasy of a single one, not even of the most tender sheep; nor will he succeed in plucking him out of the hand of Jesus. Instead, the devil himself will be trodden under foot by believers. “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16:20). Therefore, by the truth and in the might of God, they may triumph over the devil. “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:10-11).

Here is a remedy against the enmity of the world. Since God's children have forsaken the world, and convince it of sin by their light and conduct, the world consequently hates them and endeavors to draw them away from their faith and godly walk. It will do so either by caressing them with the lusts of the eye, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life; by threatening to take away all that could comfort them; or by way of cruel persecution and death. This causes a believer to be concerned whether he will remain steadfast in times of trial. Believers, do not fear, however, for also the world will not be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord Romans 8:38-39 -- neither by her caresses, nor by her persecutions. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33); "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Therefore, we may "glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed" (Romans 5:3-5). Be therefore also of good courage in this battle, and triumphantly exclaim with the apostle: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" Romans 8:35; Romans 8:37.

Here there is also a remedy against sin. A believer is only regenerate in part. The old Adam still resides within him and he retains his nature and desires. These desires war against the soul and cause her to stumble and fall frequently -- yes, they may even keep her captive to sin. Not only does this grieve her, but it also begets many doubts and troubling thoughts within her as to whether she will be deceived in the end, as sanctification cannot be separated from justification. Since faith without works is dead, she therefore wonders whether she has fallen from grace. However, this is not so, believers! If you still battle sin (even if you have but little strength), are time and again restored and renew the battle, pray against sin, and flee to the Lord Jesus for strength -- then be of good courage. Also your sins, which remain in you contrary to your wishes, will neither pluck you out of the hand of Christ, nor will He cast you away because of them. He knew ahead of time -- before He called, converted, and comforted you -- who you were and what you would do, and He took hold of you out of sovereign grace and said, "I desire to love you and I shall love you to the end." "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand" (Psalms 37:24); "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:37).

Here is a remedy against the weakness of faith, darkness, and all negative frames of the soul. Sometimes the faith of God's children comes under assault from every angle, being assaulted by the devil, spiritual desertions, bodily crosses, sin, and darkness. Then they will not only be at a loss as to what to think of themselves, but they will wonder whether there are any true exercises of faith in them, for in this wretched darkness they can neither find Jesus nor engage in transactions with Him. This engenders despondency, listlessness, and deadness in them, so that it appears as if they give up. Nevertheless, the Lord preserves faith in their heart and causes it to resurface time and again. It will then be to their comfort that the Lord Jesus prays for them that their faith fail not Luke 22:32, and that they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" 1 Peter 1:5 -- just as experience has frequently taught them that this is so. Therefore, be encouraged, even

while in that condition, to say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Here is a remedy against the fear of death. Death is contrary to nature and is the king of terrors. Even when a believer is reasonably well spiritually, if he begins to focus upon death, he will find fear and trembling within himself. Sometimes this will be in anticipation of physical death, and sometimes he will begin to realize how great the distinction is between felicity and damnation. When he then considers how feeble he is, he will think, "Where is my faith; does it have any root and validity? Where is my sanctification? I could yet be deceived at last!" Thus, the terror of death will arise in him. However, also in this we have a steadfast comfort in the certainty of God's preservation, who not only preserves His own in the state of grace in this life, but also in the hour of death. "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). As the perseverance of the saints yields a most powerful comfort, it is likewise a powerful motive for sanctification. Opposing parties, being neither acquainted with the nature of grace nor the possessors of grace, are of the opinion that this doctrine renders men careless. The contrary is true, however. There is nothing that moves man so sweetly and purely unto sanctification as grace and the permanency of this grace, for the love of God kindles the love of those whom He loves. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The steadfast hope and sure expectation of salvation is a powerful incentive unto holiness. "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). The apostle therefore uses the mercy of God as the basis for his exhortation. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1).

(1) Therefore, acknowledge the certainty of your spiritual state and you will behold the sovereign grace, goodness, power, longsuffering, faithfulness, and immutability of God, who, till the day of their complete redemption, preserves the faith and spiritual life of a people who are so sinful and are surrounded and assaulted from every side. This will give you reason for adoration, to the praise and worship of the glorious perfections of God.

(2) Be encouraged in all perplexities; trust in the Lord who will also perfect that which concerneth you, will guide you with His counsel, and afterward receive you to glory.

(3) Be valiant in the battle, while trusting in God's safe-keeping. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Forsake the world and all its counterfeit glory, for faith is of such a nature that it overcomes the world (1 John 5:4). Refrain from indulging in fleshly lusts which war against the soul, knowing that the outcome of your walk is not uncertain, and your struggle is not as a beating in the air. Therefore, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13); "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

106. Chapter 100: Concerning Death and the State of the Soul After Death

----- CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED ----- Concerning Death and the State of the Soul After Death

After God has led the elect in all the ways enumerated in the preceding, and they have fulfilled the Lord's counsel in their time, He then takes them to Himself into eternal felicity. However, this translation from time to eternity, from this sinful life to perfect holiness, from sorrow to joy, and from strife to the crown, takes place by way of the dark valley of the king of terrors, which is death. Only Enoch in the first, and Elijah in the second world have entered heaven without seeing death. With the exception of these two, however, no one will enter heaven except through this disagreeable way. Even though there is an incomprehensible difference between the final destiny of believers and the ungodly, they nevertheless have the experience of death in common. It is "the way of all the earth" (Joshua 23:14); "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" (Psalms 89:48). Regardless of whether one is a child, young man, or grown man, one must die. The end of everyone will be, "And he died." This is the certain and immutable injunction of God: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). This is the sentence: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19). This is confirmed to all men by experience, so that there is no need for proof, but rather that it be brought to remembrance. Temporal advantages are of no avail here. Wise Solomon dies as well as foolish Nabal; the strong Samson as well as a tender woman, the beautiful Rachel; Dinah as well as tender-eyed Leah; and the rich man as well as poor Lazarus. A king is removed as suddenly from his throne as a beggar from his hut. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master" (Job 3:17-19). Not only is it true that man must die, but between his birth and death there is but a small season. "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (Genesis 47:9); "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14:1); "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow" (Psalms 90:10). Man's life is spent as a "tale that is told" vs. 9, and "we fly away" vs. 10. Our life is swifter than a weaver's shuttle, which in one swift motion traverses the breadth of the loom (Job 7:9). Life is as grass and as a flower of the field, which endure but for a short season (Psalms 103:15). It is but as a "handbreadth," and a handbreadth of sun prior to sunset is but one hour (Psalms 39:5). Life passes by swifter than a post, swifter than ships and an eagle that hasteth to the prey (Job 9:25-26). It is as a vapor James 4:14, and as smoke that arises as a straight pillar but readily disappears (Psalms 102:4). It is as the tent of a shepherd which is removed quickly, and is cut off like the loom of a weaver which occurs in a moment (Isaiah 38:12). The Death of Believers is Not a Punishment

Even though dying is an experience common to all men, there is nevertheless a great difference between the death of the ungodly and of a believer. The ungodly face death as their prosecutor, and as a punishment upon sin. Death is the way whereby they are translated to eternal death. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Believers are also subject to death. It is only a chastisement, however, for the Lord Jesus has borne the punishment for all their sins and has delivered believers from them. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin" (Romans 8:10). Death is for them a passage to eternal life. "And it came to pass, that the beggar (Lazarus) died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22); "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" (Revelation 14:13). The following question needs to be addressed: When it is not the cause of Christ which subjects believers to temporal misery and temporal death, are not these then punishments inflicted by God as an angry and righteous Judge?

Someone has come to the foreground in our days who, while advocating other soul-damning and Socinian-like errors, also proposes that the misery and temporal death of believers are punishments in the literal sense of the word. We maintain on the contrary that they are but paternal chastisements upon them. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, Christ is a complete Savior, and He has left believers with neither guilt nor punishment. Death is therefore not a punishment in the literal sense of the word. For if God were not entirely and fully reconciled with the elect, and were to punish believers as an angry and righteous Judge, then Christ would neither be a complete Savior nor would He have removed all guilt and punishment for believers. This sentiment is therefore a public denial that Christ is a complete Savior.

Secondly, if temporal misery and temporal death were punishments for believers in the literal sense of the word, then according to God's justice, the punishments should be commensurate to the sins. One of the following three possibilities must then be true: 1) all the sins of believers should not be subject to any temporal punishments beyond what they currently have to endure; 2) there must be some sins left for which Christ has not made satisfaction, which are thus not worthy of additional punishment in this life; or 3) there is a portion of the merited punishment which Christ has neither borne nor paid for, and therefore the believer himself must bear and pay for this. The disputants themselves must admit these three possibilities; however, none of these three are valid.

(1) Every sin and every partial sin is worthy of all temporal and eternal punishment to the utmost degree.

(2) Believers who have committed the largest number and most heinous sins would also have to be subject to the greatest measure of temporal punishment. However, experience frequently teaches the opposite. Moreover, there are no degrees when it comes to temporal death.

(3) Christ would then have paid more for the one than for the other, whereas the believer who has committed the least number of sins is occasionally subject to the severest temporal affliction. Since none of these three possibilities are valid, but are all absurd and contrary to God's Word, it is evident that temporal misery and temporal death are not punishments upon sin.

Thirdly, if any unrequited guilt were to be punished with temporal misery and death, the enduring of such punishment would yield this satisfaction, or it would be forgiven without total satisfaction. If

the first is true, then man himself is able to make satisfaction for his sins; and if he is able to make satisfaction for some sins, one sin, or part of a sin, he should also be able to make satisfaction for all that he deserves to suffer in this life simply by suffering more. If the latter is true, then there is no need for total satisfaction and Christ's suffering would have been unnecessary. For if one sin can be forgiven without total satisfaction, this must be true for all sins, as one sin makes us guilty of all (James 2:10). Both views are contrary to God's Word -- the one is popish and the other Socinian.

Fourthly, Enoch and Elijah, who were also sinful men, did not die. They were thus delivered from what is said to be a literal punishment, of which they as well as others were deserving. If they were absolved of their punishment apart from satisfaction, absolution from all punishment can be granted apart from satisfaction and there would be no need for Christ. Or else Christ did endure the punishment of death for them, which He did not do for others.

Furthermore, consider the martyrs. They were deserving of death due to their sin, and yet the disputants will admit that their death was not a punishment for sin. However, in what manner are they then delivered from death as a punishment upon sin, of which they were worthy as well as other people? Does their martyrdom render satisfaction or have they been acquitted of their sins apart from satisfaction -- or has Christ made satisfaction for them which exceeds what He has done for others? Also believers who will be living on the last day will not die, even though they are deserving of death. It is thus evident that this error undermines the necessity of Christ's satisfaction.

Fifthly, all afflictions which believers experience in this life come from God as their Father, who does so in love (Hebrews 12:10; Revelation 3:19). They are thus not a punishment in the literal sense of the word.

Sixthly, Christ has also suffered physically and died a physical death. One of two things must be true: Either His suffering and death were in vain and are without efficacy, or He has thereby also removed temporal punishment. To hold to the first view is unchristian; the second is true. "With His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). By way of the forgiveness of sins He delivered from physical maladies. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (Matthew 9:6). Consequently, physical maladies and death are no punishments in the literal sense of the word.

Seventhly, the bodies of believers are members of Christ 1 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Thus, both their bodies and souls are delivered from punishment. Furthermore, how can the members of Christ still be subject to the righteous wrath of God and be subject to punishment in the literal sense of the word? This would be contradictory.

Eighthly, if the miseries of the body and death are punishments upon sin, then also anxieties of the soul are punishments upon sin, for in all physical affliction the soul suffers more than the body. Believers would then derive no benefit from Christ in this life, but only after death; then we ought not to put our hope in Christ in this life.

Objection: Since this error to a large extent agrees with the errors of the Papists (which were discussed in chapter 22, vol. #1, p. 575), the same objections which we refuted at that time will also be advanced here. It all boils down to the point that physical miseries are deemed to be

punishments (cf. Job 6:4; Psalms 88:17; Micah 7:9).

Answer (1) At least one text would have to be presented in which temporal death is designated a punishment. They have as yet not been able to find any text, however, and thus there is no proof for this aspect of the point of contention.

(2) The words anger, wrath, vengeance, and punishment have a twofold interpretation. Either they pertain to God as a righteous Judge or to God as a loving Father. A father can be outraged and angry, and will punish his children as much as a judge would mete out punishment for crimes. A child suffers as much as does a criminal when he is punished by a judge. Therefore, the same vocabulary is used in reference to both -- among people as well as in Scripture. Thus, we must go beyond the sound of the word and not conclude one thing or the other simply on the basis of the word itself. Rather, we must determine from the textual context whether it signifies punishment in the literal sense of the word or chastisement.

(3) Physical miseries are referred to as either chastisements or rebukes: "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure" (Psalms 6:1); "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19); "If ye endure chastening ..." (Hebrews 12:7). It is thus evident that rebukes and chastisements are identical in regard to believers. Thus, the word "rebuke" does not provide any basis for this error, and thus the error is confirmed.

Practical Use to be Made of the Reality That All Men Must Die

We have shown above that all men must die. The certainty of this ought to motivate us to be engaged toward 1) the godly, 2) the unconverted, and 3) ourselves.

First, since both you and the godly must die, you are therefore to interact with the godly -- to show them favors and to derive benefit from them.

(1) We must show favors to the godly, for they will not be with us long. If they are poor, give them alms, refresh them with food and drink, and clothe them, for it Christ is pleased when we are beneficent to his members. If they die before you, then, upon your death, they will welcome you into the eternal tabernacles (Luke 16:9). If they are not in need of physical support, but instead are weak spiritually, comfort and support them, helping them to bear this. If they go astray, restore them in love, and exhort them. If they are in a good spiritual condition, gladden them with your love and friendship, and if they are slandered, defend them.

(2) We must seek to derive benefit from the godly while they are with us, for they will soon die. Pay close attention to their virtues and how they behave themselves under specific circumstances. Let them be an example to you in their humility, meekness, wisdom, dignity, friendliness, and other virtues as they shine forth. Pay attention to them continually, and as you observe them, seek to bring your soul into the same frame, seeking to emulate them. If they are ministers, or other experienced or gifted saints, make diligent use of their instructions and directions, so that you may thus become acquainted with God's dealings with His children, and receive light in difficulties and cases of conscience. Being foolish people, we do not realize that something is good until we have lost it. If we are blessed with good ministers, we frequently do not make use of them. We assume that we can always have an opportunity. Once they have departed, however, we shall then have many questions for them. We shall then grieve that we have not made more use of them.

Therefore, make use of the godly while they are present, for they will depart from here.

Secondly, since both you and the ungodly will die, you are obligated to do something for the unconverted before they die. There are unconverted among your relatives, neighbors, acquaintances, and business associates, and thus the Lord grants you the opportunity to be a means to their conversion. It ought to grieve you that so many of them are no more, and perhaps are already in hell. Not once did you address them, warn them, point out the way of salvation to them, or take them by the hand to lead them to Christ, even though you knew that they were unconverted and were running toward hell. I repeat, this ought to grieve you, namely, that you -- as far as you are concerned -- are guilty in regard to their condemnation. Therefore, no longer follow in Cain's footsteps by saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Have compassion, and snatch them out of the fire while they are yet alive and before it is too late, for they and you are to die. Who knows -- you might be a means unto their conversion and salvation. How sweet it will be to be able to say: "Behold, Lord, here am I and the children which Thou hast given me!" If they are not willing to listen to you, you will preserve a peaceful conscience; and God, by means of you, will be glorified in His justice. Therefore, be filled with tender compassion toward precious souls. See to it that you are neither ashamed to speak of Christ and the way of salvation nor intimidated by either wisdom, greatness, riches, wickedness, or goodness. They will possibly not be as offended as you might fear, and you will subsequently meet with more approval than he who flatters with his tongue. Even if your words do not benefit them when spoken, they can come to remembrance years later and be a means unto conversion.

Thirdly, since you yourself will die, you must do something as far as you yourself are concerned. If you are unconverted, be fearful of death. If you are godly, rejoice over the fact that there will come an end to this miserable life and that death will usher in a happy life for you. Whoever you may therefore be, be prepared for your departure from this world.

If you are as yet unconverted, I have a word for you, so that, if it were possible, I might bring you to repentance by alarming you. Give ear, oh man -- you who are wallowing in the earth as a mole; you who only esteem that which is visible; you who only yearn for the tangible; and you who are only concerned about that. This is the focal point of all your mental activity and dreams which you are pursuing with all your might, and is the goal of all your initiatives. Give ear, you who lead an idle and wanton life, and determine and seek your enjoyment to be in eating, drinking, amusements, splendor, and all sorts of frivolity. Give ear, ungodly blasphemers, gamblers, drunkards, immoral adulterers and fornicators, liars, backbiting slanderers, and unrighteous, wicked, and envious persons.

First, you are unconverted and are walking upon the broad way to hell. You are going to die and you will not be here much longer. Perhaps it will be over for you tomorrow. When the king of terrors separates your soul from your body, it will be finished as far as your indulgence in delicacies, wine, the playing of cards, and gambling are concerned. Gone will be your money, profit, honor, offices you are holding, expensive clothing, and whatever else you have occupied yourself with. You will not be able to preserve those things and they will all declare to you: "Depart to hell; we no longer associate with you; we are no longer for you." They will no longer be able to entertain your fearful soul, nor be able to comfort you. Rather, they will all testify against you, and your oppressed conscience will be an unbearable burden to you.

Secondly, not only will joy have vanished, but terrors will come in its place. Presently you are such a hero, have such a strong spirit, and fear neither death, devil, nor hell. When death comes, however, your courage will depart readily. That which Belshazzar experienced will also come upon you. For a moment, let me hold before you the mirror of this history and you will discover your future condition in it. "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another" (Daniel 5:6). If the messenger of death were to come to you, saying, "Yet forty days and you shall perish"; or, "This night I shall require thy soul from thee"; would you then be joyful? Your conscience would then be very lively, and you would then have a different conception of the wrath of God and of eternal damnation than you presently have. If a drop of sweat will cling to every hair since God will be a terror to you, where will you then flee? Then seek out your previous ungodly company; they will flee from you, however. Let full dishes and goblets then be brought to you; but you will not be able to ingest them. Then play around with the money you have scraped together, but how wretched the sound of the coins will be! Then put on all your expensive clothing, but you will then say, "Away with all these rags." Then let all your prostitutes climb into your bed; but you will then say: "Depart from me; I do not want to see you." You will then say: "World, away with you; I abhor you." Tell me, what will you do then? Where will you take refuge? With God? With the foolish virgins you will find heaven to be closed. Then you will experience the truth of what you presently do not believe: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord" (Proverbs 1:24-29). Where will you flee when the Lord will bring you into judgment for all your sins? Where will you flee when the Lord will command the devil to drag your soul to hell? Then you can weep and howl all you want, but there will be neither pity nor help for you, and you will find yourself in eternal despair and pain to which there will come no end. Therefore today, as you hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your heart. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14).

You who are godly, however, need not be fearful of death. Instead, it should be to your comfort that you will not always remain here. When death comes, all your sorrow will come to an end. All dissatisfaction and restlessness; all weaknesses and pains; all poverty and concerns; and all sin and corruption will only follow you until death. You will leave all that behind, and all that will depart from you in the hour of death. What a blessing it is that there is deliverance, that our tribulations will very soon pass away, and that our weeping will be but for a short moment! It is true that death itself is dreadful, but it is at the same time also very beneficial. It cuts off all grievous and sinful crosses at once, and in one moment it will translate the soul into a state of felicity which it never could have truly anticipated prior to that. Death will be as the dreadful lion killed by Samson which, after having been killed, yielded sweet honey. It is as the Red Sea which served to deliver the children of Israel securely from Egypt and out of Pharaoh's hand. To die is to depart in peace and to begin residing with the Lord and to be with Christ. Therefore, believers, on the basis of Christ's merits, be of good courage as you bear your cross and as you face death. Be desirous to depart and to be with Christ. Being established by faith, triumph over this last enemy saying, "Death is

swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

Exhortation to Set One's House in Order

Since all men will die, you, too, will die -- unconverted and godly alike. What is then more necessary than to prepare yourself for death? Oh, that my exhortation would stir you up to do so!

First, you who read or hear this read, I have a message from the Lord to you. The Lord says to you: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (2 Kings 20:1). I am not saying, "Prepare yourself to die tomorrow," for it may well be that you will not live until the morrow, but that in this night your soul will be taken from you. Death comes unexpectedly, and frequently when one is most busily engaged and is least thinking about death. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of" Matthew 24:44; Matthew 24:50.

Secondly, as uncertain as the moment of death is, so uncertain is the manner of death. Perhaps you will be snatched from this life in one moment by way of a heart attack, an accident, or by another unanticipated event. Even if death will be preceded by an illness, you will perhaps immediately be unconscious and bereft of your mental faculties, or you will be so preoccupied with pain and anxiety that you will not be able to think composedly about God for one moment. Being thus troubled within, you will perhaps take the great step upon which eternity hinges.

Thirdly, everything is contingent upon death. As the tree falls, so it will lie. If you die as an unconverted person, your soul will go to hell; if you die as a converted person, your soul will instantly go to heaven and enter into joy. I am not suggesting that salvation is contingent upon the spiritual frame which the believer has at his final moment, but rather what he is in principle. If there is life within, his end will be peace -- even if he must depart with much darkness, weakness of faith, and strife. Just as the external manner of dying (that is, whether someone has a difficult or gentle deathbed) does not render someone saved or unsaved, likewise does not the internal condition of the soul; that is, whether a believer essentially goes his way in joy and assurance, or with much anxiety.

Fourthly, a late conversion is seldom a good conversion. God generally hides Himself and Christ generally refuses grace to those who, in spite of all the means, have stubbornly persevered in yielding to their lusts, having wasted the entire time of life allotted to them. All their sorrow is but a being fearful of hell; all their supplication for grace is but an outburst caused by fear and anxiety; and all their fleeing to Jesus is but a vehement desire to be delivered from perdition. Therefore, do not wait until the last moment. Many are, however, not even serious at the end, but rather are insensitive as they approach their end. How dreadful will their end be!

Fifthly, a worldly person is of the opinion that one would not be able to live if he were to reflect continually and intensely about death. It is true indeed that he would not be able to live peacefully in sin. Sin would no longer be a delight, and fear would take all his joy away. They who speak or think in this fashion, however, demonstrate that they have never yet walked upon the pathway of salvation, and that they would rather go carelessly to hell than presently repent. Believers ought to know, however, that it is not only genuinely wise to live in a state of preparation for death, but also

that it is a most delightful life. All that is of the world will lose its beauty, the cross will be viewed as soon coming to an end, the conscience will be at peace within, the hope of glory will yield joy, one will actively pursue sanctification, and all will be plain within the heart. How delightful is Paul's condition when he writes: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" 2 Timothy 4:7-8!

Sixthly, what would we not do to have a joyous deathbed! What a dreadful death it will be if we have neglected the time of grace and cannot look forward to anything but being cast into hell immediately upon death! How wretched it is even for believers when we must die in darkness; if we do not know whether there has ever been grace in the soul; if we fear that we shall not be saved, but rather must perish at that very moment; or if we must breathe our last breath in such a state of confusion and perplexity! What a joyful deathbed it is, on the contrary, if we may be strong in the faith, know ourselves to be reconciled in Christ and clothed with His righteousness, see heaven opened and Jesus standing ready to receive the soul, and presently taste the beginning of eternal joy! Oh, then death is not death! However, this frequently follows upon being occupied habitually with the preparation for death. It can happen that a feeble Christian, who has struggled much with sin and has been lethargic in seeking after God, has nevertheless a joyous end, whereas one who was a strong Christian in his lifetime occasionally dies in darkness. However, that is the exception. Generally, dying will be consistent with the measure in which one has prepared for it. It is not contingent upon the many comforts one has enjoyed in this life, but according to what extent he has been exercised spiritually. Those who have had much strife in this life, have experienced much darkness, have lived in weakness of faith, and have wrestled with the power of corruption, generally die in faith. Therefore, he who desires to have a joyous deathbed ought to be active in spending much time in preparing for death.

Question: What am I to do? In what does preparation consist?

Answer: First, in this time wean yourself from this world. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34). A tree which has burrowed its roots deep in the earth can only be extracted from the earth with much pulling and tearing, whereas a young tree not yet deeply rooted can easily be extracted from the earth. Such is also true for a person who greatly cleaves to this earth. His thoughts are focused on the things of this world and these fully or partially occupy his heart. This quietly robs him of his time, and man finds himself overtaken by death without having prepared himself for it -- and thus the dismay. Therefore, accustom yourself to view everything as vanity, as unsatisfactory, as dangerous, and as transitory; and then make use of everything in this weaned condition of soul. It requires effort to be habitually weaned from the visible. However, having acquired and preserved such a disposition, one will be able to depart that much more easily, for the soul will have previously been emptied of all these things.

Secondly, learn to live by faith, in reliance upon the Word of God alone. It does not please the Lord to lead His children here by way of seeing. If we have too strong a desire for this without being able to be submissive or satisfied with the way of faith, it will frequently occur that we shall be perplexed when death comes. This would not have been so if, generally speaking, he had lived by

faith. If one has previously not learned to rejoice in faith and thus to lean sweetly upon Christ, it will hardly be possible to learn this at the end. It will be in the hand of him who has learned this, however, and he will be able to depart, saying, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Thirdly, strive continually to have a reconciled conscience which is at peace. You will offend continually, but be sure that you continue not in it, going your way with a confused conscience. That is the most direct way to become more confused in the end, when faith will be most assaulted. Rather, you must accustom yourself to arise immediately after a fall, receive the blood of Christ time and again, and wrestle so long until reconciliation and peace have been regained. This will teach you at death to lay your sin upon the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This will cause you to know that your conscience has been cleansed from dead works, and to have been cleansed from all sins in the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You will then know yourself to be clothed with Christ's righteousness and thus to be perfect in Him. You shall have courage to come before Him without fear in the judgment that follows death.

Fourthly, accustom yourself to keep death continually in mind and to live continually with an impression of dying. This cannot be learned so readily, for we have a natural aversion for this and very quickly forget about death. Even if there are some fleeting thoughts about it, this will neither beget a proper disposition toward dying, nor will it give us a wise heart. Pagans accustomed themselves to actively think about death. They said that the life of the wise consists in the contemplation of death. There were those who caused it to be called out every morning: "Remember that you are a man and that you will die." Christ frequently spoke of His death, and saints prayed for a proper disposition toward death. "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before Thee" (Psalms 39:4-5). Moses did likewise: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalms 90:12). As you accustom yourself to reflect upon death, strive to do everything as if it were your last deed, and to bear every cross as if you would be delivered from it by death that evening. How much patience this will bring forth and how little you will then strive in your conduct for honor, love, and advantage! How prepared you shall then be when death will come, having daily anticipated it for such a long time already! Therefore, engage yourself, for you must at once think as follows: "I must prepare myself; I must act." Any disposition is acquired by way of much exercise.

Fifthly, hasten to bring your work to its conclusion. Do now what you would wish to have been completed at death. There is still so much unfinished work, and the time yet remaining is very short. Do you already have sufficient faith? Is your heart already warm with love? Are there no longer any sins that must be fought against and overcome? Have you already been weaned from the visible and do you live for the invisible? Have you already become an example of humility, meekness, generosity, spirituality, and love for your enemies? Have you already imprinted a footstep which your descendants will recognize and of which they will think, "Oh, how exemplary did he live! If only I would follow in his footsteps!" In all this you fall considerably short, and therefore hasten with the impression of having but little time left. How sweet will death be if, with Hezekiah, you will be able to say, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight" Isaiah 38:3!

Therefore, prepare yourself to die! "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41); "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7); "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning" (Luke 12:37). Be prepared for your journey, and, as the wise virgins, supply yourself with oil -- faith, hope, and love -- in your lamps, and thus await the coming of the Bridegroom. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching" (Luke 12:37); "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:46). The State of the Soul after Death

Having observed that all men will die, the question arises how the soul fares after being separated from the body. In chapter 10 [vol. #1, p. 307] we have dealt comprehensively with the soul, the essence of its existence, its faculties, and its operations by way of its faculties. God created man with a soul and a body, and they would not have been separated to all eternity had man not sinned. However, death, a separation of soul and body, has come into the world in consequence of sin. This results in the soul being separated for some time from the body, whereupon the body will return to dust. However, the soul is an independent entity and an immortal being, not being dependent upon the body for its existence. Upon being separated from the body, her essential existence continues, she retains her faculties -- the intellect and the will -- and continues to function as such. Immediately after death, the souls of believers are taken up into the third heaven to God and enjoy everything there which man, after soul and body have been reunited, will enjoy eternally. The intellect will be occupied with the immediate beholding of God, and the will shall be filled with love, perfect holiness, and inexpressible joy; however, the measure in which this will be experienced is not known to us. They immediately enjoy felicity Revelation 14:13, immediately are in heaven (Luke 16:22); 2 Corinthians 5:1, are united with the church triumphant, are among "the spirits of just men made perfect" Hebrews 12:23, and are with Christ Php 1:23 in whom is all their joy (1 Thessalonians 4:18). The souls of the unconverted also continue in their essential existence and retain both intellect and will -- however, in the endurance of both punishment and pain (Luke 16:23). They are "the spirits in prison" 1 Peter 3:19, "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" Jude 1:7.

There are abominable heresies concerning the state of souls when separated from the body. The Papists maintain that souls continue in their essential existence. It is their view, however, that souls who do not die in the commission of a mortal sin go to a fabricated purgatory, and that unbaptized children go to a certain place which is neither heaven nor hell, where they will have neither pain nor joy to all eternity. The Anabaptists believe that souls do continue in their essential existence until the day of judgment; however, they are asleep and are oblivious to everything -- thus having neither pain nor joy. Many among the Arminians are of the same sentiment as the Anabaptists, maintaining that souls do not carry on any mental activity after death; that is, neither manifesting any activity nor being receptive for any activity. Among the Socinians, who can neither be numbered among the Christians nor indeed are more than civilized pagans; and among the pagans (in life as well as in death) who have most in common with the Epicureans--there are some who are in agreement with the Anabaptists. Many of them (if not almost all) maintain, however, that the soul is no more than a divine breath, a characteristic, an operative function (albeit an intelligent function) just like all other human functions, such as strength, dexterity, etc. Moreover, when man dies, the soul returns as a breath unto God from whom it originated when He blew it into man's nostrils. And thus it returns to God as something belonging unto Him, and, just as is

true for the souls of animals, it consequently vanishes and ceases to exist, and therefore is neither subject to pain nor to joy. Furthermore, they believe that in the resurrection another body and breath or motion are by renewal generated and will thus enjoy eternal life if that person was one of the righteous. If not, then its annihilation will be maintained. Others express themselves somewhat differently, but it all culminates in the same idea. It could be asked whether they believe in a resurrection at all. A rational human being can readily understand that such a new generation of a different body and a new breath is not one and the same person who lived previously and committed either good or evil. This would mean that in reality there would neither be a resurrection of the dead nor a last judgment. The Immortality of the Soul after Death

We shall first address the parties mentioned and defend the immortality of the soul and her subjection to pain in hell or her experience of joy in heaven; and we shall then “deliver” all those souls from purgatory.

Question: Upon death, is the soul of man, and does it remain, a personal, living, and rational being which enjoys eternal joy in heaven if it has been the soul of a believer? Or does it suffer eternal pain in hell, the place of the damned, if it has remained unconverted?

Answer: We answer in the affirmative. Socinians answer in the negative, and Anabaptists with the Arminians respond negatively to the last proposition. Our view is evident for the following reasons:

First, it is confirmed by such texts which state that the soul retains its being after death.

(1) “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21). In Hebrew *rouach* signifies spirit, heart, breath, wind, and soul. It signifies the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the divine essence Psalms 33:6, the angels Psalms 104:4, and the soul of man: “Into Thine hand I commit my spirit” (Psalms 31:5). The preacher relates in verse 20 what transpires with the body after death: Both the bodies of beasts and of men return to the dust, and in this they resemble each other. In verse 21 he shows what transpires with the souls of both and wherein they differ, the difference being that the souls of animals (their blood) flows down into the earth, whereas the souls of men ascend toward God who has given them, for the purpose of receiving the sentence of life or death from Him as Judge. He speaks of all souls in a general sense -- the good as well as the evil -- saying the same about all: They all return to God. This cannot mean a gracious acceptance and felicity for the wicked; instead, this can only be as their Judge.

(2) “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). If the soul did not continue in its essential existence, people would be able to kill the soul as well as the body. Since, however, they are only able to kill the body and not the soul, it is thus evident that the soul remains alive after death.

(3) “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matthew 22:32). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living subsequent to their death, for God is their God after their death. However, according to the body they are not alive; and thus they are alive according to the soul.

(4) "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven ... he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:2; 2 Corinthians 12:4). The apostle demonstrates here that the soul is able to exist and perceive outside of the body. Otherwise he would not have to doubt whether it happened out of the body or in the body. Thus, the soul is capable of being in the third heaven, knowing and enjoying things that are unspeakable, while the body is upon earth.

(5) "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:22-23). All those to whom believers come do actually exist and among them are also the spirits of just men made perfect -- and thus their existence is real.

(6) "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season" (Revelation 6:9-11). The altar is Christ (Hebrews 13:10). The souls of dead martyrs were covered by His reconciliation and were in His safe-keeping. Thus, the souls of martyrs truly exist after their death. These souls longed for the glorification of God's justice in avenging the shed blood of His children, this being expressed by their crying. They had been glorified, which is indicated by the long white robes. They were both addressed and informed about what was yet to come. All of this shows very clearly that souls continue their existence after death, are living, have understanding, and are active. Even though some things are expressed in physical terms, so that they may be understood, yet the entire manner of speech makes it clear that they are to be interpreted in a manner which is consistent with souls.

Evasive Argument: It is said of Abel's blood that it calls for vengeance Genesis 4:10, and he is also said to speak after he died (Hebrews 11:4). This is, however, not true in a literal sense. It is merely indicative of his suffering and actions while he was alive. In like manner Revelation 6:9-11 is to be interpreted.

Answer: We do not acknowledge this conclusion, as it lacks evidence. This text conveys something entirely different. Here it is not only stated what the souls did, but also what answer they received and what was done to them. Thus, the reference is to the soul, rather than to deeds. This is clear proof that, rather than sleep, they live after death, and use both reason and intellect.

Secondly, that the souls of believers do rejoice after death is evident from the description of their state after death, as well as from the longing the saints have for death. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). Mention is made here of felicity after death, and thus souls continue in their actual existence, for nothing can be said of something that does not exist, nor can it enjoy felicity. The felicity of souls does not consist in sleeping, but in enjoyment. Furthermore, sleeping is meant for the body; the soul does not sleep. The fact that they rest also does not indicate that they are sleeping. Both Christ and people do rest, although they are awake. Resting indicates being at liberty and the cessation of burdensome activities. "For

we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

If the souls of believers are in heaven after the body, the earthly tabernacle, has been dissolved or has died 2 Peter 1:13, then they are indeed happy. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). That which does not exist cannot be present with the Lord. Thus, these souls, upon having been separated from the body, are present with the Lord. Furthermore, the strong desire of believers to depart this world and to be present with the Lord is an indication that souls are in a much happier condition after this life than in this life, and thus souls are not asleep. Observe this desire also in the following text: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Php 1:23). Death in and of itself is not desirable. A living dog is better than a dead lion. Paul was not that weak and sorrowful that he wished for death due to grief, for he had learned to be content and was able to do all things through Christ who strengthened him Php 4:11;Php 4:13. Yes, by God sustaining him, he took "pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses" (2 Corinthians 12:10). There was, however, a different reason why he had a desire to die, namely, to be with Christ, which was far better to him. Thus, the apostle knew that his soul would live after his death, and that it would be in a far better condition after death.

Just as the souls of believers rejoice in heaven after death, likewise the souls of the ungodly are sent to hell, there to endure eternal pain. "By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient" (1 Peter 3:19-20). Christ, by His Spirit and through Noah, preached to the disobedient world. However, upon their death their souls were sent to prison, that is, to hell. "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" Jude 1:7. If the souls of the disobedient of the first world and the souls of the ungodly from Sodom and Gomorrah are in prison and are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, then they continue to exist after death and are enduring punishment and eternal pain (Matthew 25:46). Add to this the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:23-24). The objective of this parable is to describe the condition of souls after this life in order to deter man from sin and to exhort him to the practice of virtue. To that end, the soul of Lazarus is depicted as enjoying comfort in heaven, and the soul of the ungodly rich man is depicted as suffering grief in hell.

Thirdly, there is irrefutable evidence in the following examples: Christ, the thief on the cross, and others. Christ's soul most certainly continued in its actual existence after death. While dying he said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke 23:46). He said to the thief, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Paradise is the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2;2 Corinthians 12:4). Thus, Christ and the thief would be in the third heaven on the very day of their death. Therefore the actual existence of their souls continued and they were in heaven where there is nothing but joy. This is also true for the souls of the martyrs (Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 7:9-10;Revelation 7:14; Revelation 14:13). From all this, it has been proven clearly and irrefutably that souls continue to exist after death, are alive and active, and either rejoice in heaven or suffer pain in hell.

Fourthly, this understanding is innate. The pagans knew this, and they were therefore of the opinion that souls move into other creatures. The fabrications of designated and delightful places, and fields as residences for such souls originate from this. Even until this very day, barbaric pagans have the impression that souls continue to exist after death.

Objection #1: (Ecclesiastes 3:19-21).

Answer: We have commented on this text earlier.

Objection #2: Consider these passages: "... before I go hence, and be no more" (Psalms 39:13); "Rahel ... refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not" (Jeremiah 31:15).

Answer: This means that they were not in the land of the living.

Objection #3: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Paul is engaged in proving the resurrection of the dead, and among other things he proves thereby that believers were of all men most miserable if there were no resurrection. This would make no sense if believers were already in felicity prior to the resurrection, for they do not expect felicity until the resurrection at the last day. This indicates that they will not enjoy felicity until then.

Answer (1) Paul speaks of being miserable in this life, and he is not stretching it out to the resurrection at the last day.

(2) Paul is dealing with people who maintained that man is annihilated after death -- both as to body and soul -- and all the entertainment there is for man is to be enjoyed in this life alone, it being their proverb: "Eat, drink, play, for after death no one sings." The apostle refutes this, and demonstrates that there is joy after this life, and that they therefore were not of all men most miserable since their hope was in Christ after this life.

Objection #4: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Daniel 12:2). Here the dead are said to sleep, and thus souls do sleep.

Answer: Death is referred to as sleep. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth. ... Howbeit Jesus spake of His death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep" John 11:11; John 11:13. The dead are said to sleep because of the many resemblances between both. Souls are never said to sleep, since this is contrary to the nature of a soul. Sleeping is characteristic of the body.

Purgatory is a Human Invention We shall now deal with the fable of purgatory.

Question: Do the souls of believers, after having been separated from the body in death, go to purgatory in order to be perfectly purified -- be it by way of personal suffering or through the assistance of the prayers, masses, and merits of the saints? Or are the souls of believers taken to heaven immediately upon their death?

Answer: The point of contention does not relate to the death of the ungodly, for they go to hell immediately. The point of contention neither relates to whether the reformed come in purgatory, for even the Papists declare that they are delivered from this. Rather, the point is whether the Papists come there or not, for purgatory -- that wondrous place -- is only for them. Thus, in answer to these questions they confirm the first, and deny the second. We, on the contrary, deny the first and hold

to the second. Our proof is as follows:

First, there is not one reference to purgatory in the entire Bible. They themselves do not know what to do about this -- even if they were to ask the devil (as one of them did) to point them to a text.

Secondly, Scripture knows but two ways and two destinies: life and perdition, heaven and hell (Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 16:22-23).

Evasive Argument: They who go to purgatory will come into heaven at last.

Answer: After death there are but two destinies. Purgatory would be a third one, and thus it must be rejected. Thirdly, there is no need for a purgatory. It can neither remove sin nor cleanse the soul. Instead, the Lord Jesus cleanses His own from all sins. In Him they are perfect, and are the righteousness of God. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7); "And ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10); "... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

What purpose could a purgatory have since all sins have already been removed? Furthermore, a purgatory cannot remove sin, for there is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood. It is a physical fire which cannot bring about the cleansing of the soul. The intercession of the saints and the masses for souls of the deceased are but fabrications. The merits of the saints are null and void. The real issue is money, and with money heaven cannot be opened at all -- neither at an earlier nor at a later moment. The distinction between mortal and forgivable sins is not biblical. The Bible teaches that all sin is mortal, and that there is but one unforgivable sin: the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Fourthly, Scripture states plainly that the souls of believers immediately enter heaven upon death. When the earthly house of our tabernacle is dissolved, heaven will be our portion (2 Corinthians 5:1). To be absent from the body is to be present with Christ vs. 8. To depart and to be with Christ is better than life (Php 1:23). It would be better to live until the last day, than to be in purgatory (if there were such a thing) until that time. The dead who die in the Lord are blessed from henceforth (Revelation 14:13). This was not only true from the moment that this was said, for also prior to that time there was salvation in Christ for those who died, and thus also from the time of their death forward. The converted thief was already with Christ upon the day of his death. "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Christ confirmed this with the word "verily." Hereby is not expressed that He was saying it to him today, but rather that today he would be with Christ in heaven. The first did not need to be confirmed, for the thief and others could adequately hear this. Rather, it was the second which the thief requested, and He promised him that he would enjoy this on this very day, immediately upon his death.

Objection #1: "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zechariah 9:11).

Answer (1) This most certainly cannot be a reference to purgatory -- not even according to their proposition -- for it did not exist as yet. Rather, this would then be a reference to that fabricated place where the believers of the Old Testament were kept until the time of Christ.

(2) The prophet speaks of the deliverance from the prison of Babylon. He refers to this as a pit, since prisons generally were, and still are, in caverns under the earth. "There being no water" means that there was no refreshment which those who were thirsty could receive by drinking.

Objection #2: "... lest at any time ... thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing" (Matthew 5:25-26).

Answer: This is a parable that relates to the dealings of creditors with debtors who are without means. Hereby Christ is referring to the eternal damnation which awaits unrepentant sinners, from which there will be no deliverance until full payment is made for their sins -- which will not occur to all eternity.

Objection #3: "It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matthew 12:32). Thus, forgiveness can yet be anticipated after this life; this can only occur in purgatory.

Answer: This means that no forgiveness can be anticipated after this life, for it is stated expressly that sin will not be forgiven in the world to come. No mention is made at all that there is forgiveness in the world to come. This is as much as to say: either now or never.

Objection #4: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). It is thus expressly stated that everyone will be tried by fire and that he will be saved by fire.

Answer (1) If one would wish to construct a purgatory from this, it would first have to be proven that trial and salvation by fire do occur after the day of man's death. However, the apostle speaks of what man's experience in this life will be.

(2) Fire is not to be understood here as physical fire which would be capable of affecting man's soul and his works. Rather, fire must be understood as referring to persecution and oppression in this world for the sake of the Word (cf. Zechariah 3:2; Malachi 3:2-3). "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" (Luke 12:49). The apostle says that by way of persecution it will be manifest how and what everyone has built upon the foundation of the gospel. When persecution comes, nothing but the truth will be able to be the foundation for one's suffering, and whatever has been peripheral to that he will reject, and thus the fire will save him. If, however, he has conducted himself in a genuine manner, he will be bold in suffering and his uprightness will be manifest in the day of trial.

Objection #5: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Php 2:10). No one can honor Jesus under the earth, however, except those who are in purgatory, and thus there must be a purgatory.

Answer: There are indeed creatures under the earth and there are also devils there. However, Christ, by His suffering and death, has merited all power in heaven and on earth, and everything must be subject to Him -- which the devils were when He commanded them to depart. The bending of the knees cannot be taken in a literal sense, for souls in purgatory have no knees. Instead, it signifies subjection to Him -- be it willingly or unwillingly. It thus remains a fact that there

is no purgatory. Consequently, all popish souls have been delivered from it. In addition to purgatory, the Papists, on very precarious grounds, fabricate two additional subterranean localities. The one locality was for the fathers of the Old Testament, from which Christ would have delivered them in His descent into hell. Since they are already delivered from this, however, we shall spare ourselves any further effort. The other fabricated locality is for children who die without being baptized, and in their view may neither enter heaven nor hell, but must eternally remain secluded there without pain or joy. We have refuted this above, for Scripture knows of no such place. The children of members of the covenant have the promise of salvation. It is not in the hands of adults to save or cause children to perish by either having them baptized or by depriving them of it.

Thus, the soul does not die, but rather continues its actual existence, retains its intellect and will, and immediately upon death remains active, without coming into purgatory. It will either suffer all the terrors of hell and endure the wrath of God; or it will enjoy all joy and happiness in immediate fellowship with God in perfect love and holiness, doing so in the presence of angels and the souls of the just made perfect, eternally to jubilate hallelujahs. This all being true, you who are unconverted ought to fear! Do not entertain the illusion that there will yet be the hope of being saved by being purified in purgatory. It is but a fable and you will find yourself deceived when immediately you will find yourself to be in hell, from which there will be no deliverance to all eternity. And you, believers, do not be fearful of death, for according to the promises of the God of truth, your soul will immediately be taken into glory and joy. You may freely desire to depart and to be with Christ, which will be far better for you. Oh, what a sudden change it will be when the soul will find herself free from all sin, darkness, and torments, and instead may behold the countenance of God in righteousness and be satisfied with His likeness! She will thus be preserved until the last day, when the soul will be reunited with the body in order to enjoy forever with body and soul that glory and that joy which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). Amen.

107. Chapter 101: The Resurrection of the Dead

----- CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED-ONE ----- The Resurrection of the Dead When after death the body will have returned unto dust, and the soul will have been preserved in her designated place until the last day, then all particles will return to their original substance to constitute the very same body with which the soul will be reunited. These will constitute the very same human being who previously existed. To arise from the dead or from the grave occasionally signifies:

(1) to be delivered from great oppression: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezekiel 37:12);

(2) regeneration: "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together" (Ephesians 2:5-6); "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead" (Ephesians 5:14).

However, it generally refers to the actual resurrection of the deceased. This specifically refers to those who, in both the Old and New Testaments, have been resurrected by way of a miracle, and have subsequently died again -- as well as to the general resurrection of all men when the Lord Jesus will come to execute judgment at the end of the world. It is the latter we shall now discuss. This doctrine, which cannot be deduced from nature, is ridiculed by pagans and rejected by heretics. However, the Holy Scriptures reveal it so clearly -- to the terror of the ungodly and the comfort of the godly -- that it is amazing that men dare to deny it in like fashion as those during the time of the apostles who began to contradict it. "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Corinthians 15:12). The Nature of This Resurrection This resurrection will not have a natural cause -- as if those bodies could again be brought to life after a period of time by certain motions, changes, and transformations. This can neither be accomplished by an angel nor any other creature. Rather, this is a work of omnipotence and will therefore be performed by God, the Creator of heaven and earth, "Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17); "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them" (John 5:21).

Just as there neither were nor could have been secondary causes in creation, it will be likewise at the resurrection of the dead, for it is a work of omnipotence in which no finite powers are involved. The angels will not be instrumental in the resurrection itself. However, God will use them to gather those before the judgment seat who have been resurrected: "And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31). Just as Jesus generally made use of external signs when performing miracles to make the miracle all the more obvious, so the Lord will also add an external sign at the general resurrection of the dead: a very great sound that will resound throughout the world. "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible" (1 Corinthians 15:52); "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1

Thessalonians 4:16).

Enoch and Elijah will not be resurrected, for they did not die. Neither will those who have arisen from the graves at the resurrection of Christ, nor all those who will be alive at the last day, be resurrected, for they will not die but be changed in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). However, with the exception of all such persons, all who have died from the beginning of the world unto the end (either prior to or after their birth) will arise -- be they small or great, be they godly or ungodly. The very same bodies which were either burned, drowned in the sea, eaten by beasts or men, or died a common death and thus returned to dust -- those same bodies will be reunited with their very own souls which neither died nor were able to die, and thus they will be the same persons they were prior to their death. However, their physical characteristics will have been changed. This change will render the ungodly immortal and capable of eternally bearing all punishments and the suffering of pain. The godly, who according to the soul will have the image of God perfectly, and who will be bodily conformed to Christ Php 3:21, will put on incorruption, immortality, glory, power, and spirituality 1 Corinthians 15:42;1 Corinthians 15:44;1 Corinthians 15:53-54.

All men will be resurrected simultaneously on the last day. Prior to that time there will not be a physical resurrection of martyrs who would reign with Christ for a thousand years, as chiliasts or millennialists fabricate from Revelation 20:1-15. Rather, when Christ will come to execute judgment, all men will be resurrected simultaneously. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24); "... at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible" (1 Corinthians 15:52); "I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). How astonishing it will be when all particles will return to their original substance and every bone will return to its skeleton -- when the dead will become alive and stand together upon the earth!

Two matters must be proven more specifically: 1) that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and 2) that the identical bodies will be resurrected.

Both the Godly and the Ungodly Will be Resurrected Question: Will there truly be a resurrection of the dead of both the godly and the ungodly?

Answer: The Socinians insist that the soul will no longer exist after death, the same body will not arise again, and the ungodly will not arise at all. This is therefore a total denial of the resurrection. We, however, deem the resurrection of the dead -- both of the good as well as the evil -- to be an irrefutable truth. This is confirmed by express textual references. First, there is Job 19:25-27 : "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

(1) Job does not speak of a physical restoration from his misery, but of a resurrection on the last day: "He shall stand at the latter day."

(2) He anticipates this to be after his death when the worms will have destroyed his skin and his body, and he will have turned to dust.

(3) He states that Christ will stand at the last day, that is, make him alive again. [Note: The Statenvertaling differs here from the KJV. The Dutch text reads as follows: “Hij zal de laatste over het stof opstaan,” that is, “He shall at the latter day resurrect my dust.” In the KJV this reads: “He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”]

(4) He states that with his own eyes he will see God in the flesh. All this cannot relate to the restoration of his health, but is a clear reference to the resurrection on the last day. Secondly, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). This reference is neither to the deliverance from Babylon nor from Antiochus, having spoken previously of these. Instead the prophet speaks of what should happen subsequently, namely, that Michael (that is, who is like unto God) who is the Lord Jesus, would arise in a most distressful time such as had never been before. This time of distress would be when Gog and Magog would surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city (Revelation 20:9).

(1) At that time the Lord Jesus will come to execute judgment; that is, when all the dead shall be resurrected (vss. 11-15). In these verses the very same matters are recounted in the identical order as they are recorded in Daniel, and it is therefore evident that they refer to the same matter. However, Revelation 20:1-15 clearly pertains to the coming of Christ to execute judgment, and to the resurrection of the dead. This is therefore also true for (Daniel 12:2).

(2) At that time the “wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3). This neither refers to the deliverance from Babylon, nor from Antiochus, for the priests were wicked.

(3) Upon this resurrection either eternal life or eternal contempt would follow, which will not occur other than at the end of world.

(4) At that time the dead will be resurrected and arise. When it is said that there will be “many” rather than “all,” this is not suggestive of a contrast to others who would not be resurrected. Rather, it implies that there are many dead. Or else it points to the distinction between those who will inherit salvation and those who will go lost. Many will arise unto eternal life, and many unto eternal contempt. There is a similar manner of speech in the following passage: “For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God ... hath abounded unto many; ... many were made sinners ... many be made righteous” Romans 5:15; Romans 5:19. As a confirmation of this truth, consider (Isaiah 26:19).

Thirdly, “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:39-40). A Socinian concludes from this that the deceased no longer exist and come to a renewed existence in the resurrection. The text confirms their existence, however, for they have eternal life prior to being resurrected in the last day. That which is nonexistent is incapable of being resurrected, for that which is resurrected already existed, even though it was not alive. Nothing can be said about something that does not exist.

Fourthly, “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you”

(Romans 8:11). It does not say here, as the Socinians maintain, that another person will take the place of the deceased. Resurrection implies the restoration of that which has decayed, and our mortal bodies will be made alive. Thus there is no substitution of one person for another.

Fifthly, it is evident that the ungodly will also be resurrected (1) From Daniel 12:2, where the prophet states that “many ... shall awake ... to shame and everlasting contempt.” (2) From what the Lord Jesus says: “And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29). A Socinian will say that the reference is to spiritual resurrection; however, the text refutes him. Consider also “... all that are in the graves.” To be in the grave never signifies being in an unconverted state, nor does coming out of the grave signify conversion. Furthermore, those who are in the grave will not be regenerated or converted. Therefore this text cannot be a reference to regeneration. Verse 25 refers to spiritual resurrection. There the unconverted are referred to as the dead, and being made alive is limited to all who hear the voice of Christ, in contrast with others who do not hear Him. Moreover, the resurrection is said to be unto damnation as well as unto life. This cannot be said of regeneration, for that is only unto life. The ultimate destiny of either damnation or life is applicable to those who do good and those who do evil. The reference is therefore not to regeneration, but to the resurrection of the dead.

(3) “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). It cannot be stated more clearly than this.

Evasive Argument: This only proves the resurrection of the good, for the apostle speaks of a resurrection which he anticipated. By those whom he calls the “unjust” he understands the good, who prior to their conversion were unjust.

Answer i) Then some must have been righteous prior to their conversion, for otherwise there could not have been a distinction between the just and the unjust, and thus none are excepted here. ii) Paul’s comforting hope indeed referred to the resurrection of the just; however, his declaration was of a general nature and thus encompassed all. There is a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

(4) This is also confirmed in 2 Corinthians 5:10 : “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” If all men are to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, then they must first arise; they also who have done evil will appear there and bear their punishment according to their evil. Therefore the ungodly will also arise.

Evasive Argument: By “for we all” is to be understood of those persons who will yet be alive on the last day. Answer: Paul speaks of all who were living at that time; that is, he himself and all to whom he was writing, whose ears and eyes this letter would reach. At the same time he includes all men, for as they are all alike in death, so will they also be alike in the resurrection. He is therefore here not speaking of those people only who will be living on the last day, but of all men -- good and evil. We have thus observed that all men will arise. The Same Bodies that Died Will be Resurrected

Question: Will the same bodies which died also be resurrected? The Socinians answer negatively, and we affirmatively for the following reasons:

First, it is evident from the words “to arise” and “to be resurrected.” If other bodies were to be created, then there would neither be a resurrection nor a rising again.

Secondly, the Scriptures say most clearly that the same bodies which we had in this life and which died will arise. (1) There is (Job 19:25-27). See our comments in the above. I shall see God in my flesh and I shall see Him with my eyes.

(2) “It [the body] is sown [that is, dies and is buried] in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 1 Corinthians 15:53. The apostle shows that in the resurrection our bodies will have different characteristics, but that it will be the same entity. For he states that the body which is sown in corruption, will be raised in incorruption, and that this corruptible and mortal body will put on incorruption and immortality. He speaks here of the identical subject, that is, how it will be in death and how it will be in the resurrection. If, upon being resurrected, the body which dies would become something else as far as substance is concerned, he would not be able to say “this body.”

(3) “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Php 3:21). He speaks of our body and of our vile body, and states what will happen to it in the resurrection: it will be fashioned like unto a glorious body.

Evasive Argument: This manner of speech implies nothing else but that we shall have another body -- just as is true for a flower which reappears in the month of May.

Answer: We never say that a fallen leaf reappears. If we say this concerning a flower, we understand it to refer to the same type of flower and as proceeding from the same root. There is also no agreement, however, as far as use of language is concerned. It is stated expressly here: our, this, and vile.

Thirdly, it is also evident from the resurrection of Christ who with His own body, which had died, became alive again. The actual body which had been laid in the grave arose and left the grave. Therefore the angels said, “He is not here: for He is risen” (Matthew 28:6). When Christ came to His disciples, He said, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have” (Luke 24:39). It is also proven by the resurrection of the saints at the time of Christ’s death and resurrection. It is expressly stated there that those bodies which had been buried -- those bodies of the saints which had expired -- were in actuality resurrected. “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose” (Matthew 27:52). Thus, the resurrection pertains to the identical bodies.

Fourthly, it is also confirmed by the righteousness of God which demands that it will go well with the righteous and ill with the ungodly. This does not always occur in this life, and thus it must occur after this life. “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8). This righteous retribution, oppression, and comfort would occur in the day of Christ. This could not occur, however, unless they were resurrected and unless the same bodies were resurrected. For otherwise the same

bodies which had suffered would not find rest, but others instead. And the same bodies which had been troublesome would not in turn be troubled and punished with flaming fire, but others instead. The apostle states expressly, however, that this must occur to the same bodies. "... that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). From all this it is evident that the same bodies will be resurrected.

Objection #1: "But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: so man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep" (Job 14:10-12).

Answer (1) A comparison is made here between what man is in his life and in his death. At his death he is no more in the land of the living, nor among people, nor will he be seen any longer.

(2) He will neither return to nor be in the company of men. He will arise neither naturally nor by his own power.

(3) He will not arise prior to the last day when the heavens will pass away with a great noise (2 Peter 3:10). All this we readily admit, but it does not therefore follow that man will not arise on the last day.

Objection #2: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 3:19).

Answer: In this life man is preeminent above the beasts in many ways. In death they resemble each other in that they both die and their bodies return to dust. However, the difference in them is that the soul of animals goes downward and is annihilated, whereas the soul of man goes upward to God, and thus continues its existence. Furthermore, the body of man will be resurrected on the last day to be reunited with the soul. The resemblance of which the preacher speaks here pertains to death. He does not, however, mention the resurrection; therein they do not resemble each other.

Objection #3: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:50); "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them" (1 Corinthians 6:13).

Answer (1) The apostle does not speak here of the essence of the body, but rather of its weakness and corruption which will be taken away; in the place of corruption, dishonor, and weakness, the body will receive incorruption, glory, and power (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

(2) When the apostle says that the belly will be destroyed, he is referring to the natural use of food and drink. The latter will cease at death and in the resurrection the belly will no longer serve the purpose of digesting food.

Objection #4: "They are equal unto the angels" (Luke 20:36).

Answer: This is not true as far as essence is concerned, but rather to the fact that they neither die, marry, nor procreate.

Objection #5: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him," etc. (1 Corinthians 15:36-41). Paul demonstrates here that the same body which dies will not become alive again, but rather that God grants a different body.

Answer (1) Paul is answering the following question: "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (1 Corinthians 15:35). He thus confirms the resurrection of the dead, and if there is a resurrection of the dead, it follows that the same bodies will arise; else there would be no resurrection, but a new creation instead. Rather, he asks concerning the manner in which this resurrected body will function, as well as about its qualities.

(2) The Lord Jesus applies this same comparison to His resurrection (John 12:24). And yet Christ arose with His own and very same body.

(3) The apostle shows that death must precede the resurrection and that the very same grain becomes alive again, the very same shoot and corn coming from the same grain. Thus also man's own and identical body will become alive again. From this very same body a different body comes forth, not in essence, but as far as characteristics are concerned -- as we have observed in verse 40, etc. Therefore, it will not be resurrected with the same characteristics it had when it died, but with more glorious characteristics, and these will be more preeminent in the one than in the other.

Objection #6: Many bodies have been burned and have even been eaten by beasts and men. It is therefore impossible that the same bodies would arise again.

Answer: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). God is omniscient and knows where every particle is located, and He is almighty to bring them together again, even though we cannot understand this. Take a pound of steel filings and mix it with twenty pounds of filings of copper, tin, lead, and sand. Would an ignorant person be able to understand how -- without melting and removing it from the container -- all the steel can be separated and brought together from all the other materials from which it cannot be distinguished? Would he not say that this is impossible? And yet it can be done quickly and easily by rolling a magnet around in the mixture which will only attract the steel, so that it can all be brought together again to its former weight.

We have thus abundantly vindicated this most comforting doctrine of the resurrection. This Doctrine Is a Terror to the Ungodly and a Comfort to the Godly The doctrine of the resurrection is a terror to the ungodly, for the very body, which they now cherish so much, and for which they slave so much to satisfy and beautify it, will eternally bear unbearable pain in hell. Those eyes which you now misuse so greatly to stir up filthy lust, whereby you now display the wrath, pride, and vanity of the heart, will behold with terror the Lord Jesus, the righteous Judge, and will never see light any more. Those ears, which are now ready to receive all vanities, curiosities, immoral language, foolishness, and backbiting, will hear with terror the sentence of the Judge: "Depart from Me, ye cursed," and to all eternity your ears will be filled with the howling of those who are damned together with you, along with the dreadful manifestation of God's wrath. That mouth and tongue,

which you now misuse to curse, lie, backbite, say vain things, indulge, carouse, drink, and fornicate, will then howl and scream, and in grief you will chew on that tongue. Instead of the scents which you exude to show your greatness, make yourself attractive, arouse others sexually, and be stimulated toward fornication yourself, there shall be nothing but unbearable stench for you. You who now despise the smell of the poor will be no more than a filthy stench. Those hands which now handle cards and dice, and which you now misuse in unrighteousness and the execution of all manner of subtle devices, you will then wring in pain. Yes, all those members which you are now using as weapons of unrighteousness to serve the world and sin will eternally be in the flames. Oh, dreadful state! Oh unconverted, if only you had some perception of this! May the terror of the Lord persuade you to believe! As much as the resurrection of the dead is a terror to the ungodly, so much is it a comfort to the godly. Believers have much sorrow in this life -- also according to the body. Many have weak bodies; are full of pain and subject to many sicknesses and mishaps; weep and cry sorrowfully; observe with sorrow the ungodliness of the world; must endure being mimicked by many; must hear the contemptuous, biting, and slanderous words of their opponents; and must suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and wrong. Moreover, their corruptible body burdens the soul and their earthly tabernacle oppresses their heart so filled with concerns. Believers, be it known, however, that your bodies, in which you must now suffer so much, will one day be delivered from all sorrows. The Lord will then wipe all tears from your eyes and will change this vile body so that it may be conformed to the glorious body of Christ. Then your body will shine forth as the stars, and as the brightness of the firmament. Your eyes will rejoice in beholding your beloved Jesus and all those glorious things which are to be seen in heaven. Your ears will delight themselves in hearing the heavenly hallelujahs, and you will join them in singing the heavenly doxologies. All that God has prepared to the delight of your body, the Lord will cause you to enjoy forever. What a wondrous exchange that will be! Therefore, in all patience suffer all that is distasteful to the body, and counteract your suffering by the expectation of glory.

Believers Exhorted to Use Their Bodies to the Glory of God

If such glory is to be anticipated for your bodies, oh believers, then also use your bodies presently for the service of the Lord. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:12-13); "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The inner man is concealed from the eye of man; however, it is made manifest by the body. If we then are to let our light shine before men in order that God might be glorified, we must do so with the body. Therefore, give heed to your entire physical constitution. Your conduct ought to be such that you do not give the impression of being affectatious or fraudulent. Let your conduct be upright, natural, moral, wise, honorable, and pleasing. Use your eyes to behold the works of God and for the reading of His Word. Be on guard for offending by way of your eyes or to let your eyes be the cause of offenses. See to it that your eyes are neither stern, angry, proud, shifty, shameless, adulterous, curious, nor unstable. Rather, control them so that they may convey wisdom, dignity, honor, and straightforwardness, and let them be moved in earnestness, showing friendliness or compassion -- all according to what the subjects are. "Let

thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee" (Proverbs 4:25). May it be your continual prayer "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity" (Psalms 119:37). Close your ears to all foolishness, vain and frivolous conversations, backbiting, and curiosity. Rather let your ear be open for the Word of the Lord, for the complaints of the poor and sorrowful, and with composure seek to understand well what is being said to us. Use your tongue to God's honor; that is, to sing His praises, to declare His perfections, and to be of benefit to your neighbor. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29); "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" (Psalms 34:12-13). Make David's resolution your own: "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Psalms 39:1). May it be your continual prayer: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3). Use your hands to be diligent in an honorable profession. "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thessalonians 4:11). In all the management of your body and the utilization of its life, only endeavor to adorn godliness, to be an example to others, and to render glory to God -- until this corruptible put on incorruption, this mortal immortality, and this vile body glory.

108. Chapter 102: Concerning the Last Judgment and the End of the World

----- CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED-TWO ----- Concerning the Last Judgment and the End of the World When all men who are to be born according to God's decree have come into existence and become the recipients of life, and the elect will have been converted and gathered in, the Lord, upon a day designated by Him, will summon all men before His judgment seat and publicly judge them. God has dominion and reigns over all men who live upon earth. Already in this life He punishes the ungodly and chastises His children; this is also denominated a judgment: "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Psalms 119:120). God also judges every man who by death is translated from time to eternity, sending them to their destination. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). There will come a moment, however, when God will cause all men to appear before Him collectively, and this is preeminently referred to as the eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:2).

Scripture's Testimony Concerning the Last Judgment That there will be such a public and general judgment cannot be ascertained from nature. It can only be ascertained from Scripture and be confirmed by faith. The human conscience also convinces the heathen that they must anticipate the judgment of God after this life, culminating in either glory or damnation (Romans 2:15). It is also common knowledge that God is a righteous Judge who will cause it to be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. That which Solomon says is also in some measure imprinted upon man's nature: "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him: but it shall not be well with the wicked" (Ecclesiastes 8:12-13). This does not always happen in this life, however, and therefore one can conclude that it will occur after this life. However, the general and public nature of this judgment and procedure are only revealed in Scripture. That there will be such a judgment is evident from these texts and many others: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" Jude 1:14-15; "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9); "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14); "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36); "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10); "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1).

These suffice to convince a believer of the Word of God of the truth of these matters. Additional texts will be presented as we proceed. The Final Judgment Executed by God in the Person of His

Son Jesus Christ. The Judge is God who created heaven and earth. Abraham calls him “the Judge of all the earth” (Genesis 18:25); David and Paul call Him “the righteous Judge” (2 Timothy 4:8); and this judgment is “the righteous judgment of God” Romans 2:5, executed by “God the Judge of all” (Hebrews 12:23).

However, this judgment will be executed by the Lord Jesus in a visible manner. “And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man” (John 5:27). The reason for this is that He, as the Son of God, has assumed the human nature, has been obedient to the Father unto the death of the cross, and has executed the great work of redemption for the elect, in consequence of which the good pleasure of God would prosper in His hand (Isaiah 53:10). This is what the Lord Jesus says, “For the Father judgeth no man, (that is, separate from the Son and in such a visible manner) but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). This is also to be observed in the following passage, “Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). The Lord Jesus will come from heaven as Judge. He will not come to earth to reign a thousand years, as the premillennialists are dreaming; they misinterpret Revelation 20:1-15. Rather, He will come upon a great cloud -- not clothed with humility, but in power and glory, the greatness of which far exceeds one’s imagination. Once already Christ has been transfigured on the holy mountain before the eyes of His three disciples, who were witnesses of His majesty and glory which He received from God (cf. Matthew 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17-18). His glorious appearance will, however, also infinitely exceed that event when He will come in His essential glory and in the glory of His Father, together with the holy angels who will accompany Him as His servants. Observe this in the following passages: “He (the Son of man) shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26); “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27). The manifestation of this glory will be all the more awesome due to:

(1) The great sound of the last trumpet: “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

(2) The splendor of the throne which will be placed in the clouds upon which He as Judge will be seated. The splendor of this throne is shown to Daniel in a vision. “His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire” (Daniel 7:9). Of this throne the Lord Jesus says that He will “sit upon the throne of His glory” (Matthew 25:31).

(3) The innumerable multitude of holy angels who will be present there as His servants, “when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him” (Matthew 25:31). Oh, how awesome and majestic will the appearance of that great Judge be!

It is also written that the saints will judge: “Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28); “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Corinthians 6:2). They will, however, not judge with legal authority and power; rather, as members of Christ they will enhance the glory and the work of their Head -- particularly approving of the judgment of Christ, as is written of an angel, “And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments” (Revelation 16:7). They will also do so with their deeds which will become manifest there, and with their godly presence they will condemn the ungodly, as Noah did the first world (Hebrews 11:7). The Objects of This Judgment:

The Devils and All Men

Those who will be judged are: (1) The devils whom God will cast down to hell, and deliver into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment

2 Peter 2:4, having reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day Jude 1:6. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:3).

(2) All men without exception: great, small, young, old, rich, poor, kings, and beggars. No qualifications will come into consideration here. He who is a human being will be judged: "And before Him shall be gathered all nations" (Matthew 25:34); "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10); "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10); "... who shall judge the quick and the dead" (2 Timothy 4:1); "Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). The ungodly, even though they "shall not stand in the judgment" Psalms 1:5, will nevertheless be there. Believers will also be present at this general judgment Matthew 25:34 -- even though they will not go into perdition, but instead will be translated from death to life. The Execution of this Judgment In the execution of this judgment we shall consider all that belongs to a righteous judgment, such as citation, appearance, cross-examination, the pronouncement of sentence, and execution.

First, the citation or the issuance of a subpoena will occur by the voice of the archangel, the trumpet of God 1 Thessalonians 4:16, and the great sound of a trumpet (Matthew 24:31). The contents of this will be: "Arise ye dead and come to the judgment."

Secondly, the appearance of the defendants will follow immediately upon this. No one will be able to turn aside as if the Lord were not his lawful judge, nor will anyone be able to plead extenuating circumstances. No one will be able to hide himself, nor avoid this judgment. No one will be forgotten, for the omniscient and omnipotent God will cause everyone to appear, and the angels will gather them before the throne. The Lord Jesus will separate the good from the evil, placing the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left hand. The good will be taken to meet Christ in the clouds, whereas the wicked will remain standing upon the earth. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Concerning this separation we read: "... and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matthew 25:32-33). The angels will also be used to that end: "And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31); "The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just" (Matthew 13:49).

Thirdly, subsequent to this, the examination will be conducted meticulously. All the sins of every person will be made manifest there. These include:

(1) All thoughts which everyone has ever thought, and thus also the most intimate frame of soul: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men" (Romans 2:16); "... until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

(2) All words which everyone has ever spoken: "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36-37); "To execute judgment upon all ... of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" Jude 1:15.

(3) All deeds which have been committed, either secretly or publicly, or have been committed in conjunction with others; and all the motions of the members of the body, as well as what has been done with each member -- with eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, etc. It will be manifest how we have obtained our belongings and how we have used them -- our clothing, homes, furnishings, gardens, food and drink -- as well as how we have engaged in our profession and what our conduct has been. It will be revealed how we have used the means of grace -- every sermon, every conviction, and the Word of God which we have had in our homes. It will pertain to the duration of our life and what we have done every year, month, day, and hour. In one word, everything will be considered -- small and great, good and evil. This will not only be true in a general sense, but for every individual matter. It will not only occur in the conscience of every man, but it will be made manifest to all. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). The standard by which this examination will occur is the law, which God has written upon the heart of every man (Romans 2:14-15), and which He has declared more plainly to the church by way of the Scriptures. According to this law men will be judged as to their status. "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Romans 2:16). When the apostle says, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" Romans 2:16, he does not mean to say that the gospel will be the rule by which this examination will be conducted, and whereby the quick and the dead will be judged, for the gospel will never have been proclaimed to most of them. Instead he is saying that in proclaiming the gospel, he also declared at the same time that there would be such a general judgment and that, by the terror of the Lord, he had sought to persuade men (2 Corinthians 5:11). The gospel will magnify the sins of the unconverted and make their damnation all the more severe, for "it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you" (Matthew 11:22). Believers will be acquitted by reason of the gospel, however, since they are partakers of the satisfaction and holiness of the Lord Jesus and thus have the righteousness of the law fulfilled in them (Romans 8:4). The law is therefore the standard whereby man's disposition, thoughts, words, and deeds will be judged. This is the opening of the books -- the book of everyone's conscience, the book of God's omniscience, as well as the book of God's eternal decree. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12).

Question: Will the sins of believers also be made manifest in this judgment?

Answer: Some answer negatively, and others in the affirmative. It is not a fundamental doctrine of faith, and we therefore need not render each other suspect about this. We maintain that the sins of believers will be made manifest in the judgment -- however, not as being unforgiven. This is evident:

(1) From general statements which are all-inclusive and do not make the sins of believers an exception. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12; cf. Ecclesiastes 12:14; Acts 17:31). Whenever Scripture makes no exception, we also may make none.

(2) From the fact that both believers and the ungodly will appear before the judgment seat of God, He being their Judge as well as of the ungodly. Since a righteous judge will most carefully examine what is both for and against the defendant, it thus follows that the judgeship of the Lord Jesus demands that He also examine the deeds of the godly. "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books" (Revelation 20:12).

(3) From the express statement that those faithful ministers who watch over souls "must give account" (Hebrews 13:17). An account cannot be given, however, except by a careful disclosure of one's entire conduct, and thus the imperfections and failures of the faithful will of necessity also be made public.

(4) When considering that the justice of God can only become manifest in the acquittal of believers if guilt and satisfaction are contrasted with each other.

(5) When considering that the satisfaction of Christ can only be viewed in its magnitude and efficacy when the sins for which He has made satisfaction are made manifest.

(6) When considering that the goal of salvation is the praise of God's glorious grace and mercy, and this cannot be perceived except by manifestation of the guilt incurred by the vessels of mercy.

(7) When considering that the godly have committed sins in conjunction with the ungodly. Thus, if the sin of an ungodly person committed in conjunction with a godly person is made manifest, then the sin of the godly person must become manifest likewise.

Objection #1: The Judge Himself has made satisfaction for all their sins. Why would He then bring all their sins to the foreground again and accuse them of those sins once more?

Answer: They will not be accused of those sins, nor will those sins be brought to the foreground as being unforgiven. Rather, they will be presented as having been committed indeed, but also as having been atoned for by the Surety.

Objection #2: God has already forgiven all their sins; He remembers them no more. He has cast them behind His back into the depth of the sea. They are covered Psalms 32:1, and thus they can no longer come to the fore.

Answer: "Not to remember" means "not to be punished," "not to be treated as a sinner" -- for with God there is no forgetfulness. To cover does not mean "to hide," for God, the angels, other godly persons, and also the ungodly have seen them. Rather, it means that He does not punish them.

Objection #3: It would be to the grief and shame of the godly if all their sins would be held before them again.

Answer: They will indeed be willing to own that they have been such sinners, since this manifestation will be to the glory of God's mercy and justice as well as of the satisfaction of Christ on their behalf. Neither shame nor grief will be an issue, since they have been reconciled.

Objection #4: Only the good deeds will be mentioned in the judgment -- and not the evil deeds. "For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me" (Matthew 25:35-36).

Answer: These words neither belong to the judicial sentence nor to the examination, both of which are under discussion here. In pronouncing the sentence, the Judge will advance the fact that they have loved, have been redeemed by Christ, and have been believers (as being the reason and evidence that they are elect); for love is the fruit of faith Galatians 5:6, and is evidence of the love of God toward them (1 John 4:19; 1 Corinthians 8:3). These deeds will not be mentioned as the meriting causes of salvation (for they receive heaven as an inheritance), but as a proof that they are partakers of the righteousness of Christ. Justification and sanctification are linked together and can never be separated from each other.

Fourthly, we are also to consider the sentence of the defendants in this judgment, which will be pronounced separately toward the godly and the ungodly. "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" Matthew 25:34; Matthew 25:41. The sentence upon the godly will first be pronounced in order to glorify them before the eyes of all the ungodly and to the increased grief and shame of the ungodly.

Fifthly, this will finally be followed by the execution of the sentence. The ungodly will be cast away into hell to be tormented there forever. Subsequent thereto, however, the godly will be ushered into the third heaven -- the paradise of God -- by the King, in order to have the eternal satisfaction of joy in immediate fellowship with God. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46).

Place, Time, and Duration of the Final Judgment The place where the judgment will be executed is not the valley of Jehoshaphat, as some of the Papists maintain by misinterpretation of the following text: "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there. ... Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about" (Joel 3:2; Joel 3:12). In this text the reference is to an extraordinary deliverance of the people of God and to a specific judgment upon their enemies, similar to the special deliverance God gave to Israel and the judgment He executed upon the enemies at the time of Jehoshaphat. He praised the Lord for this and consequently called the place the "the valley of Berachah," that is, the valley of praise (2 Chronicles 20:26). Instead, the place of the last judgment will be in the air -- in the clouds. "They will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 24:30); "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17); "Behold, He cometh with clouds" (Revelation 1:7). The time when the final judgment will occur is the last day, upon which the world will perish immediately. However, how long it will be before this will occur is hidden from man. But we do know that this day will come suddenly and unexpectedly. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32); "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:13); "For as a snare

shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:35); "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts 1:7). There have always been curious and bold individuals who have endeavored to calculate its time and have declared when the time will be. They have, however, been put to shame throughout history. There is still a Jewish fable which judges from the first verse of Genesis that the world will remain six thousand years since the Hebrew letter א (aleph) is found six times in that verse, this being the first letter of eleph, which means "thousand." However, a faulty foundation results in a faulty building.

Even though the Lord has concealed the precise moment from us, He has nevertheless given us several signs in His Word which must precede Christ's coming unto judgment. Some of these have already been fulfilled to a large extent, such as powerful delusion by way of many heresies and false prophets, apostasy, terrifying wars, earthquakes, floods, famines, dreadful persecution and oppression of the church, prevailing carelessness and ungodliness, the proclamation of the gospel throughout the entire world, and the revelation of the antichrist. There are yet matters, however, which are to be fulfilled prior to Christ's coming to judgment. There must yet be the destruction of the city of Rome, the throne of the beast (Revelation 16:13); the undressing, forsaking, and contemptuous rejection of the harlot of Babylon (Revelation 17:16); the eradication of her empire Revelation 18:1-24; (Revelation 19:2); the conversion of the entire Jewish nation to the acknowledgment that Jesus is the Messiah (Romans 11:15); the glorious millennial state of the church upon earth; the rebellion of Gog and Magog which will follow this Revelation 20:1-15, and the time when they will encompass the camp of the saints and oppress them in an extraordinary manner. It is then that the Lord Jesus will suddenly come to execute judgment. From these things we can deduce that the day of judgment is not that near as yet. This day is near for every individual person, however, and the day of judgment will find a man in the state in which he was at the time of his death. There is another sign which will accompany the coming of Christ, such as the sign of the Son of man which will then appear in heaven (Matthew 24:30). No mention is made of the nature of the sign, and this can therefore not be determined at all. Some are of the opinion that it will be the coming of Christ Himself, others believe it to be the erection of His glorious throne Matthew 25:31, others an extraordinary and glorious radiance, and again others believe it to be the great noise of the last trumpet. The superstitious papists believe that it will be a great and glorious cross. Whatever it may be, however, it will be something whereby the living will acknowledge and say, "Now the Judge is coming unto judgment, and the end is here." The duration of this judgment is also unknown. From that which has been said it can indeed be deduced that it will neither be a silent proceeding, nor only last one or several hours, or even for a day, as some imagine. Instead, it may last a very long time, and were it to last -- give or take -- two thousand years, there will be no haste if this task were to require that much time. Believers will then be in glory and in a state of bliss already, and the ungodly will suffer anxiety which is so unbearable that they would wish that they could escape the presence of Christ. However, the duration of it is not to be determined. The Final Judgment to be Greatly Feared by the Ungodly

Consider all the above collectively and bring it vividly to your attention. Christ will come to judgment; He will appear in a very conspicuous manner and every eye will see Him; He will come with great glory and as Judge to execute judgment; He will summon all men before Him and separate the good from the evil; He will examine everyone painstakingly and make all their deeds

manifest; He will pronounce the sentence of life or death upon everyone's work. Thereupon He will execute the sentence and cast the ungodly into hell and usher the godly into heaven.

How this should cause the hair of the ungodly to stand on end for fear, for it will be a dreadful day for them! It is "that great and notable day of the Lord" (Acts 2:20). "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1). Then they will experience what is written: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14). Then they shall say "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:16-17). It is amazing that people who are so desirous to know future things and so careful to make provision for their own old age as well as for their children and grandchildren -- and if possible gather treasures -- are nevertheless so careless about this great and terrible day. Their conscience convinces them of sin, and if they would but give a little heed to their conscience, they would be fearful of wrath. This day makes no impression in the hearts of many, however; they neither wish to think of it nor reflect upon what it will be like. They ignore it, as if the likelihood of this day would be less if they do not think about it. The devils tremble for this day and Felix became very fearful when he heard Paul speak of the impending judgment. Who is, however, presently persuaded by the terror of the Lord to believe? It is a grievous sign when someone who lives in sin nevertheless does not tremble for this great judgment.

You who are careless, insensitive, comfortable in your sin, carnal, worldly-minded, of the earth earthy, immoral, fornicators, adulterers, proud boasters, gamblers, drunkards, liars, backbiters, hypocrites, and disobedient rejecters of the gospel -- hear and take notice. How do you think you will fare? I assure you that you will be summoned to judgment just as you are. You will see the Lord Jesus in glory, sitting as your Judge upon the throne of His glory. The call will go out to you, "Adam, where art thou? What have you done?" You will then tremblingly appear, and there the history of your life, together with a review of all your private and public sins will be read to you. This will silence you and the Judge will look upon you in wrath, and in anger will address you as a cursed one. The godly will behold you with contempt and approve of your condemnation. All this you will have to endure for a long time with utmost anxiety. It will be unbearable to you that those whom you now despise will then be in glory and will judge you. Upon this will follow the eternal casting away into the pool which burns with sulphur and where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. There the smoke of your torment will arise to all eternity, and there the worm of your conscience, which will bite you furiously, will never die. There you will seek death but not find it, and in unbearable despair you will bite your tongue for grief. All this will come upon you. Where will you then flee? All grace will then be withheld from you; all hiding places will have been removed, and all refreshment, change of condition, and relief will then cease. Only your sorrows according to soul and body will have no end. Oh, that by the terror of the Lord we could persuade you and that we could save you through fear! Now the wrath of God can still be escaped, since Christ as the way, the truth, and the life is yet offered to you in the gospel. Therefore, repent now and believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. May the almighty God now cause you to come tremblingly to the Lord and His goodness, so that you may stand in that day before the Son

of man with great liberty and joy when He will come in His glory. The Final Judgment to be Joyously Anticipated by the Godly

Believers, you who seek Jesus unto justification and sanctification, do not fear the coming of the Lord. Instead, long for it and anticipate it with great joy; love His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:8). Comfort each other with the promise of His coming 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, and lift up your heads, for your redemption is drawing nigh (Luke 21:28). Ought you not to do so?

First, our Lord Jesus will then be glorified before the eyes of all men, angels, and devils. He who has been humbled so deeply while upon earth; who then was a Man of sorrows, tempted in all miseries, and abhorred and despised by the people; who died upon the cross while experiencing the wrath of God and the mockery of the people; and who presently is so little acknowledged, revered, and feared wherever He is preached, but instead is contemptuously rejected by the world and is still mocked and persecuted in His members -- that Jesus will then be seen in His glory, sitting on the throne of His glory as the Judge of all. Therefore, rejoice ye lovers of the Lord Jesus, and long for that day, for then your Jesus will be glorified in all His saints and "be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

Secondly, this day will be a day of great refreshment for you, for it will be the time of refreshing Acts 3:19, a day of deliverance from all your misery Luke 21:28, a day of being received at the marriage feast Matthew 25:6, and a day of crowning (2 Timothy 4:8).

Thirdly, the good and the evil will then be separated from each other. Presently -- to your grief -- they are intermixed in the church, but then you will "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not" (Malachi 3:18). All the godly will then stand as a single assembly together at the right hand of Christ. Not one ungodly person or hypocrite will be able to find a place among them. Rather, they will all be placed together at the left hand of the Judge.

Fourthly, you will then observe the execution of righteous wrath upon all the ungodly and the oppressors of the church. Then He will come, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Fifthly, He will then confess before the angels and all men that He loves you, that, as your Surety, He has atoned for all your sins, and that you are an heir of eternal life. Oh, how great will your glory then be when you will be acknowledged by that great Judge as His bride, and when He will usher you into the house of His Father where there will be nothing but light, glory, holiness, and joy! Therefore, lift up your head out of all your sorrows and rejoice. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Believers Rebuked and Exhorted

It is a deplorable situation that believers rejoice so little over the coming of Christ unto judgment and are unable to comfort themselves with this in their current spiritual and temporal tribulations. If you ask what the reason for this is, then I answer:

(1) It proceeds from a misconception that it would be more glorious for the Lord Jesus, the church, and you if it were to occur presently in this life, as if it would not be such a great thing in the day of judgment.

(2) It proceeds from unbelief, because you fear that you are not a child of God and that you would yet find yourself at the left hand. Oh, why this continual doubting about one's state, since there are so many reasons to acknowledge grace? It is so harmful if the believer, in essence believing that he has been translated from death and is a possessor of life, nevertheless does not function as being in this state and as being an heir with Christ, and does not rejoice in this.

(3) It proceeds from the weakness of historical faith. One secretly believes that the Lord Jesus will come to judgment. If, however, historical faith were stronger, you would focus upon this day and deem it to be a present reality. You would then be conscious of the principle from which your present motions would proceed.

(4) It proceeds from carelessness. In your mind you remain too attached to the earthly and, with Peter, you would wish to erect tabernacles here to find pleasure for soul and body. Therefore, you reflect so little about the future -- as if that were not desirable. If you do not reflect much upon that great and glorious day, nor deem this to be to your comfort, joy, and glory; if you do not comfort others with those words, then it is no wonder that you neither have high thoughts of it nor much desire for it.

(5) It proceeds from a lack of love for Christ. If you had more of a desire for Christ's glory, and if you were more desirous of seeing Jesus in His glory and to be with your Bridegroom, your heart would reflect more upon it and long more for it.

Since the Lord Jesus will come to judgment: (1) Review your account, examine your debts, and place the satisfaction of Christ over against it. Endeavor by faith to have this account signed with the blood of the Lord Jesus.

(2) Adorn yourself for such a time with the glorious wedding garment -- the righteousness of the Lord Jesus -- so that you, being clothed with the garments of salvation and having put on the robe of righteousness, may see yourself as perfect in Him, as the righteousness of God, and thus anticipate that day with liberty.

(3) Be watchful, so that this day may not come upon you unawares. Furnish your lamps with oil, keep your loins girded and your candle burning Luke 12:35, and prayerfully anticipate the coming of the Bridegroom: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). You must now work and be abundant in the exercise of virtue: "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:46). You must now be doing, if you then wish to hear: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me" (Matthew 25:34-36). The End of the World

Once the ungodly will have been incarcerated in hell forever and the Judge will have entered heaven with His elect, the world shall perish. At the time of Noah, the first world, after having

existed approximately 1656 years, did perish by water -- the history of which has been recorded in Genesis 38:1-30. The Lord has promised and sworn that the world will no more perish by water, and, as a confirmation, has appointed the rainbow to be the sign thereof (cf. Genesis 8:21-22; Genesis 9:9-17; Isaiah 54:9). Even though the world will no more perish by water, it will perish once more with all that is in it. "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed" (Psalms 102:25-26). The heavens and the earth will perish by fire. "But the heavens and the earth ... are ... reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men ... in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" 2 Peter 3:7; 2 Peter 3:10; 2 Peter 3:12.

Heaven and Earth to be Purged and Restored Rather than Annihilated

Question: Will the structural edifice of heaven and earth be annihilated, or will they be purified by fire and be restored to their original purity, beauty, and glory?

Answer: There are differences of opinion about this. Some maintain the first, and some the second. It is not a point worthy of dispute. We are of the opinion that the heavens and the earth will be purified and be restored in their original luster. The reasons are as follows:

Proof #1: "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). This time is none other than the coming of Christ to judgment. Prior to that day we do not expect Christ from heaven. In the millennium all things will not be restituted. Corruption and sin will remain as long as the world stands. This time of Christ's coming unto judgment is called "the times of restitution of all things." "All things" does not refer to people; rather, as we have observed earlier from Peter's epistle, heaven and earth and all that is in it will, according to the apostle, be fully restored. They will thus continue as far as their substance is concerned and will only be changed as far as their characteristics are concerned.

Proof #2: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:19-23). The "creature" and "the whole creation" cannot refer to believers, and much less to the apostles being contrasted with other believers. For not only did the apostles have the firstfruits of the Spirit, but also all believers have it, and they are all "firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18). That "creation" and "creature" are not to be understood to refer to believers is evident as follows:

(1) There is a distinct contrast between creature and believers, for the creature anticipates the revelation of the children of God. The creature is not subject to vanity due to his own doings and to inherent guilt, but that of another, namely, the guilt of man -- for which reason God has cursed the

earth (Genesis 3:17; Genesis 5:29). Believers, together with all men, are subject to vanity due to their own doings. We repeat Romans 8:23 : “And not only they, but ourselves also.” Thus, there is an immediate contrast between the creature and believers. Believers are therefore not the creature, nor were the apostles, for the apostles were also subject to vanity -- not due to the guilt of believers, but, as is true for all believers, due to their own guilt.

(2) Neither the apostles nor believers are ever referred to as “the creature” or as “the whole creation”; but every believer is indeed called a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). However, this pertains to themselves; that is, relative to who they were previously, for nowhere are they in themselves, or in comparison to others, denominated as either the creature, or “the whole creation.” Others are, however, called creatures in contrast to believers. “... that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18; cf. Mark 13:19; Romans 8:39; Hebrews 4:13). Thus, creature or creation does not refer to believers but to the edifice of heaven and earth. This creation, contrary to its nature, is subject to vanity and must be subservient to sinful man. This creation will be delivered from bondage. Of this creation it is said (figuratively speaking) that it groans and hopes (as it is said to rejoice and clap hands), to be freed and restored to liberty, consistent with its mode of existence -- just as the children of God will then be placed in glorious liberty.

Therefore, the substance of heaven and earth will not be destroyed, but will remain.

Thirdly, “They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed” (Hebrews 1:11-12). That which waxes old, is folded up, and is changed continues to exist in essence. Furthermore, perishing also does not mean annihilation, but rather a change in state and characteristics. We thus say that people perish when they drown in the sea. Likewise the apostle Peter did say that the first world perished, whereas it nevertheless remained as far as its substance was concerned.

Fourthly, “Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now ... reserved unto fire ... shall pass away with a great noise ... shall be burned up ... be dissolved ... melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” 2 (Pet 3:6-7,10-13); “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” (Revelation 21:1).

(1) All these expressions are indicative of a wondrous change, but not of annihilation. All that perishes, burns, and melts in the world, remains the same as far as substance is concerned. Its condition and characteristics are changed. It is dissolved into its elements, but it is not annihilated as far as substance is concerned. From these expressions one can therefore not conclude that heaven and earth will be annihilated.

(2) The first world perished, but was not annihilated. After the world perishes, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. We know, however, that whatever is renewed is also said to be new (John 13:34; Galatians 6:15). There will be a new heaven and a new earth; this cannot be denied. How will this take place? Will this be by way of a new creation? Such a statement is not found in the Bible. Thus, the heaven and earth which now exist will remain as far as substance is concerned and be renewed as far as condition and characteristics are concerned. Only as far as

the sea is concerned do we read a different expression: It will be no more. Whether this refers to substance or characteristics, we shall leave unanswered. Whatever may be advanced contrary to that are but figures of speech which have been mentioned before, and upon which we have commented.

Man in his curiosity asks many questions about this, such as, "Shall God create new persons, animals, trees, etc. Will those persons fare better than Adam did and not sin, since it is stated that righteousness will dwell in that earth? Will there be animals? Will death among animals and vegetation also take place there? Will animals procreate?" etc. We have no desire to answer these and similar foolish questions. It is certain that the continuation of heaven and earth will not be purposeless. They will exist to the glory of the Creator, and for angels and men who may possibly (due to the mobility of their bodies) be able to travel from heaven to earth and from the earth to heaven. As angels currently do not miss heaven when they are upon earth, so will glorified believers also not miss heaven and communion with God if they were to come upon earth to observe the works of God there. They would thereby be able to glorify God as the angels did when God created heaven and earth Job 38:1-41.

We ought to aspire to be an heir of God and a fellow heir with Christ -- to be quickened to a godly walk by the hope of inheritance, and leave the earth with all that is in it for the ungodly as their portion. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" 1 (John 2:15;John 2:17); "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:11-12).

109. Chapter 103: Concerning Eternal Glory

----- CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED-THREE ----- Concerning Eternal Glory The Blessed Portion of the Elect

Upon completion of the judgment and the casting of the ungodly into hell, the Lord Jesus will usher the elect into eternal glory Psalms 73:24, the Father's house in which there are many mansions John 14:2, the house not made with hands which is eternal in the heavens 2 Corinthians 5:1, the third heaven, paradise 2 Corinthians 12:2; 2 Corinthians 12:4, the city which has foundations and whose builder and maker is God Hebrews 11:10, the joy of the Lord Matthew 25:21, and the heavenly kingdom (2 Timothy 4:18). He will give them eternal life John 10:28, place the crown of righteousness upon their head 2 Timothy 4:8, grant them the crown of life James 1:12, and make them partakers of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Peter 1:4). Furthermore, they will enjoy that which the Lord Jesus has merited and petitioned for them: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me" (John 17:24).

God Himself who alone is omnipotent, wise, and merciful, has built the third heaven Hebrews 11:10, and has prepared this kingdom from the foundation of the world for His blessed ones (Matthew 25:34). He has chosen them from the beginning unto salvation 2 Thessalonians 2:13, He has sent His Son into the world to save His people Matthew 1:21, and it is His pleasure to give them the kingdom (Luke 12:32). "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Romans 11:36). The Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, has earned and merited salvation for the elect. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23), who is "... the captain of their salvation" Hebrews 2:10, who "is able also to save them to the uttermost" Hebrews 7:25, and has said, "I lay down My life for the sheep ... and I give unto them eternal life" John 10:15; John 10:28. Therefore, He bears the title Savior, for man contributes nothing to salvation; he is led to and subsequently ushered into it. "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture" (Psalms 100:3). "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). Therefore, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake" (Psalms 115:1). The elect, they who are foreordained, are those who will become partakers of salvation: "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also ... glorified" (Romans 8:30); they are the blessed of the Father: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom" (Matthew 25:34); they are those who have been given to Christ by the Father: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John 17:24); and they are believers: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). They alone, and they all, are the persons who will enjoy felicity. The Godly Will Differ in Glory in Heaven Question: In heaven, will one person have a greater measure of glory than another?

Answer: Some think this will not be the case, whereas others believe that there are various degrees. We maintain that all they who are glorified will be filled with felicity to overflowing; that is, as much as they can endure. Thus, there neither will be a desire for more, nor will this be possible. It will be impossible to be deprived of anything there. "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psalms 17:15). As one vessel can, however, contain more than another vessel, while yet all being full, we believe that also the one will excel the other in glory. This is, however, not due to merit. The papists maintain this when they say that virgins, monks, ministers, and martyrs who excel in merit here, will also stand out there. Rather, on the basis of His free grace, God will elevate in glory those who have done or suffered much as a witness for His Name. This is evident in the following passages:

First, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). In verse 2 the prophet relates what all believers will be equal partakers of: eternal life. Subsequently, in verse 3, a distinction is made between ministers and those who have been instrumental in the conversion of many. They especially will shine forth as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars.

Secondly, "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:41-42). The apostle not only indicates that the same bodies will have different characteristics, but also that these characteristics will differ in individual persons -- the one will be more glorious than the other. There is a difference between the luster of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and also the stars among themselves differ in luster.

Thirdly, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). This promise does not pertain to this life, for this does not always occur. Rather, it pertains to eternal life, which is confirmed from Galatians 6:8 where the apostle states: "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The word "sparingly" is contrasted with "bountifully." It is not indicative of a lack, but rather of a difference of degree.

Fourthly, consider (Luke 19:12-19). "And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come" vs. 13; "Have thou authority over ten cities" vs. 17; "Be thou also over five cities" vs. 19. Not only is the reward of the faithful servants recounted, and the fact that there is a reward in a general sense (as is the case in Matthew 25:21; Matthew 25:23), but also the measure of reward given in accordance with each person's profit. This is figuratively expressed by having authority over either ten or five cities.

Fifthly, "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Corinthians 3:8). We neither have a contrast here between the faithful and the unfaithful, and between the good and the evil, nor is it said of them that the good are to be rewarded and the evil punished. Rather, the apostle only speaks of faithful servants -- of Paul and Apollos -- and relates the task of each person. It is the one who plants and the other who waters -- even though the planting of a church in a given locality requires more work than the administering of that which is subservient to her growth. He declares that they both are indeed unable to facilitate its growth, but nevertheless, each one would be rewarded according to whether his work was of greater or lesser importance.

Sixthly, "Many ... shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11); "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22); "When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). The reference here is to heaven, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob do not belong to the church here on earth. Lazarus enjoyed sitting down with Abraham after he had died and the apostles would sit upon the twelve thrones when Christ would sit upon the throne of His glory. Following this time state there would be a difference between Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the many who would sit down with them; between Abraham and Lazarus; and between the apostles and other believers -- namely, that the apostles would sit upon the twelve thrones, which is not said about others in this text. From this it is evident that there will be a difference in degree in the measure of glory.

Objection #1: "So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny" (Matthew 20:8-10). Equal wages were given to those who had labored much or little, and thus there are no degrees in heaven.

Answer (1) The objective here is to show that the reward is not meritorious, but rather is given out of free grace. (2) The penny is not to be understood as referring to eternal life, for there will be no one there who has an evil eye and who murmurs.

Objection #2: All believers are equal partakers of the same election, satisfaction of Christ, justification, adoption of children, and designation as heirs. Thus, they are also equal partakers of glorification. This proves that there are no degrees in glorification.

Answer: This argument is futile, for by way of the same argument we could conclude that believers are all equal partakers in sanctification. Experience and Scripture both teach that this is not so, but that in this life there are fathers in Christ, young men, and children. Just as there are degrees in this life in regard to grace and its outworking, so likewise in the reward. The least of them will, however, be filled to overflowing and eternally enjoy as much glory and felicity as he is able to contain. This must nevertheless motivate us to do and suffer much for Christ. The Saints Will Recognize Each Other in Heaven

Question: Will there be mutual recognition in heaven? Answer: Even though such knowledge will not be what it is here (it being associated with a physical relationship and affections), we nevertheless believe that ministers will know their members, members their minister, the husband his wife, the wife her husband, parents their children, and children their parents. Relatives and acquaintances will know each other. Furthermore, all men of renown in the Bible, and all who excel in glory will be known by all. All who are in heaven will mutually know each other by divine revelation and through the eternal fellowship they will have with each other. No one will be a stranger to each other or be considered as such by anyone, for there will be no loss of memory. Ignorance is a weakness, and there will be no imperfection. Mutual fellowship will be perfect there; it will not be engaged in ignorantly, but knowledgeably. I believe that they shall recount to each other the ways in which the Lord had led them. They shall then praise and magnify the perfections of God which manifested themselves at each step of the way. They shall thus not be occupied with

the immediate beholding of God only, without thinking of each other. Rather, as glorified men they shall fellowship together, unitedly glorifying God. The disciples knew Moses and Elijah when they were on the holy mountain (Matthew 17:3). The poor will know their benefactors when "they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (Luke 16:9). The absence of relatives will not engender sorrow since all physical relationships and affections cease there. The righteousness of God will give as much reason for joy and rendering of glory to God as His goodness. That they shall have the ability to speak is evident from the fact that inability to speak is an imperfection. How else would they be able to sing praises? Moses and Elijah spoke with Christ, its purpose being to render glory to God. We believe, however, that the difference between languages will cease, this being a consequence of sin. However, which language will be spoken there is not known. It may possibly be the language that Adam spoke, which up to the moment when the languages were confused (a period of nearly two thousand years) was the only language -- the Hebrew language. Perhaps it will be a language enabling the saints to express the essence of heavenly matters better than any earthly language, which is generally derived from temporal matters. Whatever the language will be, however, it will be to the glorification of God. The Essential Elements of the Glory of God's Children

We shall now consider the matter itself; that is, that which constitutes the glory of God's children. This glory is very great, as is confirmed first of all by its inexpressible nature. Anyone who receives but a glimpse and tastes but a little of this will be dumbfounded and his pen will stop, for he will not be able to find words to express it. He will be ashamed about the expressions he makes concerning it, as they do not correspond to the matter itself. When David wishes to give expression to this, all he is able to say is: "Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!" (Psalms 31:19). If anyone should be able to tell us something about this, it ought to be Paul, for he was drawn into the third heaven. All he could say about it, however, was that he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" 2 Corinthians 12:4 -- thus, unspeakable matters. And even if someone were able to express the matter somewhat more particularly, no one would be able to understand it unless he were of a more heavenly disposition. The inexpressible and incomprehensible nature of this glory ought not to cause us to think less of salvation, but ought to stir us up to think of greater glory. Nevertheless, the Lord has revealed that much of heaven in His Word, and made it known to the souls of His children, that they may know enough of heaven to enable them to endure all tribulations and heartily desire to be a partaker of that salvation.

Secondly, that which the only wise and omnipotent God has conceived and thought out within Himself (let me speak as a man), namely, to exalt man to the highest level of felicity, fill him with incomprehensible glory and delight, and glorify Himself in His saints and be admired in all them that believe 2 Thessalonians 1:10, must be glorious to the highest degree. Therefore God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth, is called the Builder and Maker of heaven. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

Thirdly, this is to be deduced from the fact that they whom God leads unto salvation are His children. One reserves his very best for his children. Men of renown provide great inheritances for their children. Would that which the great God has prepared for His beloved children not be most eminent? "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17).

Fourthly, this is evident when considering that the means whereby this salvation was procured for them is of inestimable worth; it is the precious blood of Christ, the Son of God. The Son of God would not have suffered that much to provide man with only a small measure of happiness. Therefore, how great is that salvation which has been purchased at such a high price! "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10).

Fifthly, it ought to be considered furthermore that when God wishes to promise His children the very greatest blessing, He promises them eternal life. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. ... He ... shall not be hurt of the second death. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:7; Revelation 2:11; Revelation 2:17); "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, ... and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God ... to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne" (Revelation 3:5; Revelation 3:12; Revelation 3:21); "He that overcometh shall inherit all things" (Revelation 21:7).

Sixthly, salvation constitutes the entire hope and comfort of believers. This has enabled them to endure all manner of torment and cruel deaths. For this salvation they have longed with great yearning. "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:26); "... having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Php 1:23). From all this it can readily be concluded that future felicity will be inexpressibly great. Would you not dare to put all your trust in this, believers? Would you not joyously forsake all that is of the world, endure all suffering, and courageously engage in all battles in return for this -- even if all that you could perceive of it is no more than what you can deduce by way of conclusion? Surely, if faith were but lively, you would have sufficient reason to long for this. The Experience of Felicity

I can understand that the godly reader is desirous to hear a bit more concerning the state of felicity, expecting more particulars concerning this matter to follow. I must tell you, however, that I shall not be able to satisfy your desire and expectation. You are not interested in words, but in the matter itself, and this I cannot give you. Human words are not able to express the inexpressible. Nevertheless, I wish to mention some things. May it please the Lord to make it an occasion for someone to get the matter itself in view and begin to taste it. First we shall say what will not be there, and then what will be experienced there, both according to body and soul.

There will be nothing of all that which causes either body or soul any discomfort or unrest in this life. No darkness will stupefy the mind and no sinfulness will pollute the soul. Souls will no longer be deserted, and there will no longer be any battle against the flesh, the world, and the devil. All sorrow, grief, heartache, anxiety and fear will have been eliminated. There will be no poverty, opposition, oppression, pain, hunger, or anything else that would grieve soul and body. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4); "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat" (Revelation 7:16).

Instead of misery, there will be everything that can satisfy the soul and the body. The body will be clothed with glory and “be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Php 3:21). Furthermore, since the body will have perfect vision and hearing, nothing will be lacking to render a man happy. Everything will be present there and will be subservient to the glory of God. However, what the eye and ear will see and hear is hidden from us. In general we can say that whatever will be seen and heard there will be wondrous, joyous, and enrapturing.

Heaven, as a locality, is inexpressibly great and filled with divine glory. It is described for us in a figurative sense in Revelation 21:1-27, and is there compared to the most eminent circumstances that can be construed upon earth. “And the city lieth foursquare. ... And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” Revelation 21:16; Revelation 21:21; Revelation 21:23.

Fellowship there will be very conducive to promotion of joy. “I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by” (Zechariah 3:7). All the saints (each in his own glory, delightfulness, and loveliness); all the godly from Adam until the day of Christ; all the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles; and all the martyrs and those who have heroically fought for the truth, will have fellowship with each other, speak together, and together will praise the name of the Lord. “And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 7:10-12). The Quintessence of Felicity: To Be in the Presence of God and Enjoy His Fellowship The foregoing can, however, not ultimately satisfy the soul which has an infinite desire, and which cannot find fulfillment in anything else but the enjoyment of the infinite. It is thus necessary to lead the soul to a higher plane.

First, there believers will be forever with the Lord. It is their grief in this life that they live so far from the Lord. This costs them many a tear. All their desire, yearning, and delight is focused upon communion with God. “Nevertheless I am continually with Thee. ... But it is good for me to draw near to God” Psalms 73:23; Psalms 73:28. However, communion there will be both immediate and eternal. This renders them comfort in this life: “So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). This was Paul’s desire: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Php 1:23). This is the promise made by our faithful Jesus: “... and where I am, there shall also My servant be” (John 12:26). This was His petition: “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am” (John 17:24). We are given a view of this: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them” (Revelation 7:15). Oh, how sweet it shall be to sit eternally under the shadow of the almighty, good, loving, all-sufficient, and benevolent God!

Secondly, felicity consists in seeing God. God cannot be seen with physical eyes, for He is the invisible One (cf. 1 Timothy 6:16; Hebrews 11:27). The Lord Jesus, according to the body, will, however, be seen with physical eyes with overwhelming joy and love by all the citizens of heaven.

Since the fullness of the Godhead will dwell bodily and visibly in Him, the nature of this will be such that the reflection of divine glory will be seen in Him. Believers will see Jesus in His glory, and they will speak with Him and He will speak with them face to face. God, however, will be seen with the enlightened eyes of the understanding. Presently, the believer sees God only from afar and sees but a small ray, seeing it but for a fleeting moment. This yields a wondrous joy to the soul; however, it is but a rare moment of brief duration. [Note: The Dutch phrase reads as follows: "Is een zelden uur van eenen korten duur."] It readily disappears and leaves behind a strong desire intermixed with sorrow in those who have seen and tasted something of this. Time and again they must say, "Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalms 10:1); "How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?" (Psalms 13:1); "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" (Psalms 101:2); "Show me Thy glory" (Exodus 33:18). Then it shall be as the sun in its clearest light at dawn. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12); "I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psalms 17:15). David said of it, "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalms 16:11). When God in an immediate and immanent manner -- in a manner which God presently has not made known to us -- will reveal His glorious perfections to His children, will cause the soul to experience that He is her portion, and cause her to taste the gratifying efficacy of this, only then shall they know what it means to see God's friendly, glorious, loving, holy, gladdening, and satisfying countenance.

Thirdly, such a life by way of beholding will neither consist nor end in mere reflection, but it will be accompanied by the enjoyment of mutual and perfect love. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). This infinite love will encompass and fill the soul, and as the soul experiences the warmth and sweetness of this divine love, it will respond to God in reciprocal love. In the enjoyment of this mutual love it will enjoy an incomprehensible sweetness and joy which will satisfy it forever. "Charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:8).

Fourthly, perfect love is perfect holiness. Since the mind beholds God in perfection, and the will enjoys God in perfect love and immediate union, there can be no room for imperfection. "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:10). There the image of God will be perfect in everyone. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psalms 17:15). There they will be partakers of the divine nature perfectly (2 Peter 1:4). Everyone will shine forth in holy luster as the sun, moon, and stars. This perfection will manifest itself in all the fellowship with the glorified saints, who will be united in perfect love.

Fifthly, there will only be joy and bliss. "Enter Thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matthew 25:21). When the soul may behold God perfectly and be surrounded by the glory of the Lord, walk forever in the light of His countenance; when God will fill the soul with His all-sufficiency, encompass it with His love, and overshadow it with all His perfections -- how can it be any different but that the soul will delight itself in a "peace which passeth all understanding," in adoration which will bring the soul into ecstasy, and in an inexpressible joy, and thus lose herself entirely in God. Oh, how wondrous it will be when, together with all the angels and the elect, they may reverently bow before the Lord and jubilate forever with them the eternal hallelujah!

Sixthly, bring to mind all that you have ever beheld of God: all the joy and peace you have ever tasted, all the union and communion with God you have ever enjoyed, and all the being lifted heavenward you have ever experienced. Then add thereto all the enrapturing sermons you have ever heard, all that others have shared with you of their experiences, and all the love you have ever perceived in a gathering of saints. Consider all this collectively and then compare these minute rays of light to the joy and bliss that will be enjoyed in the state of perfection. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). That which will enhance all this blessedness even more is that there will neither be fear of losing it nor of its termination -- for no one will disturb it, assault it, or remove it. Instead, it will endure to all eternity. This life is "eternal life" John 10:28, an "eternal inheritance" Hebrews 9:15, "eternal glory" 1 Peter 5:10, "the everlasting kingdom" 2 Peter 1:11, and it is "eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). The Unconverted Exhorted to Strive to Become Partakers of This Glory

Such glory and bliss is laid away for believers. Therefore, you who are unconverted, strive for that faith in Christ in order that you also may become a partaker of that salvation and may flee the eternal perdition which otherwise awaits you. It is presently offered to you, and therefore, take hold of it before it is too late. If you are not willing, then be no longer amazed about the strife and the tribulation the godly have to endure, as well as everything else they are engaged in. No longer think that it is but illusion, obstinacy, and stubbornness. Consider rather that they are acquainted with this glory, delight in it, and that they strive to receive that crown.

Believers Exhorted to Conduct Themselves in Anticipation of Such an Inheritance And you believers, who may anticipate so great a salvation, conduct yourself as heirs of the same. First, deem all things of this world as too insignificant and transitory than that you would concern yourself with it. Do not set your heart on prosperity, riches, honor, and entertainment. They are not worthy of mention in comparison with this inheritance. Turn away from them and do not permit them to hinder you as you pursue this crown. If you encounter adversity, oppression, persecution, death for the name of Christ, poverty, or whatever else it may be, be not too troubled by it, for in comparison to this inheritance it amounts to nothing. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Yes, suffering prepares us for a greater degree of glory -- that is, if one bears it well. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). Rather, rejoice in tribulation instead of succumbing to it in discouragement. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (James 1:12). In place of the cross the Lord will grant you abundant and eternal comforts. Observe this in (Revelation 7:13-17). As this was the last text my deceased father preached upon, I shall quote it in its entirety: "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains

of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

Secondly, if you may anticipate so great a salvation, then rejoice in this future inheritance. “Rejoicing in hope” (Romans 12:12). Many believers have the deficiency that they focus too much upon the present. They would like to fare a bit better in this world, for this would then yield a somewhat more quiet life for them. At another time they are only concerned about the state of their soul, considering whether they are in the state of grace. Time and again they insist on examining themselves and repeatedly must be able to conclude that they are in a state of grace. Then they insist that they ought to have more sensible grace and more power to resist sin. In the meanwhile time passes on, and they do not lift up their heart enough to anticipate the great glory they may look forward to. They have but a few fleeting thoughts about it. Instead, one ought to be occupied in reflecting upon eternity, and upon the certainty and reality of this your inheritance. One ought to focus continually upon the glory of this inheritance, and by faith traverse heaven, beholding how gloriously the Lord Jesus manifests Himself; how the angels bow before Him; in what intimate manner He deals with the glorified saints; what light and immediate fellowship with God they enjoy; how they are moved and filled with a magnificent happiness toward God, Christ, the angels, and each other; how sweetly they may sing the praises of the Lord; and how they may adore and lose themselves in the perfections of God and the perfection of their state! We would then forget ourselves and, so to speak, find ourselves among the glorified multitude. With them we would bow ourselves before the Lord and glorify Him. In coming back to ourselves upon earth, we would then delight ourselves in bringing this glory to mind and we would go our way with joy, not stumbling over every spiritual difficulty. We would then be as someone who departs to take possession of a very great inheritance, and who, presently being poor and destitute, will endure a difficult day of travel. Therefore, I say again, “Rejoice in the hope of glory.” “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:13).

Thirdly, cause this glory to be the only goal you pursue. The goal motivates the worker, and the more vehemently he delights in it, the more seriously he will apply himself to his work. Therefore, do not pursue any worldly goals, and do not seek anything here in which you might find your rest. Do not take it so seriously if you must be deprived of what you would desire to have, or if your soul does not prosper according to your wishes. This is not the season to be drawn into the third heaven with Paul. Now is the season of warfare and of tribulation. Therefore, look ahead and only have this glory in view. Depart neither to the right nor to the left side, and do not become inactive. Rather, let this glory be your goal, and pursue it so that you may enter heaven while being in a full run. Paul thus holds himself up as an example: “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Php 3:13-14).

You must do what our Lord Jesus did. Of Him the apostle writes: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Moses did likewise when “he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Hebrews 11:26). Therefore, keep heaven in view and “fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called” (1 Timothy 6:12); “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24).

Fourthly, by way of anticipating this glory, stir yourself up to live a holy and heaven-oriented life. In this world conduct yourself as a stranger who is travelling to his homeland Hebrews 11:9-10; Hebrews 11:13-16, and lift yourself continually above the things of this earth so that you may presently live for the invisible, have your conversation in heaven, purify yourself, and lead a heaven-oriented life. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18); "For our conversation is in heaven" (Php 3:20). He who may have such a lively expectation of glory, holding this before him, will be motivated by that hope to prepare himself for this. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

Believers, you may therefore anticipate that such glory will shortly be your portion. Thus, hasten to complete your task, and be an example of godliness, faith, and courage; and hope upon glory. Make this glory, and the way which leads to it, known to others and lead them along unto felicity, so that you may join the Lord Jesus in saying, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do ... I have manifested Thy name unto ... men. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me!" (John 17:4-6). HALLELUJAH!

110. Appendix

APPENDIX The Administration of the Covenant of Grace in the Old and New Testaments “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.” -- Genesis 4:3-5 “The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” -- Hebrews 9:8-12 “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” -- Revelation 1:3

111. Chapter 1: The Church of the Old Testament from Adam to Abraham

----- CHAPTER ONE ----- The Church of the Old Testament from Adam to Abraham

Thus far we have given a comprehensive presentation of both the nature and the characteristics of the gracious work of man's redemption. We shall now proceed to consider the difference of the administration of this work prior and subsequent to the incarnation of Christ. The administration preceding the time of Christ is called the Old Covenant or Testament; after His incarnation it is referred to as the New Covenant or Testament. Since Scripture uses the words *berith* and *diatheke*, I have used the words "covenant" as well as "testament" to show that there is no basis for erroneous views which are propagated by making a distinction between them. The distinction between the manner in which the covenant of grace is administered in the Old and New Testaments is based upon the Word: "... ministers of the New Testament" 2 Corinthians 3:14 "... in the reading of the Old Testament" (2 Corinthians 3:14); "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second" Hebrews 8:13 "In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old" (Hebrews 8:13). The Old Testament is an administration during which it was promised that the Surety and Savior would come. Thus, the time from Adam to Christ was the age of promise, wherein the Savior was typified in His natures, suffering, and death -- the purpose being that the people of Israel would be better acquainted with and believe in Him. This was accomplished by way of many sacrifices, which the apostle denominates as figures. They clearly depicted Christ; and thus the people, so to speak, with their physical eyes daily witnessed and beheld Christ in His suffering and death.

"Which was a figure for the time then present" Hebrews 9:9, Christ not having as yet become incarnate. The writer of Hebrews also refers to these ceremonies as types. All types were constructed according to the divine prescription, precisely typifying the coming Christ. Thus, we do not define Christ according to the types, but the types are defined according to Christ; in the type, the people beheld the image of Christ who was to come. "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). The ceremonies were also referred to as shadows -- not because their intent was to darken, conceal, and obscure the matter, but to depict the matter as clearly as possible, even though the matter itself could not yet be seen. This can be compared to a man standing on one side of a fence in the brightly shining sun, who is able to see the shadow of another man standing on the other side of the fence. He cannot see the person himself because the fence blocks his view. However, the shadow extending beyond the end of the fence can be observed by him. Furthermore, he is not only able to infer from this shadow that a human being is present whom he has not yet seen, but he can also observe whether this person is a child or an adult; and by way of the clothing he can determine whether it is a man or woman -- yes, whether the person is moving or standing still, standing upright or bending over, and even what he might be doing. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were such shadows. "Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:17). They are commonly referred to as ceremonies;

however, this word is not to be found in the Bible. [Note: This is not true for the KJV, as the word "ceremonies" is found in Numbers 9:3.] Ceremonies are external exercises, accompanied with words or gestures. Since the term is not scriptural, we only wish to say that the term tends to incline the reader to either not understand or misunderstand the matters at hand. It is therefore better to use scriptural words. Such a practice we wish to adhere to. The Old Testament Administration of the Covenant of Grace Begins in Paradise The Old Testament or Covenant encompasses the entire period from the gospel declaration in Paradise until Christ. During this entire time frame there was no diversity in its manner of administration -- an administration which functioned during this entire period by way of promises and figures. However, relative to the subjects of this administration, we can make a chronological distinction between the church prior to Abraham and thereafter. Prior to Abraham the church consisted of various nationalities -- as is also true in the New Testament era. However, God took Abraham and his seed to be His church. Thus, subsequent to Abraham's time, other nations rapidly became estranged from true religion. This pure religion was preserved, however, among the descendants of Abraham. Therefore, when speaking of a national covenant, it must be understood as the covenant of grace established with that particular nation. The term does not imply more than that. Not much has been recorded concerning the condition of the church from Adam to Abraham. What has been recorded, however, is sufficient to show us that the gospel and true religion were as well-known and practiced then as was the case thereafter. It was by way of that generational line that the Lord Jesus descended from Adam. His descent from Adam was necessary in order to His being the Mediator. It was necessary that this be known in order to acknowledge Him as such. The time frame from Adam to Abraham encompasses about two thousand years and has been recorded in the first chapters of the first book of Moses. We shall briefly outline the most significant matters and then answer some questions.

After Adam and Eve had transgressed the covenant of works, the Lord announced a new covenant, a covenant of grace, with the following words: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15). This text has been expounded previously in this work. The words are few, but they encompass the great work of the redemption of the sinner; the overthrow of the devil's tyranny over the elect; the enmity and warfare between God's children and the children of the devil -- and they point to the Person through whom this would be accomplished, who is called the Seed of the Woman (and thus not seed of the man). This Person is Christ -- the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Mary -- who through His death has destroyed the devil (Hebrews 2:14). God had expounded this matter more clearly to Adam and the holy men after him. Adam remained in the church for nine hundred thirty years. Enoch was a prophet who proclaimed the day of judgment Jude 1:14-15. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. The content of his preaching was Christ 1 Peter 3:19-21, and he prophesied concerning the calling of the Gentiles after the rejection of the seed of Shem (Genesis 9:27). God also instructed and strengthened these believers by faith in the sacrifices of the fruits of the field, clean cattle, and of the firstborn (cf. Genesis 4:4; Genesis 8:20).

Hereby the people acquired knowledge concerning the mysteries of salvation and were led to believe in Christ. When Eve gave birth to Cain, her eye was upon Christ. She viewed his birth either as the beginning of the procreative process out of which Christ would be born, or she was in

error concerning the person, thinking that he would be the Redeemer. For upon giving birth to Seth, she said, "For God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew" (Genesis 4:25). She knew that God had rejected and cursed Cain and his descendants Genesis 4:26, and believed that the Savior would be born out of Seth. Abel was a righteous man Matthew 23:35 and a strong believer -- and thus pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:5). Enoch walked with God and was taken away without seeing death, having this testimony that he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5). During the time of Enos, believers separated themselves from the ungodly, joined one another in fellowship, and called upon the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:26).

Also then the church became corrupt, so that its members married unbelievers. By this the church became even more corrupt, and therefore God did not want His people to intermarry with other nations (cf. Daniel 7:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14). The earth became increasingly corrupt. Contributing to this were the proud Lamech -- the first man who had two wives and boasted of the sword of his son -- and the fierce giants who relied upon their strength and reputation, ruled with violence, and made a name for themselves (Genesis 6:4). Since the world and the church had become extremely ungodly, God caused all men with whatever moved upon the face of the earth to perish by means of the flood.

However, Noah and his wife, together with his three sons and their wives, as well as a representation of every living species, were preserved alive in the ark, by which they were saved. Noah planted a vineyard and became drunk -- either because of his great desire for wine which he had not drunk in a long time, or because he had become unaccustomed to wine and was affected by it that much more quickly, or because the wine was stronger than the wine he had drunk previously. The fact is that at one time he became drunk and laid down to sleep. Due to stirring in his sleep, his covering was removed, and he lay there naked. When his son Ham entered the tent and saw his father's nakedness, he went out and informed both his brothers. While approaching their father backward, they took a covering and spread it over him. Ham's sin was not merely in the act of seeing, for if in moving about he had unexpectedly seen this and had quickly departed, he would not have sinned and brought such a curse upon himself. Rather, while seeing this, something occurred which amounted to mockery: Either Ham went so far as to mock with his father, or his son Canaan, seeing his grandfather lying there naked, paused and mocked with him. In fact, the curse was not pronounced upon the person of Ham and his entire posterity, but upon his son Canaan. It could be that he had mocked, or that Ham was punished in his child -- this being the severest punishment for a father. It could also be that they were both guilty, for Shem and Japheth received a blessing of their father, whereas Ham was passed by.

Ham's genealogy is placed side by side with those of Japheth and Shem. In this genealogy Nimrod is mentioned, of whom it is said, "He was a mighty hunter before the Lord" (Genesis 10:9 a). This can be interpreted as a description of an ungodly man, being a terrible tyrant who cared neither for God nor man. It could also be a description of a Godfearing man, being desirous to provide a safe shelter for people -- or more particularly, who killed and drove away the animals of prey for the benefit of his family. Wild animals had multiplied greatly and prevented people from living quietly and peacefully. Thus, it was not the timid hare or the quickly-frightened deer which he hunted, but rather lions, bears, tigers, wolves, and similar animals of prey. This required courage and, being accompanied with danger, caused him to flee to God for refuge, and with His help, overcame the wild beasts, thereby creating a safe residence for people.

These people, who intended to make a name for themselves by building a high tower and erecting a beacon to prevent their dispersion, were prevented in doing so by having their language confounded -- and were thus dispersed over the entire face of the earth. These are the particulars of what has been recorded for us concerning the first two thousand years. Then Moses turns to Abraham, as the church was restricted thereafter to his family only.

Six Rules to Be Observed in Determining Whether Something is a Type

Prior to Christ's coming, men sought for the substance itself, longing and yearning for the fulfillment of the promises and shadows. Now that both the light and the substance have come, people look for shadows and types -- rejoicing when they believe to have found a shadow. While in darkness, people sought for the light, and now that there is light, people look for darkness. This is deemed to be scholarship, and therefore everyone feels compelled to look for something new. The rule adhered to in such a pursuit is that there must be similarity in regard to name, issue, and circumstances. He who finds or constructs that, believes then to have found a type. Before we discuss the types to be found during the time from Adam to Abraham, we shall first show what constitutes a type.

First, it is to be observed that, according to Paul's exhortation, a man must think soberly, and not think of himself more highly than he ought to think (Romans 12:3). In this matter one must conduct himself with fear and trembling, and assign no other meaning to the holy words of God than what God has expressed by them. By allegorizing nearly everything, and by fabricating as many prophecies and types as the mind can contrive, one will deprive the Word of its sanctity and spirituality.

Secondly, the similarity between names or their meanings, the congruency and analogy of certain matters, and the fact that the exegesis neither conflicts with the context of the text nor the rule of faith, are not rules by which types are established. The reasons for this are as follows:

(1) Where are such rules to be found in God's Word? If, however, one does establish his own rules, any exposition according to such self-made rules is no more than a fabrication of one's own mind. I reject these rules; let their validity be proven. Would it not be appropriate that irrefutable proof be rendered for a method used to interpret nearly the entire Bible?

(2) If one is to recognize a type by his own rules, then any type incompatible with those rules would be unacceptable -- even if God Himself, with great clarity, has designated it to be a type.

(3) If one adopts his own rules, the entire Scripture can be distorted at will. Every grapevine, every tree, every foundation upon which a house is built, every kernel of grain, every door, every road and pathway, as well as the sun, the morning star, a lion, a hen, a worm (and very many other things) would be a type of Christ, for all these names are attributed to Him. There is some analogy and similarity between them and Christ; they are neither in conflict with the context of those texts nor do they contradict the regulative principle of faith. Thus it is readily perceived that to designate all these things as types would be foolishness -- nevertheless, to do so would conform to such rules. This makes it very clear that these rules yield neither proof nor any foundation to designate a given matter to be a type.

One might say that the precise analogy between given matters is not accidental, it having been the intent of the omniscient and all-wise God to direct things in such a way that one thing would be a type of the other. I reply that the intent of a precise analogy is not to recognize a type. Were it so, nearly everything in the Bible could be designated as a type, and the entire Scripture could be made into an allegory and be reduced to a number of comparisons. A painting can resemble a different person as well as he whom the painter had in mind. It could be that such persons either resemble each other, or that the painting, without this being the painter's intent, depicts certain features whereby it resembles the other person more than him of whom the painting was made. Would one conclude on the basis of this resemblance that it was the painter's intent to paint the other person? This is also the case here. Even though God knows what matters resemble each other, it has not been His intent that the one thing would be a depiction or type of the other. Also in the New Testament there are descriptions of many matters and people who have a semblance and are analogous to those of later date. Who would conclude on the basis of such similarities that matters spoken of in the New Testament are types of matters of some later date? Furthermore, things occur daily that resemble matters and people related to occurrences of one hundred or two hundred years ago. Also these are not outside of God's providence. Would one thus conclude that the former are types of the latter? It is therefore evident that something is a type not by virtue of analogy, but rather by divine appointment.

Thirdly, even the word type (or example) does not always signify a representation -- a future depiction -- exemplifying the Christ who would come. Rather, examples are also matters which, by way of application, are presented for the purpose of warning, emulation, or as an explanation, so that one may come to a clearer understanding of a given matter by way of analogy. This does not then say, that those matters which are used as examples were established for the purpose of predicting and depicting given events. Instead, they are used in retrospect by way of application.

(1) Consider an example which is given to us as a warning. "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (1 Corinthians 10:6); "Now all these things happened to them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition" vs. 11; "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes ... making them an ensample (cf. Hebrews 8:5) unto those that after should live ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6). Obviously, these examples are not types of Christ, nor did they typify the time of the apostles. Instead, by way of application, they may in retrospect be used as a warning. This may and must occur in all ages.

(2) Consider an example given for emulation. "Brethren, be followers together of me ... as ye have us for an ensample" (Php 3:17).

(3) Consider an example given with the intent to explain it by way of analogy. "... Adam ... who is the figure of Him that was to come" (Romans 5:14). In this chapter Adam is presented as being the cause of death of all who are comprehended in him, that is, the entire human race; and Christ is presented as quickening all who are in Him, that is, the elect. It is beyond controversy that Adam, prior to the fall, did not depict Christ as the One who was to come, since there was as yet no sin which needed to be removed -- the purpose of Christ's coming. There was then no need of Him; therefore He had not been promised as yet. Also in his fall, Adam was no type of the Christ who would come to remove sin, for there was neither any covenant of grace revealed nor had Christ yet been promised and typified. Also after his fall, Adam was not presented to the Old Testament

church as a type of Christ. Rather, it is very clear that all we have here is a comparison. The matter with which the apostle was dealing could be explained by way of analogy and contrast -- that is, as Adam was the original and only cause of sin and condemnation, so Christ is the original and only cause of atonement for and the eternal felicity of the elect who had died in Adam. The same applies to Jeremiah 33:20-26 : "Thus saith the Lord; if ye can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night ... then may also My covenant be broken with David My servant," etc. The permanent institution of day and night was not a type of the covenant with David, even though the covenant with David is compared to it. Rather, the institution of day and night serves as an analogy and an application in order to point out the immutability of the covenant with David.

Fourthly, whatever is a sign is not necessarily a type. All types are signs, but all signs are not types. The lying in the crib and the being wrapped in swaddling clothes were signs that this child was the Messiah (Luke 2:12); however, they were not types. The star which went before the wise men of the east and which remained stationary above the dwelling place (of Joseph and Mary) was a sign that the newborn King was present there; however, it was not a type. A type anticipates something in the future, whereas a sign points out a certain matter -- past, present, or future -- and unveils it to the understanding. In this sense the Lord Jesus established Jonah as a sign of His burial. "There shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39-40). Nowhere is Jonah either presented or designated to the Old Testament church as an example of Christ's burial. Thus, they committed no sin if they neither perceived nor believed Jonah to be a type of His burial. Moreover, Christ did not say that Jonah was a type of Himself for the church of the Old Testament. Instead, the Lord Jesus gave Jonah as a sign to the Jews of His time. Nowhere in the entire New Testament does this ever mean that whatever befell Jonah is typical of what would also befall Christ. Thus, what we have in these verses is an explanation of what would happen to Jesus -- by way of analogy with Jonah -- so that when it would come to pass, they would be convinced that He was the true Messiah.

Fifthly, in the New Testament both expressions and matters are transferred from the Old Testament by way of allusion in order to explain the matter at hand -- however, without being types. Consider Revelation 2:7; Revelation 22:1-2, where the Lord Jesus is called the Tree of Life. The reference is, without a doubt, to the tree of life in Paradise, the sacrament of the covenant of works. It is, however, a certainty that Christ had not been presented to Adam; that there was no need for a Surety there; and that Christ was not the object of Adam's faith. Thus, the tree of life did not depict Christ to Adam. After the fall, Adam was no longer permitted to either see or touch the tree of life. This came to an end upon the breaking of the covenant of works, and subsequently this tree was never held before the Old Testament church as a type of Christ who was then promised. Never did the Old Testament church believe in Christ by means of the tree of life. Thus, by way of allusion and application, Christ is called the tree of life in the New Testament. As Adam saw this tree daily, ate of it, and thereby rejoiced in the promise of eternal life, likewise believers also use Christ, live in the enjoyment of Him, and will live and rejoice in Him. From all this we observe that one must not immediately designate something as a type if, in some measure, it is analogous and applicable to Christ.

Sixthly, consider attentively that God caused matters to transpire in the Old Testament with the intent that His wise and adorable providence would be observed afterwards, and that these

matters would be applied allegorically. Thus, it is not only so that there would (or could) be an analogy between both, but God indeed intended it to be so. The apostle therefore presents Hagar and Sarah as having allegorical significance (Galatians 4:24). The Greek word is *allegoroumena*. Hagar was not a type of the Old Testament, for as the Old Testament is designated a typical covenant, the one type would thus be a type of another. Even without such a supposition, Hagar would be a type of those types which are presented therein -- which is a complete absurdity. Moreover, the apostle does not call her a type. Instead, he states that they are *allegoroumena*, which signifies matters which, by way of analogy, are transposed from one meaning to another. Thus, it is permissible to transpose the meaning of many matters to other matters, even though it may not be possible to determine with unquestionable certainty that God had that meaning in mind with that given situation. Consequently, one can thus delight himself in the wise providence of God which, for example, can be observed in God's command to Abraham to offer his son Isaac upon Mount Moriah, the place where hundreds of years later the temple of Solomon was built and where sacrifices were made. One can do likewise in many other situations. One must, however, refrain from making types of them. I believe this is a solution to eliminate the differences of opinion concerning types. A Type Defined in the Strict Biblical Sense of the Word A type is something ordained of God prior to the coming of Christ, to typify the Savior who was to come. Its purpose was to instruct His church during that time frame and lead her to faith in Christ.

If one is to designate something as a type, the following must be true:

(1) It must have been appointed by God to be a type, for a type is an essential element of religion whereby the people of Israel were called to faith in Christ. However, their religion had to be utterly divorced from all will-worship and human precepts.

(2) Types had been given to the church of the Old Testament in order that during that time frame she would thereby look unto Christ and believe in Him. This is to be observed in Hebrews 9:9, "Which was a figure for the time then present."

(3) Since the types had been given to the church of the Old Testament for the practice of religion, all those who did not use these types for their intended purpose -- to know and believe in the future Messiah -- did sin.

Therefore, something is most certainly a type (1) when one finds a person or matter designated as such in either the Old or New Testament;

(2) when such a person or matter had been revealed and given as such to the church of the Old Testament; and

(3) if one were guilty of sin because he failed to make use of this given type. When these three criteria are absent, however, one may not appoint or designate something as a type. We believe that this will convince the conscience of all who esteem God's holy Word and delight in sound religion, making them to be careful in establishing and designating types. From what has been said, it is evident that:

(1) Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, etc., cannot be designated as types of the Lord Jesus, for there is neither evidence that they were appointed to be types, nor were they given as such to the Old Testament church -- nor is there evidence that it was or would be a sin to the church if she were

not to avail herself of these men as types.

(2) The garments of Adam and Eve may not be designated as types of the righteousness of Christ wherewith believers are clothed. Aside from the fact that no word is mentioned about this in God's Word, the basis upon which one does so is improbable; namely, that these clothes were made from the skins of those animals which Adam had sacrificed. Adam was at that time still in Paradise, and when God dressed them with these clothes, which were a rebuke for their sins, He derided them, saying, "Behold, the man is become as one of Us" (Genesis 3:22).

(3) For the identical reason, the ark of Noah is not a type of Christ. A similarity does not make something to be a type.

(4) The flood was neither a sacrament of the covenant of grace nor a type of holy baptism. Nowhere is it designated as such; the argument rests only on similarity.

Objection: The flood has been designated as a sacrament of the covenant of grace: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee" (Isaiah 54:9). Furthermore, holy baptism is identified as an antitype of the flood: "The like figure [Note: The Statenvertaling uses the word "tegenbeeld," that is, antitype.] whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21). The form for baptism speaks in like manner of the flood and the Red Sea, saying, "... by which baptism was signified."

Answer: The text, Isaiah 54:9, does not speak of the actual flood as to the time and occasion of its occurrence. Rather, it speaks of something which transpired subsequently: the oath of God upon Noah's sacrifice, that He would no more destroy the world by means of a flood. The flood is also not designated as either a sacrament or type -- neither are the Jews commanded to designate and use it as such. Instead, God declares what the matter, which transpired after the flood, meant to Him: He would be as true to His promise that He would not be wroth with His church as He was true to the oath He swore after the flood. Israel could be as sure of this as they were of the fact that the world would not again be drowned. The text, 1 Peter 3:21, does not establish the flood as a shadow or type of baptism. For even though holy baptism and the Lord's Supper have come in the place of the Old Testament sacraments, these sacraments are not a type of the New Testament sacraments -- and much less of the flood. Where is the flood designated as a type? Did it serve that purpose during that time frame? This would have to be proven; however, not a word about this is to be found. We have shown before that examples are also mentioned which did not typify anything. They are only presented by way of application, as a warning, or for the purpose of emulation or explanation. Thus, holy baptism is here designated as an antitype for the purpose of explanation; that is, as Noah was protected against the water by the water which raised the ark, likewise is baptism, which seals and assures believers of their atonement by the blood of Christ, a means unto their salvation. The form for baptism does not say that the flood is a type of baptism, but rather that baptism is signified thereby. We have already shown in a previous paragraph that an alternate meaning does not presuppose a covenant. The Rainbow is Not a Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace

Question: Is the rainbow a sacrament of the covenant of grace? Answer: One might be inclined to think that this is so, since it is called the token of the covenant (cf. Genesis 9:12-13). We answer

negatively for the following reasons:

(1) It is a token of the covenant between God and the earth, all men (both good and evil), and all living animals which had been in the ark with Noah (cf. Genesis 9:9-17). The covenant of grace is only a covenant between God and believers.

(2) By means of the rainbow, the Lord did not seal any spiritual benefits in Christ, but temporal blessings only; this blessing being that there would be no more flood upon the earth. The covenant of grace, however, contains spiritual promises.

(3) Since the covenant and the rainbow will remain until the end of the world, this would mean that we would have three New Testament sacraments. The first one would then be the rainbow -- which is absurd.

(4) The word "covenant" does not always refer to a covenant in the actual sense of the word. It can also refer to an unchangeable promise or institution as in Jeremiah 33:20 : "If ye can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season." The word "covenant" is here to be interpreted as an unchangeable promise and institution.

Objection: In Revelation 4:3 we read there was a rainbow round about the throne upon which Christ sat. This causes us to reflect upon the rainbow of the covenant established with Noah, indicating that this rainbow points to Christ.

Answer (1) This was a prophetic vision and must not be stretched beyond that.

(2) The rainbow reflected the radiance of Him who sat on the throne -- just as the rays of the sun shining through water vapor upon a heavy cloud cause the rainbow. Even if it were to refer to Noah's rainbow (which is not certain), it would be an indication of the immutability and certainty of the things which would be revealed to John -- just as the rainbow gave assurance that there would be no reoccurrence of a global flood. There is no mention here whatsoever of the covenant of grace being sealed by the rainbow. The Old Testament Begins Neither at Mount Horeb nor Consists in the Inheritance of Canaan

Question: Did the Old Testament begin with the first promise in Paradise, or did it begin at Mount Horeb, consisting in the inheritance of Canaan as a type of heaven?

Answer: Some distinguish between the time before Mount Horeb, referred to as the time of promise, and the time after Horeb, referred to as the Old Testament, but not a covenant, which they distinguish from a testament. The first period they designate as a period of freedom, the other as one being under the hard yoke of bondage. This latter period would neither consist in the holding forth of the promises of salvation through Christ, nor as being the covenant of grace, but would consist in the inheritance of Canaan.

We respond in the first place by saying that Scripture does not make a distinction between covenant and testament, since the one word (berith) is used in the Old Testament, and the word (diatheke) is used in the New Testament. Furthermore, Scripture makes no distinction between these matters. Even the very time period they exclusively want to be designated as the Old Testament is referred to as a covenant in Scripture, describing this era in such terms as cannot be

applicable to a testament. "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers ... because they continued not in My covenant" (Hebrews 8:9). The heir cannot disannul the testament, but a member of a covenant can break a covenant. Their distinction between testament and covenant is due to the entire construction of their argument being founded upon that distinction. If one were to refer to it as a testament, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would have to be assigned to the first time frame, called the time of promise. By assigning them to this testament, the period of the Old Testament could neither be designated as a period of hard bondage, nor be limited to the inheritance of Canaan as being the substance of the Old Testament. They did not have Canaan in their possession as yet, but only the promise that their descendants would possess it. However, as we have shown in the appropriate place, the distinction between covenant and testament is unfounded.

Secondly, we maintain that the Old Testament does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan as a pledge of heaven.

(1) God's Word states nowhere that Canaan is a pledge of heaven; this would have to be proven. It is indeed true that heaven is called a rest Hebrews 4:1 and that Canaan is also called a rest (Hebrews 3:18). However, one cannot designate something to be either a type or a pledge on the basis of name. It is not even Paul's objective to compare Canaan and heaven with each other. Rather, he admonishes to be diligent to enter heaven by faith, using as his motive the evil consequences for the unbelieving Israelites in the desert. They did not enter Canaan because of unbelief, provoking God to wrath -- and are thus given as a warning example (1 Corinthians 10:11).

(2) If Canaan were a pledge of heaven, all ungodly Jews who lived in Canaan would have a pledge of heaven, and thus they would most certainly be saved -- for to whomever God gives a pledge, He will most certainly also give the matter itself.

(3) Since the disputants claim that the Jews lived in the fear of missing Canaan, such ungodly Jews could not have lived in such fear of death if Canaan were indeed a pledge of heaven. One would readily and easily dispense with the pledge in exchange for the matter it represents, as the pledge cannot even be compared to it. Since Canaan is not a pledge of heaven, it follows that the Old Testament does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan as being a pledge of heaven. The words "as a pledge" would then have to be left out and it would have to be said that the Old Testament consists in the inheritance of Canaan -- as something of a physical nature, and thus end in that which is physical. This point can also be verified as follows:

(1) God, by His very nature, cannot establish an external covenant, promising only temporal blessing upon outward obedience. We have dealt extensively with this in volume one, chapter 16. If God cannot enter into an external covenant with man, the Old Testament does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan.

(2) It is immaterial whether the Old Testament consists in either the promise of Canaan or in the possessing of it. If it consists in the promise, it did not begin at Mt. Horeb, but rather with Abraham who received the promise four hundred thirty years before that. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would then also belong to the Old Testament -- a fact the disputants deny.

(3) If the Old Testament consists in the possession of Canaan, it would not have begun at Mt. Horeb, but upon the entrance into Canaan -- consequently, forty years later. How then will Israel's presence in Babylon be explained? Were they outside of the Old Testament during that time?

We thus conclude that the Old Testament does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan -- neither outwardly, physically, nor as a pledge of Canaan -- but rather that Canaan pertained to a temporal promise flowing out of the covenant of grace. Also in the New Testament the covenant of grace includes temporal blessings. The apostle Paul therefore changes the promise of Canaan into the promise of the earth: "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:3).

Thirdly, we maintain that the Old Testament did not begin at Mount Horeb, but rather with the first promise of the gospel given to Adam in Paradise. This is true for the following reasons:

(1) It is evident from what has been said before: The Old Testament does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan, and therefore did neither begin with Abraham, nor with Horeb, nor with the entrance into Canaan.

(2) The first book of Moses describes the state of the church prior to the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. This book is a book of the Old Testament, as the apostle confirms: "For until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament. ... But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart" (2 Corinthians 3:14-15). Paul here refers to the books of Moses -- not only the last four, but also the first one. Thus, the first book of Moses is a book of the Old Testament. Consequently, the church was at that time in the Old Testament; therefore, the Old Testament did not begin with Horeb, but with Adam.

(3) During the Old Testament period, Christ was depicted and sacrificed typically in the sacrifices. Thereby it was understood and confessed that satisfaction for sin had not actually occurred -- satisfaction which one day would be accomplished by the seed of the woman. This period the apostle refers to as the first covenant: "For if that first covenant had been faultless. ... In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old" Hebrews 8:7; Hebrews 8:13. However, what was the first covenant or testament? That covenant which was administered by way of types and sacrifices, for:

(i) there is no other text in which it is contrasted with the new; that is, the one which came in its place;

(ii) the apostle shows this in the same chapter, verse 5: "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things."

Thus, the entire period during which Christ was exemplified and typified was the Old Testament. Christ was, however, depicted and sacrificed by way of shadows in the sacrifices not only in and after Moses' time, but also prior to Moses -- from the very time of Abraham. Already then they had altars and sacrifices of the firstborn of clean cattle as well as of the fruits of the field. We observe this with Cain and Abel Genesis 4:3-4, Noah Genesis 8:20, Abraham Genesis 12:7-8, the sacrifice of Isaac and of the ram in Isaac's place Genesis 22:13, Isaac Genesis 26:25, and Jacob, who built an altar upon God's command (Genesis 35:1-7). In all this Christ was depicted for them; therefore it is said of Christ that He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

Whereas the Old Testament consists of the ministry of shadows, and since the ministry of shadows has functioned since Adam, the Old Testament thus originates with Adam.

(4) The period when sins were atoned for by Christ prior to His incarnation belongs to the Old Testament. This is evident from Hebrews 9:15 : “And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” However, Christ did not only atone for the sins committed subsequent to Moses, but also prior to Moses, that is, since the time of Adam. This is beyond controversy.

Evasive Argument: Christ did indeed make atonement for those sins, but the apostle nevertheless speaks only of the Old Testament which began with the exodus of the church from Egypt, and thus limits the forgiveness of sins to that period.

Answer (i) Since the disputants believe that the inheritance of Canaan constitutes the Old Testament, the apostle would then have to speak only of those sins which were committed relative to that testament. This is absurd and contradicts the objective of the apostle.

(ii) Scripture does not divide the period prior to Christ as a period of promise prior to Moses, and a period subsequent to Moses, denominating only that period as the Old Testament. Scripture only knows of two periods: yesterday and today. Yesterday is the entire period prior to Christ, and today is the period subsequent to Christ. It declares that the death of Christ was equally efficacious in both periods: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).

(iii) The apostle shows in the same chapter, Hebrews 9:1-28, that he does not restrict the atonement of sin to the period from Moses forward; rather, he has in view all sins of believers committed prior to Christ -- and thus also those sins which have been committed from the foundation of the world. This is evident in verse 26: “For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world.” This means that His one sacrifice would then have lacked the efficacy to remove all the sins of His elect which had been committed from the foundation of the world. Thus it is a certainty that the time from Adam to Christ is the time of the Old Testament.

(5) The Old Testament constitutes that period, the sacrifices and typical ministry of which had to cease and be annulled by virtue of their fulfillment through Christ, the substance of the shadows. “In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13). It cannot be maintained here that the apostle has only the period of Moses in view, calling it the first testament. In addition to what has been stated above, none would be able to show that the sacrifices and other shadows in use prior to Moses had been abolished. However, all those sacrifices and shadows in use prior to Moses also belong to “those things that are shaken,” which have to be removed (Hebrews 12:27). All those things were abolished, just as those in use during and after Moses. Consequently, the sacrifices since the time of Adam belong to the Old Testament. This period is as much the time of the Old Testament as is the time after Moses.

Objection #1: “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day” (Deuteronomy 5:2-3). Thus, the covenant commenced at Horeb.

Answer: Israel stood before Jordan, ready to enter Canaan. Moses, addressing those who were alive at that moment, contrasted them with their fathers. The covenant which God made with them there was not made with their fathers. Who were the fathers? They were those who died during the forty-year sojourn in the wilderness -- this in accordance with God's threat that all who had left Egypt, being twenty years of age or above, would not enter Canaan. The Lord had indeed made a covenant with the nation of Israel at Horeb. Those involved, however, were already dead and did not receive the fulfillment of the promise of Canaan. Instead, those who were then alive would possess it, and with them God made this covenant. The essence of this covenant was no different from the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with Israel at Horeb. In essence they are one and the same: "... that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He swore unto thy fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:12). However, the circumstances were different, involving different people: a people who now stood ready to cross Jordan and enter into Canaan. It was a solemn renewal of that covenant; it had not taken place with their fathers, but it had with them. Circumstances will change a given situation; thus a given matter is referred to in different terms, thereby negating the former as to measure and manner. Observe this in John 7:39 : "The Holy Ghost was not yet given," who, however, was from all eternity, and of whom believers prior to and during the time of Christ were partakers. Consider also Romans 16:25-26 : "... according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest." It is even clearer in Ephesians 3:5 : "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed." The intent here is the same: not with our fathers, but with us. Those who advance the initial text as a counter argument cannot but understand this text to mean just that, for they do not place the beginning of the Old Testament at the moment when Israel stood before the Jordan and solemnly renewed the covenant, but at the exodus or at Horeb.

Objection #2: "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (Jeremiah 31:32). Since God established the Old Testament then, one must therefore place its commencement at that time, and not any earlier.

Answer (1) This has already been answered; that is, when a matter which in essence already existed is said to have transpired subsequent thereto, it means that it has occurred in a different manner and measure. The covenant made at Horeb in its essence existed prior to that, for it was the covenant which God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is by virtue of that covenant that God delivered Israel from Egypt in order to bring them to Canaan (Exodus 2:24). It is by virtue of that covenant that God inaugurated the covenant with Israel at Horeb and at the Jordan. "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God ... that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God ... that He may establish thee to day for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee, and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" Deuteronomy 29:10; Deuteronomy 29:12-13. Yes, it was the covenant of grace itself, as we shall demonstrate in the next chapter. Thus, the reference to the time of the exodus is due to the public execution and inauguration of the covenant, but not relative to its essence. Things are therefore ascribed to Moses which had been instituted long before his time, such as circumcision. "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision" (John 7:22). Likewise, even though altars and sacrifices, the distinction between clean and unclean cattle, and

circumcision had been instituted and were in use long before Moses, the law of shadows is ascribed to him because in his time the ministry of shadows was deployed in its full eminence and glory.

Objection #3: "... these (Hagar and Sarah) are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar" (Galatians 4:24). The Old Testament therefore necessarily begins at Sinai.

Answer: The apostle does not state that it began at Sinai. Rather, he refers to this place due to the official ratification and the solemn inauguration of this covenant, for it has been shown that the covenant, as far as its essence is concerned, already existed prior to this. If Hagar were the covenant, it must consequently originate with her. By way of application, she is referred to as the covenant retroactively, there being similarity and agreement in some matters (cf. p. 382). We shall discuss this text more comprehensively elsewhere. From what has been said, it has been shown sufficiently that this text does not state that the Old Testament commenced at Sinai.

Objection #4: "Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood" (Hebrews 9:18). The word "dedicated" signifies the construction of something new; thus, one must place the origin of the Old Testament at Sinai. There, by way of a large system, it was ratified with blood. The apostle refers to this time, which is evident from the verses which follow.

Answer (1) Dedication does not signify the beginning of a matter which previously did not exist, for this word is also used for something which is either improved or renewed: "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication" (John 10:22). Here is the same word, signifying renewal.

(2) The first covenant was already ratified in Adam's time with the first sacrifice. Noah ratified it by blood when he exited the ark. When the covenant was established with Abraham and his seed, it was also solemnly ratified with blood (Genesis 15:8-9).

(3) A marriage may have been arranged long before the official ceremony; however, this does not constitute a different marriage. A king may already be king and have reigned prior to having been crowned. However, the crowning ceremony neither makes him a new king nor does it even make him a king. It is the same here. The covenant spoken of at Sinai existed already and had been initiated several times previously. However, in this situation it manifests itself under entirely different circumstances. At this occasion, there was a general and public ratification of the covenant which had been established with their father Abraham. The shadows and types were now regulated and arranged in a different order, all of which would be subservient to keep the church in the midst of that nation faithful to true religion. Thus, the identical covenant, which had already existed and had already been inaugurated, was ratified anew with festive ceremonies. Therefore, this text does not indicate that the Old Testament commenced at Sinai.

Remission of Sins by the Shedding of Blood by Way of Sacrifices Predates Moses and the Ceremonial Laws

We have hereby demonstrated that the Old Testament did not begin at Sinai, but with Adam; and that the Old Testament did not consist in the inheritance of Canaan as being an example and pledge of heaven. Consequently, the period from Adam to Moses can no longer be referred to as the time of promise in contrast with the time after Sinai. The entire period from Adam to Christ is

the time of promise. What the apostle says of the fathers of the Old Testament in Hebrews 11:13 is most certainly true for the believers of all that time: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." The supposition which distinguishes between the time prior to Moses as being the time of promise only, and the time after Moses as being the Old Testament, engenders another supposition: The sacrifices from Adam to Moses were neither mandatory nor imposed, but were offered voluntarily, and then only when men had a desire to do so. These sacrifices were not intended to declare men guilty in regard to sin, unpaid debt, and inability to make personal satisfaction, and to lead them to the only sacrifice of Christ, He being the fulfilling antitype of their foreshadowing sacrifice.

We respond, first of all, that we cannot imagine there would be anyone who would maintain that the sacrifices of that period were neither instituted nor mandated, for:

(1) How would man himself be able to fabricate such suitable types of Christ, they being the same types as were commanded of God subsequent to Sinai, and to that end distinguish between clean and unclean cattle?

(2) Their sacrifices would then not even have been religious in nature. Instead, it would have been a self-willed religion established by men, which had been forbidden by God and declared by the Lord Jesus to be vain (Matthew 15:9).

(3) They would then not have been able to sacrifice in faith -- which nevertheless they did. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Hebrews 11:4). Their sacrifices could then not have been pleasing to God -- which nevertheless they were. "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour" (Genesis 8:21).

(4) God had expressly commanded to build an altar: "And God said unto Jacob ... make there an altar" (Genesis 35:1). If there is a command to build an altar, then there is also a command to offer up sacrifice, this being the purpose for which the altar was made.

Secondly, it is God's will that all religion instituted and commanded of God be practiced. God has never given man the freedom of choice as to whether he would practice a mandatory religious exercise or not. Noncompliance with God's commandment is disobedience toward Him. Furthermore, God does not want compulsory service. All service must proceed from faith and love; and wherever these are present, there will be voluntary compliance. Any religious exercise which one does against his wishes and by coercion will not be well-pleasing to God. "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). Whatever was needed for the construction of the tabernacle had to be given voluntarily. It is commanded that it be so: "Serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (1 Chronicles 28:9). Since God had commanded the sacrifices, and everyone was thus obligated to comply, God uses motives to stimulate men to be obedient, doing so at times with promises and at other times with threats -- it being God's will that transgressors of His law be punished by having them expelled from the church. Since God also had a separated people (a congregation or church) who practiced religion prior to Moses and Abraham, there was necessarily also order -- and thus also rebuke and excommunication from the congregation if someone was and continued to be disobedient.

Both prior to and after Moses, the shadows were not given for punitive purposes; that is, as a vexatious and troublesome burden. Rather, they were a divine blessing and benefit. They

constituted the gospel which instructed them about Christ and led them to Him. The more types God afforded them, the greater benefit God bestowed upon them, and the more clearly He made Christ known to them. The godly found great delight in these types and thanked the Lord for them. Therefore, we readily admit that the sacrifices prior to the time of Moses were not given to be a vexatious burden -- as is also true for the sacrifices subsequent to Moses. Among all the ordinances prior to Christ, there was none more difficult or painful than circumcision, which Peter refers to as "a yoke ... which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10). This circumcision had already been instituted several hundred years prior to Moses; nevertheless, compliance with this ordinance was delightful and easy for those whose pleasure it was to serve God according to His will.

Thirdly, all sacrifices point to Christ. Apart from that purpose they were neither instituted, nor were they pleasing to God, who is not pleased with external service. Thus, the sacrifices prior to Moses also looked forward to Christ, and it is for that reason that Christ is called "the Lamb which was slain before the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Moreover, they sacrificed in faith, which always points to Christ. Therefore, the sacrifices prior to Moses typified Christ.

Fourthly, all the sacrifices were a remembrance again of sins to the humbling of those who sacrificed. All sacrifices declare that the guilt of sin had not been satisfied, but would be satisfied by the substitutionary Surety, Jesus Christ. All sacrifices declare that neither he who sacrifices nor the sacrifice itself can remove sin, but point to the substance of those shadows. All this is characteristic of a sacrifice; otherwise a sacrifice is not a sacrifice. Consequently, all sacrifices point to sins and their removal. This is to be observed in Leviticus 1:4 : "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." Thus also the sacrifice of Job -- who did not descend from Abraham and who, in all probability, lived prior to Moses -- pointed to sin and atonement. When offering a burnt offering, he said, "It may be that my sons have sinned" (Job 1:5). All sacrifices are of an identical nature. Nowhere is a distinction made between the sacrifices before and after Moses. There is no argument that the sacrifices after Moses pointed to sin and atonement; therefore, this is equally true prior to Moses. Even in the New Testament, holy baptism and the Lord's Supper point to sin and atonement -- much more so than the sacrifices in the Old Testament. From all this it is very clear that religion prior to and after Moses does not differ as to nature and sort -- nor is there a difference between the state of the church prior to and after Moses.

112. Chapter 2: The Church from Abraham to the Law, or Sinai

----- CHAPTER TWO ----- The Church from Abraham to the Law, or Sinai

During the time preceding Abraham -- a period of approximately two thousand years -- the church consisted of an indiscriminate variety of nationalities, there being no connection with any particular nation or locality. Beginning with Abraham, however, God made a distinction among the nations. He established the church among the descendants of Abraham, and in a given locality, determining this to be Canaan. Thereby one could acquire knowledge about the Christ who was to come with that much more certainty. By way of ancestry, Christ descended from Adam and was thus the promised seed of the woman. Subsequently, this seed was restricted to Abraham, thereafter to Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and finally to David, after whom there was no further restriction. The distinction between the church before and after Abraham does not relate to the practice of religion (this being one and the same), but rather to her being restricted to one nation. Subsequent to the church having been restricted to Abraham's seed, several transformations occurred. They can be reduced to six: 1) from Abraham to Moses, 2) from Moses to the Judges 3:1-31) from the judges to the kings, 4) from the kings to the captivity in Babylon, 5) from the beginning of the captivity to the return to Canaan, and 6) from this return to Christ, all of which comprehends a period of approximately two thousand years. The Church from Abraham to Moses

Abraham, the son of Terah, Nahor, Reu, Peleg, Eber, Selah, Arphaxad, Shem, and Noah, lived in Mesopotamia (which in our language means "the land between two rivers"), in a city named Ur, thereafter inhabited by the Chaldeans. Soon after the flood, true religion had been corrupted -- even in the generation of Shem, among whose descendants the church existed until Christ. Abraham's ancestors had become very degenerate, and, like Abraham, were worshipers of idols (cf. Joshua 24:14-15). Thus, there was not the least probability for true religion to be restored in their generational line -- much less for the church to exist strictly among their descendants. But God, who in all things manifests His sovereign grace, called Abraham in an extraordinary manner and revealed to him that the Messiah would come forth from him -- commanding him to leave his country and kindred. He was to go to a different land, the location of which God did not reveal to him at that time. God only told him that He would show it to him. Abraham obeyed God, left Ur, and resided for a period of time in Haran, also located in Mesopotamia. After his father's death, however, Abraham departed from Haran as well, and crossed the river Euphrates, taking with him his wife Sarah, his brother's son, Lot, and all that belonged to him -- his possessions as well as those servants and maids who were his property. After much roaming about, he entered Canaan near Sichem and settled there, not knowing that this was the land that God would show to him. There God appeared to him and promised that his seed would inherit this land. In response, Abraham built an altar to sacrifice unto the Lord to show his gratitude -- as Noah did after he left the ark. A famine in Canaan caused Abraham to leave that land and to travel to Egypt. From there he returned to Canaan -- to the place where he had previously built the altar. He dwelt there as a stranger, however, not having one square foot as his own property. As a result of the multiplication of their cattle, Abraham and Lot could no longer dwell together. Abraham gave Lot the choice as to

where he wished to settle, and Lot chose the region of Sodom and Gomorrah. After having lived there for a period of time, the region was conquered by Chedorlaomer, who led away captive both man and beast. Lot was among the captives. Having been notified thereof, Abraham gathered an army of three hundred eighteen men, born in his house, and defeated Chedorlaomer, and rescued his nephew Lot. Lot remained in this region until the time that those cities and the surrounding region were overthrown, at which time the Lord rescued him by means of angels. After he had left the city together with his wife and two daughters, his wife, contrary to God's command, looked back at Sodom. Immediately God punished her by changing her into a pillar of salt -- a pillar as hard and impossible to melt as a stone. The daughters of Lot afterward committed their shameful deed that resulted in the emergence of two evil nations which became the mortal enemies of the children of Israel.

Upon Abraham's return from his victorious battle, he met Melchizedek, king of Salem, who supplied refreshments for him. The identity of this Melchizedek, and whom he typified, has been dealt with in volume one, chapter 20. Thereafter the Lord again appeared to Abraham, renewed the previous promise of the Messiah to come and the multiplication of his seed, and in an extraordinary manner confirmed the covenant of grace with him. At that time God revealed to him that his descendants would be oppressed in a strange land for four hundred years, after which they would return to Canaan to possess it as their inheritance.

Since Abraham probably did not know that the Messiah and the multiplication of his seed would proceed from Sarah, he, upon Sarah's advice, lay with her maid Hagar, and begot Ishmael by her. By renewal God appeared to Abraham, repeated the same promise, and added to it that this promise would be fulfilled by means of a son whom he would beget from his wife Sarah, commanding Abraham to call him Isaac. God also renamed Abram and Sarai: Instead of Abram, God called him Abraham, and instead of Sarai, God called her Sarah. In renewing His promise, God confirmed the covenant by way of the sacrament of circumcision. He commanded Abraham to circumcise all the males among his descendants at the eighth day -- the command being accompanied by the threat that whoever would not be circumcised would be cut off from his people and be recognized as neither a descendant of Abraham nor a member of the covenant.

Circumcision: (1) was a seal of the covenant of grace, sealing to believers the forgiveness through the Messiah who was to come. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith" (Romans 4:11).

(2) pointed out the uncleanness of nature unto humiliation. This uncleanness, being expressed by the foreskin of the heart, displeased the Lord, and thus He wanted it removed. "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked" (Deuteronomy 10:16); "... all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart" (Jeremiah 9:26).

(3) placed the children of Israel under obligation, and sealed to them their sanctification. "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Jeremiah 4:4); "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Colossians 2:11).

(4) was a very evident mark of distinction for both the Israelites and strangers alike, as it indicated that they were in a covenant relationship with the Lord, and as the seed of Abraham belonged to the church.

True to the promise and the covenant which had been sealed, Sarah became pregnant and begat Isaac at the age of ninety -- contrary to the course of nature. Abraham was one hundred years of age when, to his great joy, Isaac was born to him. It was, however, also a great trial, for God commanded him to sacrifice this precious son upon Mount Moriah. Abraham obeyed God in a matter of the very greatest import. One can imagine, however, that he did so with great pain in his heart. Even if he were to kill his son, he nevertheless believed that the Messiah would come forth from this son -- even if God would have to resurrect him from ashes. However, God prevented him from doing so by providing him a ram which, in close proximity, was caught with his horns in the thicket and was sacrificed in his son's stead. Thereupon God renewed his previous blessings, pertaining to both the Messiah and the multiplication of his seed through Isaac; for Ishmael had already been sent away at the request of Sarah and upon God's command. At the occasion of Sarah's death, Abraham purchased the field of Ephron where the cave of Machpelah was located. There he buried Sarah, and later he was buried there himself, along with Isaac and Jacob. In principle the promise of Canaan -- Canaan being a land in which he, prior to this, did not own as much as one square foot -- was here fulfilled for Abraham. Jacob likewise purchased a parcel of land; this portion was so precious to him, that upon this parcel having been forcefully taken from him, he regained it with his sword, and preserved it as a precious earnest which he bequeathed to Joseph.

Isaac, upon the direction of his father Abraham, and due to the faithfulness of Abraham's servant, Eliezer, obtained Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel and the sister of Laban, as his wife. She was barren, but the Lord heard Isaac's prayer and Rebekah conceived and gave birth to Esau and Jacob after God had made known to her that the older would serve the younger. God renewed the covenant and the former promise to Isaac, who also built an altar unto the Lord and called upon His name. A profane Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. Isaac, being old and blind, believed himself to be blessing his son Esau, but unknowingly, due to the quick maneuvering of Rebekah, he blessed Jacob and gave him the rights pertaining to the firstborn.

Upon the advice of Rebekah, Isaac sent Jacob to Mesopotamia. God revealed Himself to Jacob in an extraordinary manner, promising him glorious blessings: the inheritance of Canaan and the multiplication of his seed. Upon arriving in Mesopotamia, Jacob, via a special direction of divine providence, became acquainted with Rachel and through her with her father Laban. He promised his daughter to Jacob as a reward for seven years of service. Laban deceived him, however, and secretly put Leah into Jacob's bed. Consequently, Jacob had to serve an additional seven years for Rachel. Thus, without this having been his objective, Jacob acquired two wives. From these wives and their maids Jacob fathered twelve sons and traveled with them to Canaan. Along the way he wrestled with the Lord, who changed his name to Israel, and blessed him greatly. Jacob cleansed his family of idols, built an altar unto the Lord, and served him uprightly.

Due to the envy of his brothers, Joseph was sold as a slave to some merchants, who brought him into Egypt where he was sold. After many vicissitudes, Joseph was highly exalted by Pharaoh, who enabled him to bring his father, together with his entire house, into Egypt, thereby preserving

them during the seven-year famine. At first, Israel was treated in a friendly manner, but afterward the Egyptians greatly oppressed Israel, making the people their slaves in accordance with God's prophecy to Abraham. What could be said about types during this period has been expressed in the previous chapter. When the oppression reached its zenith and all means were employed to eradicate Israel completely by killing all newborn male children, the Lord came to their rescue and delivered Israel from the hand of Pharaoh, led them into the land of Canaan, and fulfilled His oft-repeated promise.

After having been preserved for some time, Moses was put into an ark of bulrushes by his parents, who no longer dared to hide him. They placed him among the flags by the river's brink where Pharaoh's daughter and her companions found him and picked him up. On the recommendation of Moses' sister, Pharaoh's daughter committed him to his own parents for the purpose of raising him, and later adopted him as her son. God called and sent him to deliver Israel. Moses began by punishing an Egyptian; but Israel did not recognize him as their deliverer. He fled and married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro who was a priest or ruler in Midian. While watching the sheep of His father-in-law at Mount Horeb, the Lord appeared to him in a bush which burned, but was nevertheless not consumed. God sent him forth to deliver Israel, but he sought to be released from that task. God strengthened him by way of signs, however, and permitted his eloquent brother Aaron to accompany him. Upon this, Moses departed and requested of Pharaoh to let Israel go. In response to his repeated refusals, Pharaoh was afflicted with no less than ten plagues, after which he at last allowed Israel to leave. The people of God were also made willing to go. God gave Israel the treasures of Egypt for their heavy labor. Therefore they demanded silver and gold from them, and the Egyptians gave willingly in order to be rid of the people of Israel. The last plague consisted in the death of all the firstborn of the Egyptians. In order to exempt the people of God from this plague, God commanded them to kill a lamb -- a one-year-old male without blemish -- in their homes during the preceding evening. They then had to apply the blood to both of the side-posts and the lintel of their doors. Furthermore, they were commanded to roast the entire lamb in the fire, without breaking any bones, and to eat it with bitter herbs during the night, having their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and their staffs in their hands -- and thus be ready to journey. They had to eat this lamb in its entirety, doing so with haste. God promised that the angel who would slay all the firstborn of Egypt would pass over all the houses where the blood of the lamb had been applied to the doors, and thus would not slay the firstborn -- which indeed did occur that very night. Upon this, Pharaoh commanded Moses and Aaron to depart -- yes, the people strongly urged them to depart and Israel did so that very same night in a hasty yet orderly manner, each squadron being five by five. The Lord decreed that this slaying of the lamb -- the blood of which was applied to the doorposts to deliver Israel from the slaying angel -- was to be observed annually during the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month. He called it the Passover, which means to pass by. And since the blood of the lamb was the means, the lamb itself was called the Passover. "... and kill the passover" (Exodus 12:21); "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed" (Luke 22:7). The following particulars are to be observed:

(1) God changed the months; God designated the seventh month to be the first month. Upon the tenth day of the month Abib the Israelites were to take a lamb from the flock, and set it apart in isolation until the fourteenth day. On that day the Israelites were to kill it toward the evening

(Exodus 13:6).

(2) The lamb, be it of a sheep or a goat, was to be a one-year-old male without blemish (Exodus 12:5).

(3) The people were to kill it in their homes until the time that God chose a location for the ministry of types. From that time it was no longer to be killed in the homes, but only in the temple Deuteronomy 16:5-6 where the blood was to be sprinkled upon the altar 2 Chronicles 35:11, for the Passover was a sacrifice -- being interchangeably called the sacrifice of the Lord's passover (Exodus 12:27); 2 Chronicles 35:7-9, or sacrifice Numbers 9:7; Numbers 9:13.

(4) The lamb was neither permitted to be boiled nor to be eaten raw. Instead, it was to be roasted in the fire as one entire piece, without breaking its bones (Exodus 12:9).

(5) Having been roasted, it was to be eaten, along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exodus 12:8).

(6) The lamb had to be eaten in its entirety; nothing was permitted to remain. Therefore, if a family was too small, as many families as necessary would have to assemble in order that everything could be consumed; or else the leftovers had to be burned by fire (Exodus 12:10).

(7) Neither strangers, the uncircumcised, nor the unclean were permitted to eat; only the circumcised and the clean were permitted to do so -- men, women, as well as children (Exodus 12:45-47). If anyone was prevented from doing so due to extraordinary and unavoidable circumstances (or whatever else the reason may have been), he would have to observe it on the fourteenth day of the following month (Numbers 9:11).

(8) They had to eat the Passover being prepared to journey, having shoes on their feet, staffs in their hands, their loins girded (since they wore long garments in those lands), and in haste. No one was permitted to leave the house (Exodus 12:11-12). It is credible, however, that some of these particulars only pertained to the first Passover -- Israel having to depart from Egypt immediately upon the eating of the Passover. The Passover, given by God to Israel as an institution, being a sacrifice, belonged to the law of shadows, also called the ceremonial law. It was a type of Christ, as are all sacrifices. Christ is called "our passover [even Christ] is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7); "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Peter says that we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). Christ was the Son of man; He was a Man of sorrows who was without blemish, was holy, and was killed in the full strength of His life. Not one of His bones was broken, and by His shed and sprinkled blood He delivers all His own from all plagues, and they receive eternal salvation.

After having eaten the Passover, Israel departed Egypt in haste as if they were fleeing. Yet they departed in an orderly fashion by groups of five. They deviated, however, from the normal route leading out of Egypt. When this came to Pharaoh's knowledge, he reversed his decision to let them go, quickly gathered an army, and pursued them as if they were a flock of helpless sheep. Israel came into great distress. Before them was the sea, at their sides were either the mountains or a way which was not passable, and behind them was Pharaoh who pursued them with his armed forces. Escape was impossible. Moses called upon God who responded by dividing the sea

so that the waters stood as walls on both sides, and Israel traveled on dry ground across the bottom of the sea to the other side. As Pharaoh pursued them, the waters converged upon Pharaoh and his army and drowned every one of them. This crossing of the sea was a sacrament to them, sealing redemption in Christ to the believer (1 Corinthians 10:2). Israel, being joyful, praised the Lord and continued their journey. However, the least mishap caused them to distrust the Lord and to murmur. Nevertheless, the Lord helped them. When they were without bread, God caused manna to rain from heaven every night. When they were without water, God cleaved a rock, making water to come forth as a river, which followed them as a flood. They arrived at Mount Horeb, where God had determined that they should worship Him in a solemn manner. This manna and this rock were the sacraments for their spiritual life and of their redemption in Christ (1 Corinthians 10:3-4). Here they entered into a covenant with God; here God gave them the rule of life, the ten commandments; here the tabernacle was constructed at God's command; and here the ceremonial worship was prescribed to them in an orderly fashion. These matters need to be discussed in more detail.

After Israel had arrived at Horeb, Moses ascended the mountain. God commanded Moses to ask the people on His behalf if they wished to remain in the covenant and be obedient to Him (Exodus 19:8). Moses relayed the message, and the people responded at once: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). Thus, we truly have a covenant transaction here: God proposed the covenant and added a promise, upon which the people accepted it. The Covenant Made at Horeb: The Confirmation of the Covenant of Grace This raises the following question: Is the covenant made at Horeb the covenant of grace itself, or is it a national, external, and typical covenant, having as its only promise the inheritance of Canaan -- and is thus the point at which the Old Testament commences?

We answer as follows: (1) It is the covenant of grace itself. This transaction is but a solemn renewal of that covenant of which all believers since Adam have been partakers. God renewed this covenant with Abraham and his seed, confirming it with the sacrament of circumcision.

(2) The sound of the term national covenant is such, that it sometimes causes confusion for those who are not well-informed. It is, however, the covenant of grace which had previously been established with believers, but since the time of Abraham had been restricted to the posterity of Abraham. Only in that respect, and in none other, may it be referred to as a national covenant. The word "national" is not to be found in the Bible.

(3) An external covenant, consisting in temporal promises contingent upon external obedience, had never been established. There can be no such covenant between God and man. We have dealt with this extensively in volume one (chapter 16, pp. 457-463).

(4) The covenant of grace is a typical covenant, and therefore can be referred to as such, since it was administered by types which pointed to Christ. The administration of the covenant is therefore occasionally denominated as the covenant (Genesis 17:3; Jeremiah 31:31). In designating this covenant as a typical covenant, one is not to imply that it did not have an inherent spiritual promise; that is, that the covenant was only typical of spiritual benefits -- particularly those of the New Testament. There is not one trace of evidence in God's Word that this is so. Such a notion is thus to be rejected as quickly as it is stated.

(5) The Old Testament is the very embodiment of the covenant of grace, administered in the old fashion by way of shadows -- and nothing other than that. If the Old Testament were other than the covenant of grace, the death of a testator other than Jesus Christ would be necessary, for no testament is confirmed except in the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:16-17). Furthermore, the Old Testament neither began at Horeb, having been in existence since the time of Adam, nor consisted in the inheritance of Canaan, as we have shown in detail in the previous chapter.

We have stated all this by way of general introduction. Since the Old Testament neither began at Horeb, but rather with Adam and neither consists in the inheritance of Canaan nor is an external covenant, it remains that the covenant made at Horeb is the covenant of grace itself. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, the covenant made at Horeb is not a new covenant, but a renewal of a covenant previously established. This is evident from Exodus 19:1-25 and from all God's dealings with Israel during their stay at Horeb. Nothing is stated there which even resembles the establishment of a new covenant -- a covenant which previously had not existed. Rather, the covenant dealt with is consistently the covenant which existed previously. Observe this at the beginning of the chapter: "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:5-6; Exodus 19:8). Here we have the solemn confirmation of the covenant. God proposes His requirements and makes promises, and all of Israel acquiesces. God neither speaks a word about Canaan nor of anything new. In His proposition He speaks of My covenant as a covenant that already existed and of which Israel knew. It is this covenant to which they simultaneously and solemnly agreed. Thus, the covenant was already in existence. On the basis of and following this proceeded 1) the giving of the law of the ten commandments by God as their God (if this law were a formula of the covenant of grace, it would powerfully confirm the matter) and 2) the institution of an orderly worship, by way of types of Jesus Christ. Therefore, this covenant was not first established at Horeb, but existed prior to it. The transaction there pertained to a covenant that already existed. Prior to this there was, however, no other covenant than the covenant of grace. Thus, the covenant at Horeb is the covenant of grace.

Secondly, the covenant established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was the covenant of grace. The covenant at Horeb was, however, the same covenant as was established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus, the covenant established at Horeb is the covenant of grace.

It is evident that the covenant with Abraham is the covenant of grace for the following reasons:

- (1) It had Christ as its Mediator (Genesis 12:2-3; Galatians 3:17).
- (2) It had God as a God who was a shield and a great reward (Genesis 15:1; Genesis 17:8).
- (3) By it Abraham was established as the father of all believers (Genesis 17:2; Genesis 17:4; Romans 4:11).
- (4) It had to be embraced by faith (Genesis 25:6; Genesis 17:3; Romans 4:18-20).

(5) It had circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of faith (Romans 4:11). That the covenant made at Horeb was the same covenant made with Abraham is first of all evident from the fact that it contained the same promises, had the same rule of life, and had the same manner of worship.

(1) It contained the same spiritual and temporal promises. The spiritual promise was that God would be their God, and that they would belong to God. "I am the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:2); "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God" (Exodus 29:45); "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people" (Exodus 19:6). That this is the essence of the covenant of grace is evident from 2 Corinthians 6:16 : "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Furthermore, they were a royal priesthood and a holy nation: "And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:6); "But ye are ... a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9). The temporal promises were also the same -- as for instance, the promise of Canaan. God gave this land to Abraham. "And I will give unto thee ... the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:8); "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it" (Genesis 28:13). Thus, Canaan belonged to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob successively, and their descendants inherited it as an inheritance received from their father. The possessions of the parents are for the children.

(2) It had the same rule of life -- the will of God to love the Lord, and to fear, believe, and trust Him. All this is comprehended in the command: "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1). At Mount Horeb, God gave the identical command to Israel by way of the law of the ten commandments annunciated there.

(3) There was the same manner of worship -- by way of shadows. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob made altars of earth, and also offered sacrifices as Cain, Abel, and Noah did before them. They had mishmor, mitsvah, chakkah, and thorah. These are words which are generally expressive of laws -- both moral and ceremonial.

"Because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Genesis 26:5). They had circumcision as a sacrament of the covenant. Israel had the same ordinance -- the same sacrament. Since everything was identical, Israel had the same covenant which was established with Abraham.

Secondly, it is evident that the covenant established with Israel was identical to the covenant God established with Abraham from the fact that when mention is made of the covenant with Israel, reference is continually made to the covenant with Abraham, the declaration being that they are one and the same. "Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He swore unto thy fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:11-12); "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them. ... Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God. ... That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into His oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that He may establish thee to day for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee, and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" Deuteronomy 29:9-10; Deuteronomy 29:12-13.

Thus, the covenant which God established with Israel, along with the promises and the benefits, is the same; it is none other than the covenant God made with Abraham -- and is thus the covenant of grace itself.

Evasive Argument: In these texts it is indeed stated that God swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the covenant He made with Israel at Horeb would be established with their seed; but not that it is the same covenant.

Answer (1) This is merely conjecture and its conclusion can be answered with a denial.

(2) It expressly contradicts those texts which declare that God has established this covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that God would confirm that identical covenant with Israel, their seed.

(3) It contradicts Genesis 17:7 where the Lord enters into covenant with Abraham, and in him with his seed -- it being declared to be one and the same covenant. Furthermore, regarding Canaan, it was given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; it was their land. "And I will give unto thee ... all the land of Canaan" (Genesis 17:8); "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it" (Genesis 28:13). Israel received it from their father as an inheritance. Abraham had the property rights, and Israel, by reason of those rights, came into its possession in accordance with the Lord's promise made to Abraham that He would do so.

Thirdly, not one person who is of Reformed persuasion will deny (no one can deny it!) that the covenant which has Christ as its Surety and Mediator is the covenant of grace. Such is true, however, for the covenant of Horeb, for it does have Christ as its Mediator, which is evident from the fact that it was ratified with blood. "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you" (Exodus 24:8); "Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people" (Hebrews 9:18-19).

God had given the blood to make atonement for man. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). The blood of animals was not capable of reconciling man with God. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). This efficacy is, however, to be found in the blood of the Lord Jesus: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Romans 3:25); "In whom we have redemption through His blood" (Ephesians 1:7). The blood of animals sacrificed in the Old Testament was a type of the blood of Christ -- just as the entire law of shadows pointed to future benefits and was not the essence of the matter itself (Hebrews 10:1). This is particularly to be observed in Hebrews 9:1-28 where the apostle continually compares the blood of bullocks and goats with the blood of the Lord Jesus, that is, the type with the antitype (vss. 12-14, 20, 25). Speaking of this in verse 23, he says, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Hebrews 9:23). Therefore, just as Moses sprinkled the book and the people, the blood of Christ is called the blood of sprinkling (Hebrews 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2). It is thus both certain and

obvious that the sprinkling of the book of the covenant and of the people pointed to the sprinkling of the blood of Christ (that is, the appropriation and application thereof), confirming the covenant of grace. Thus, the covenant of Sinai had Christ as its Mediator, and consequently was the covenant of grace.

Fourthly, that covenant is the covenant of grace itself which has as its sacraments the sacraments of grace. A seal confirms a covenant -- and then only that covenant of which it is a seal. To sever a seal from one covenant and to attach it to another covenant of an entirely different content is the height of infidelity. However, the covenant of Sinai has as its seals the seals of the covenant of grace. It was confirmed by circumcision and the Passover, both of which the children of Israel were commanded to strictly observe upon the threat of excommunication; that is, expulsion from the congregation of God and the covenant. It has been confirmed in the previous chapter that circumcision and the Passover were the seals of the covenant of grace. Both were instituted prior to the covenant at Horeb. The disputants admit that nothing but the covenant of grace existed previously. Both sealed the covenant of grace: Circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith Romans 4:11, and the Passover was Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Along with the three previous proofs, this proves that the covenant of Horeb was the covenant of grace.

Refutation of Objections to the Covenant at Horeb being the Covenant of Grace

Objection #1: The Word of God continually makes a distinction between the covenant at Horeb and the covenant of grace. Thus, the covenant at Horeb is not the covenant of grace, but an external covenant, consisting in the promise of Canaan as typifying heavenly benefits. This is evident from Deuteronomy 5:3 : "The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day." Here the fathers, who were not present at Horeb, are contrasted with those who were. It is expressly stated here that the covenant made at Horeb was not made with the fathers. Thus, the covenant at Horeb is a different covenant from the covenant of grace in which the fathers were comprehended, and which remains the same from Adam until the end of the world.

Answer (1) The contrast is not with the fathers prior to the exodus, but with those who had been present at Horeb and who, according to God's threat, had died in the wilderness; and with those who presently were alive, were in the fields of Moab, and forty years later stood ready to cross the Jordan and enter Canaan. At that time God solemnly renewed the covenant; therefore the objection is null and void.

(2) This covenant made in Moab was the same in essence, but different in regard to time, persons, and manner. In this context it is said that God did not make that covenant with their forefathers who died in the wilderness -- just like Scripture frequently speaks of or denies a matter which did not exist under given circumstances. (Cf. John 7:39; Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:5; Appendix, chapter 1, p. ###373).

(3) If one wishes to interpret the fathers as referring to Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc. the contrast also does not pertain to the essence of the covenant, but is relative to the circumstances, for it was one in essence, as has been shown in the confirmation: "The Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He swore unto thy fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:12). However, here

the reference is not to fathers but to Horeb.

Objection #2: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts" (Jeremiah 31:31-33). Here there is an obvious contrast between the covenant at Horeb and the new covenant in the days of the New Testament -- not in regard to circumstances, but the essence itself. In the New Testament God would write the laws in their heart and He, as is promised in verses 33-34, would forgive their unrighteousness and remember their sins no more. The text in question does not connect any of this to the covenant at Horeb. Thus, the covenant at Horeb is not the covenant of grace, but an external, typical covenant, the promise of which only pertained to the inheritance of Canaan.

Answer: It is a fact that there is a distinction here between the Old and New Testaments. It is equally certain that the New Testament did not exist during the days of the Old Testament, but came after the Old Testament; that is, it replaced and set aside the Old Testament. Furthermore, it is true that the New Testament is the covenant of grace, comprehending the spiritual benefits in Christ -- and to remain with the text: the writing of the law in their hearts, to have God as their God (vs. 33), to have enlightened eyes of the understanding, and to have the forgiveness of sins (vs. 34). Moreover, it is equally certain that the Old Testament comprehended all these benefits of the covenant of grace and the covenant of grace itself. This we shall show in the following chapters.

It is also agreed that the covenant of grace has been since Adam and will remain the same in essence until the end of the world -- as in our opinion it has been irrefutably proven in the previous chapter that the Old Testament began with the very first promise in Paradise. Consequently, it follows with equal certainty that the contrast between the Old and New Testaments cannot be one of essence. Since the New Testament is the covenant of grace -- the New Testament having been nonexistent during the Old Testament, existing subsequent to, instead of, and the setting aside of the Old Testament being implied -- then all who lived prior to the time of the New Testament would not have had a covenant of grace. There would then have been no fear of God, no knowledge of the mystery of salvation, and no forgiveness of sins; whereas people were indeed saved and did possess all the benefits of the covenant of grace.

Therefore, the contrast pertains to the circumstances, the manner of administration, and the measure of light, faith, hope, and love. Old Testament believers had the law written in their hearts, had God as their God, had the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, and had the forgiveness of sins. They did not have this, however, with the same clarity as New Testament believers. The Old Testament is the covenant of grace, administered by shadows and examples. The New Testament is also the covenant of grace -- but administered without shadows. The one testament is called "old" because of its previous and original existence; and it has become old and has vanished. The other testament is called "new" because it chronologically followed the old, and it was also administered differently from the old. Scripture calls something new which, though it existed previously, is renewed. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another" (John 13:34).

Additional Objection: Man cannot annul the covenant of grace. However, the Jews did set the Old Testament aside (vs. 32). Thus, the Old Testament is not the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) He who has truly entered into the covenant of grace will by reason of the immutability of God and the influence of preserving grace not break it. This is according to the promise found in (Jeremiah 32:40). The unconverted Jews, however, made a covenant of works of the old covenant. They desired to be justified by observing the ceremonial service, and believed that the blood of animals removed their sins. Thus, they broke the old covenant, changing and distorting its administration and objective in such a manner as to make it differ completely from the purpose for which the ceremonial service was instituted.

(2) By their ungodly lives the unconverted Jews showed that they had never entered rightly into the covenant of grace, but had only entered in externally and thus were no partakers of the benefits of the covenant. Thus, this breach of covenant relates to them and their activities.

(3) If the Old Testament consisted in the promise of Canaan, and if they had rendered that null and void, the unconverted Jews would have rescinded the inheritance of Canaan; it would no longer be their inheritance. To this, however, they will not admit.

Objection #3: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Here we have an express contrast between Moses and Christ -- between law, and truth and grace. Moses was the mediator of the Old Testament, and Christ of the New Testament. The law, the Old Testament, did not provide grace. It only had the promise of the land of Canaan. In the New Testament, however, there is truth and grace. The covenant at Horeb was thus not the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) For the sake of the honor of Christ, I vehemently deny that Moses was a mediator of the Old Testament. To maintain this is very detrimental to the mediatorial office of Christ. Christ was the Mediator -- and the only Mediator -- of the Old as well as the New Testament. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today (Hebrews 13:8). Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

(2) Moses is only called mediator in Galatians 3:19 in consequence of his transmitting of the law as a messenger -- the law which had been placed in his hands by angels. However, he is never called the mediator of the Old Testament and was never a mediator in Canaan, for he had already expired prior to Israel's arrival in Canaan. Or was he a mediator in heaven? Moses was no more a mediator of the children of Israel than he is for us at the present time. We have the law, transmitted by Moses, as much as they had it.

(3) The contrast on which this text focuses is between law, grace, and truth, and conveys that the law (interpret this as broadly as you wish) could not grant salvation. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Romans 3:20); "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices ... make the comers thereunto perfect" (Hebrews 10:1). All the shadows, when divorced from their substance, are of no value; they were not instituted as such. Their design was to lead to Christ, in order to believe in Him. Christ is the true image and embodiment of the shadows. By virtue of His satisfaction, believers both of the Old and New Testaments obtain grace. That is the contrast expressed in this text. What then is left in this text of an external covenant? What basis is there for

asserting that the covenant at Horeb is not the covenant of grace itself?

Objection #4: Consider 2 Corinthians 3:1-18. In this chapter there is a contrast between the Old and New Testaments. The apostle calls the Old Testament the letter that kills (vs. 6), “the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones” (vs. 7), and “the ministration of condemnation” (vs. 9); whereas the New Testament is called “the ministration of the spirit” (vs. 8), and “the ministration of righteousness” (vs. 9). It is thus very evident that the Old Testament was not the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) It can be seen very clearly that the reference here is to the law of the ten commandments, which alone was written upon and engraven in tables of stone. This was not the case with the ceremonial laws. And since the disputants postulate the ten commandments to be a declaration of the covenant of grace, how can they avoid contradicting themselves? Is the compendium of the covenant of grace a ministry of death and a ministry of condemnation? They will therefore have to answer me concerning their own objections.

(2) If the Old Testament were a ministry of condemnation, it would be without promise; and it would also not have Canaan as its inheritance. It would then be a covenant of condemnation. Who would ever be willing and delighted to enter into a covenant of condemnation? Old Testament believers would then have been partakers of a covenant of condemnation. If they had been partakers of a covenant of condemnation, not one believer from the time of Moses would have been saved, but all would have been condemned. And thus by using this text, one contradicts himself, the Scriptures, and the children of God.

(3) The text neither distinguishes nor contrasts the Old and New Testaments. Rather, it does so relative to both the moral and ceremonial laws (let us consider it in such broad terms) and their administration as such, that is, divorced from Christ. This is how the Jews viewed and used the ceremonial law. This is to be observed throughout the entire letters to the Galatians and the Hebrews, as well as in what Paul expresses in Romans 9:31-32 : “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.” And thus he declares that the administration of the law, when divorced from Christ, is but a dead letter -- a ministry of death and condemnation. For no one could be justified in that manner; but all who adhere to this external structure, divorced from and without Christ, could only be condemned. Apart from Christ there is no salvation, “for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (Galatians 3:10). He contrasts this with Christ and the proclamation of Him, calling that the ministration of the Spirit and a ministration of righteousness. For all believers are called to Christ by the gospel which was present in both the Old and New Testaments -- and who, believing in Christ, are justified. Therefore, there is nothing here which could either be supportive of an external covenant, or disprove that the Old Testament is the covenant of grace.

Objection #5: “But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:23-26). Here the Old and New Testaments are contrasted with each other. The Old Testament, depicted by Hagar and

her son Ishmael, was established at Sinai. It commenced at that time as a carnal and external covenant (having Canaan as its inheritance and having no true and spiritual benefits), imposing hard bondage by way of the ceremonies. In contrast, the New Testament, depicted by Sarah and Isaac, is a spiritual covenant, sets at liberty, and grants spiritual and eternal benefits. Thus, the covenant at Sinai is not the covenant of grace.

Answer: To respond to this objection, we shall first exegete the text, and then counter the objection extracted from this text. The history at hand pertains to Abraham, who laid with Hagar upon Sarah's request and fathered Ishmael, who according to the flesh was from Abraham. Subsequently, Abraham received a specific promise that he would receive a son by his wife Sarah, whom he would call Isaac, and that from Isaac would proceed the multiplication of his seed and the Messiah. Isaac having been born, Ishmael hates, mocks, and persecutes him to the utmost of his ability (vs. 29). Verse 30 states that Ishmael, together with his mother Hagar, was cast out without inheritance. However, godly Isaac remained at home and became the heir of everything. The apostle does not refer to these matters as examples, for they were not such in the true sense of the word. They were neither incorporated as part of the body of worship, nor did they belong to the ceremonial law, as then there would also be examples of examples -- and they in turn of others. Hagar would have been an example of the Old Testament, and that in turn of Jerusalem (vs. 25). Rather, he calls them allegoroumena -- matters which by reason of similarity to and agreement with certain matters can be applied to other matters and meanings. (See previous chapter.)

He calls Hagar and Sarah two covenants. God, in Adam, had established the covenant of works with the human race, the demands of which are repeated in the law of the ten commandments. This covenant having been rendered ineffectual due to sin, God reestablished it as the covenant of grace, which in essence is the same and will abide from Adam until the end of the world. However, since the Surety of that covenant did not come at the very outset, but about four thousand years after the initial establishment of the covenant, it was necessary, and it pleased God in His wisdom and goodness, to administer that covenant of grace by way of examples and shadows of the promised Surety until the advent of Christ, the Surety. Subsequent to His coming, however, there was no longer any need or purpose for them; Christ now administers the covenant without them. The distinction made between the old and the new covenant relates to the administration thereof, they being one in essence. Its denomination as either old or new does not relate to the essence of the covenant, but to its administration, as is evident from what follows:

(1) The old covenant is no external covenant which promised external benefits upon external obedience, did not commence at Sinai, and does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan; rather, it is the covenant of grace itself -- all of which has been shown in the previous chapter. Consequently, it is called "old" relative to its administration.

(2) The new covenant is not called "new" relative to its essence, for it is the covenant of grace itself which has been operative since Adam. Rather, it is called new relative to its administration. The new covenant or testament has come subsequent to the old, has taken its place by annulling the former, and was not new as long as the old covenant was operative. The New Testament did not exist in the days of the Old Testament, whereas the covenant of grace did. Consequently, the covenant of grace is called the new covenant or testament only relative to its administration. In this

text the apostle speaks of the covenant of grace in its twofold administration, calling it two covenants. The apostle calls the one the covenant of Sinai. This does not imply that the covenant of grace commenced at that time (see previous chapter), but that it was at that time solemnly inaugurated, and attained its greatest glory and luster. This engendered bondage or servitude -- just as Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. Servitude can be either good or bad. Good servitude consists in serving God in spirit and in truth, and according to His will. The godly are therefore often called the servants of God, as well as servants of righteousness (Romans 6:19). They yield their "members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (vs. 19) and are "servants of God" (vs. 22). In that light Paul says of himself in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." It is such service God had in view by giving the ceremonies. They were given to that end as the contents of the old covenant. There is also an evil servitude when one serves sin and is in bondage to sin. "... as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity" (Romans 6:19). This also applies when one wishes to serve God in a manner contrary to what He has commanded: "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship" (Colossians 2:23). The covenant of Sinai which engenders bondage brought forth illegitimate children, just as Ishmael was illegitimate. This was not a consequence of the nature of this covenant, for it was an administration instituted by God for the purpose of worship. It was pleasing to Him, and therefore the godly found great delight in it, praising and thanking the Lord for it. Rather, it was through human perversion that this evangelical manner of worship -- which the old administration was -- was changed into a covenant of works. Thus, the antitype, Christ, was separated from the types, thereby removing the very soul from them. They adhered to the external deeds of the law and sought their righteousness therein. This Sinai was synonymous to "Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children" (Galatians 4:29). This was the nature of the condition of Jerusalem in the days when Paul wrote this. There was no adherence to the covenant of Sinai which had been broken, as the Lord testified in (Jeremiah 31:32). It had been changed into a covenant other than what the Lord had given -- into a covenant of works -- and they sought their righteousness therein. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3); "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Since they were mired in the external things, they were not serving God, for He had not given these ceremonies for that purpose. Their servitude toward the ceremonies was an evil servitude. God had not imposed this servitude upon them in this covenant. The apostle issues a warning against this, saying: "Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1); "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" Galatians 4:29 All who had brought themselves therefore in a bondage of this nature were in a condition just like unto Ishmael, who was a son of a bondwoman, and by virtue of that relationship, he himself was in bondage. They did indeed issue forth from Abraham according to the flesh, but they were not the children of promise. They had no spiritual graces and no spiritual inheritance. "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:6-8). Just as Ishmael was a reviler and persecutor of Isaac, likewise the Jews under bondage were revilers and persecutors of those gracious souls who had been born after the Spirit (Galatians 4:29). Just as

Ishmael had been expelled, God had likewise rejected them -- their destruction with that of Jerusalem already being imminent. Thus Hagar and her son Ishmael represent all who are in the covenant only in an external sense. This is what is meant by Hagar, Sinai, and Jerusalem. The covenant contrasted with the covenant of Sinai (which, as stated above, in this context is represented by Sarah) is the new covenant. In its essence it already existed in the Old Testament; all the godly were partakers of it, and by it they obtained redemption and the eternal inheritance. Relative to its administration, however, it is a new covenant which had its beginning with the suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. As far as essence was concerned, this covenant was one and the same as the old covenant. It is a gracious covenant, pertains to heavenly benefits and a heavenly inheritance, and begets free and heavenly children. "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:27). This covenant, administered in the new manner, would be very fruitful in bringing forth free and spiritual children. "Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband" (Galatians 4:27). This is Sarah and the Jerusalem which is from above. Paul's objective in presenting these matters was to draw the Jews away from their errors, and to prevent believing Jews from succumbing to them. The latter continually wanted to return to the ceremonies -- not to use them again as types, for they believed that the Messiah, Christ, had already come, but to use those things and activities for worship, and thereby to seek their righteousness.

Now we shall proceed with the rebuttal of the objection extracted from this text: The covenant made at Sinai is not the covenant of grace. The entire thrust of this argument is derived from 1) the covenant at Sinai being depicted by Hagar and Ishmael, 2) it being said to be a covenant of bondage, and 3) this covenant being contrasted with the New Testament, depicted by Sarah and Isaac and consisting in heavenly benefits.

Answer (1) Not one word is mentioned here of Canaan being the inheritance in which they who object insist the Old Testament consists. It also does not concur with it being typified by Hagar and Ishmael, who were sent away without an inheritance.

(2) Also here it is not stated that the Old Testament had its beginning at Sinai. Sinai is mentioned since the Old Testament was solemnly inaugurated and adorned with all its luster and glory at that occasion -- a covenant, as has been shown in the previous chapter, which already existed since the time of Adam. It is likewise stated that circumcision was given by Moses, even though it had been given to Abraham long before that.

(3) Paul, who compares the Old Testament with Hagar, does this not as it had been instituted of old, but as it had been perverted into a covenant of works. So it was in Jerusalem at the time when Paul wrote this -- a city which had completely deviated from the proper institution of the covenant. The objection can therefore not be sustained.

(4) Also the word "bondage" does not contribute at all to the discrediting of our proof. Divine servitude, even though it is grievous for the flesh, is a holy work and has the promise of all spiritual benefits and salvation. It is not expressive at all of an external covenant pertaining to temporal promises only. However, God did not impose the grievousness of this bondage. Rather, this bondage was in consequence of their perversion of the gospel (which is what the ceremonies were), making it a covenant of works in order to be justified by it. This yoke was therefore an

unbearable burden.

(5) It cannot be true that Hagar depicts an external covenant, for the godly were also comprehended in the covenant of Sinai, and thus they would simultaneously hail from Hagar and Sarah. They would have been ungodly Ishmaels, mockers, persecutors of those who are after the Spirit, no heirs, and subject to being cast out -- and simultaneously be sons, freemen, and heirs. It is thus evident that this objection is without substance, a fact which becomes all the more clear when one adds to this the exposition of the text as mentioned.

Objection #6: "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" (Hebrews 7:22); "How much also He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Hebrews 8:6). The New Testament is a better covenant, having better promises and Jesus as a Surety. Thus, the Old Testament is an external covenant, having temporal promises without having Jesus as a Surety.

Answer (1) One could at best conclude from this objection that the Old Testament was not such a good covenant, and did not have such good promises; but not that the Old Testament was simply an external covenant, having only temporal promises. That which differs in measure does not differ in nature; that which differs as far as circumstances are concerned does not differ in essence. The essence of the covenants is one and the same. As to the covenant of grace itself, the manner of administration differs as far as clarity and scope are concerned. That is the reason why the one is better than the other.

(2) The apostle's objective here is to show the excellency of Christ, and how in His ministry He is superior to the priests, their work, and the types of the Old Testament. Paul speaks of all this -- as they are in and of themselves, divorced from the antitype Christ. In this manner the Jews of that time viewed the entire ministry of shadows; they embraced it as a covenant of works and sought to be justified thereby. Such were the persons the apostle opposed, showing them that all such service, when divorced from Christ, was neither efficacious nor beneficial. Instead, it was ineffective, useless, and flawed. Over against this the apostle placed the Lord Jesus, who is the antitype of those shadows and the Mediator of the covenant of grace. The objectors place the external administration as such in opposition to the covenant of grace and Christ as its Surety -- just as if one were to divorce the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper from their spiritual meaning, considering these elements just as they are, while contrasting them with the Lord Jesus and His fullness. The covenant of grace is indeed a better covenant than all those external administrations -- better than all those animal sacrifices. Of that better covenant Jesus is Surety and Mediator. That covenant has better promises than its external administration as such and when viewed as divorced from the antitype. To make such a separation is fruitless, for the covenant was not instituted apart from the antitype.

Objection #7: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded) ... but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. ... And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" Hebrews

12:18-20; Hebrews 12:22; Hebrews 12:27. In this passage we observe a very significant distinction between the two covenants -- one is so dreadful, whereas the other is so lovely. The people prayed that the one be concealed, whereas the other is so desirable. The one is so unbearable, whereas the other is so light, gentle, and sweet. The one is finite, whereas the other is of eternal duration. All these distinctions indicate very clearly that one, the Old Testament, is but an external covenant.

Answer (1) This objection contradicts itself. In verses 18-20 mention is made only of the giving of the ten commandments. The ceremonial laws were not given in that fashion, and furthermore, the opposing parties deemed the law of the ten commandments to be a formula of the covenant of grace. This would then mean that the covenant of grace would have been announced in such a dreadful fashion. How can the disputants then conclude from this frightful event that the covenant established there cannot be the covenant of grace?

(2) There is not even a reference to a covenant here. No name is mentioned, nor is the matter referred to. Thus, one cannot construct an external covenant from this passage.

(3) All that is stated in the text neither refers to the matter nor to the contents of the ten commandments -- which they were also unable to either fulfill or practice. Rather, it refers to the manner in which it was given, which they could not bear. Their prayer was that God would no longer speak to them in that manner, but that God would speak to them instead through Moses.

(4) The fact that the things of the Old Testament are said to be shaken (vs. 27) is not indicative of an external covenant. Rather, the specific manner in which the covenant of grace was administered had to cease, since the substance of that of which the types were a shadow had come. The administration of the New Testament will also cease, but does this therefore mean that it is not the covenant of grace? The change of administration is not indicative of a change of covenant.

Objection #8: That covenant into which an entire nation, head for head, the godly and the ungodly, must enter (and also did enter); the sacraments of which every single individual had to partake of; and which was capable of being broken and annulled, is not the covenant of grace, but is an external covenant. However, the covenant of Sinai was such a covenant. Therefore:

Answer (1) All who are called in both Old and New Testaments are obligated to obey the voice of the gospel and to enter into the covenant.

(2) There is a difference between the act of entering into the covenant, and the covenant itself. The act of entering can be of a deceitful and external nature, but it is therefore not true that the covenant is an external covenant. Those who did not enter in the right manner sinned most dreadfully, for they were all obligated to enter with an upright heart.

(3) Every believer is obliged to use the sacraments and to have their children sealed by the sacrament of incorporation. An ungodly person is also obliged to believe and to use the sacraments while believing. However, an ungodly person who was and continued to be ungodly was no more permitted to eat the Passover and bring sacrifices than they are presently permitted to be baptized and partake of the Lord's Supper.

(4) A temporal believer can fall away; however, he does not fall out of the covenant of grace, for he was never in it. The actual breaking of the covenant occurred when he entered. There was an external entering into, and thus an external breaking of the covenant, as shown above. When all these things are considered together, it is evident that the first proposition is false -- and thus the entire syllogism is null and void.

Objection #9: The covenant of Sinai was external in every respect. The blood, the commandments, the obedience, the promises, the atonement, the mediator (such as Moses), the sacraments, the sanctuary, and the manner of worship -- all were of an external sort, and therefore it was also an external covenant.

Answer (1) If all these matters existed independently, and neither pointed to nor were united with the antitype; and if God were to have made a covenant with man thereby, we would allow the objection. However, neither the one nor the other is true.

(2) By way of such argumentation, it could also be concluded that the New Testament is an external covenant. There is external water, external bread and wine, external preaching, external confession, external physical activity along with words to glorify God thereby, and external and temporal promises. The covenant is therefore external. This proves the futility of the objection.

(3) All the external matters and forms of worship pertained to the antitype, Christ. Apart from Him they neither had meaning nor were instituted as such. Rather, they were united with the antitype. The manner of worship was therefore spiritual, and both the atonement and the sealing of it were in truth. The promises were not only temporal in nature, but also pertained to all the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace. As shown earlier, Moses was not the mediator of the covenant, but only the one who transmitted the covenant. God was not satisfied with external worship; He demanded the heart instead. Thus, this objection refutes itself.

113. Chapter 3: The Ceremonial Laws Given at Sinai and the State of the Church from Sinai Unt...

----- CHAPTER THREE ----- The Ceremonial Laws Given at Sinai and the State of the Church from Sinai Until Christ

After Israel's solemn entering into covenant with God, He gave laws to the partakers of His covenant -- laws to which each would have to be subject. These laws are generally distinguished as follows: 1) the moral law, directing everyone unto a holy life; 2) the ceremonial law, governing man in his worship through faith in the future Messiah; and 3) the civil law, governing society in the form of a republic -- its special focus being the maintenance of religion.

We have dealt comprehensively with the giving and contents of the Moral Law in volume 3, chapters 45-55. There we dealt with, among others, the following questions:

(1) Is the Moral Law a covenant of works?

(2) Is the Law of the Ten Commandments a formula of the covenant of grace?

(3) Is the law, the covenant at Horeb, a mixed covenant -- partially derived from the covenant of works and partially from the covenant of grace?

(4) Was the covenant made at Horeb external, typical, and national -- and thus distinct from the covenant of grace? For our response to these questions see volume 1, chapter 16, p. 427, and volume 3, chapter 45, p. 35. We shall therefore not discuss this law any further here. The ceremonial laws governed religion in harmony with the circumstances of that time frame, in order that by way of shadows the future Messiah and His works could be made known, and thus lead Israel to exercise faith in Him unto their salvation. These laws can be arranged under three headings: 1) the location where the ceremonial acts of worship were publicly performed, which first was the tabernacle and afterwards the temple; 2) the persons who performed these ceremonies -- the priests; and 3) the ceremonies themselves and the manner in which they were performed. The Location of Israel's Ceremonial Worship: The Tabernacle and the Temple The location of the ceremonial worship was first the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple. After Moses had been commanded and instructed to make the tabernacle (but prior to its completion), Moses erected a tent outside the camp where the people would congregate for religious worship until the tabernacle was constructed (Exodus 33:7). David likewise made a tent for the ark until his son Solomon would build the temple, bringing the ark to this tent from the house of Obededom (cf. 2 Samuel 6:17; 1 Chronicles 16:1). Concerning the tabernacle we must note: 1) the pattern after which it was constructed; 2) the materials from which it was made; and 3) its structural form, and the tools to be used. The pattern of the tabernacle was neither an invention of Moses nor of any other wise builder. Rather, it was God Himself who stipulated everything from the greatest to the smallest detail. Thereby He depicted the Messiah in the clearest possible fashion. Thus, Christ is not patterned after the ceremonies, but the ceremonies are patterned after Christ. It was God's will

that nothing of man would either be taken from or added to it, as the ceremonies belong to the realm of religion -- a realm in which only God has a right to legislate, and where there is not the least room for any institutions of man. God revealed everything to Moses, piece by piece, emphatically commanding him to construct everything according to the exact specifications. "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount" (Exodus 25:40). Likewise, God gave commandments pertaining to all the details concerning the construction of the temple, giving David a pattern of all these things by the Spirit. David, in turn, gave that pattern to his son Solomon, reassuring him that "all this ... the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern" (1 Chronicles 28:11-19).

Concerning the construction of the tabernacle, the materials used were of the most precious sort. They were the following: shittim wood (for it was not a house of stone, but rather of wood, so that it could be transported that much more efficiently), gold, silver, precious stones, copper, fine linen, fine twined threads, the most excellent colors (such as heavenly blue, purple, and scarlet), ram skins dyed red, badger-skins, goat's hair, various items to decorate the sanctuary within, and various items to decorate the sanctuary without. All these materials were prepared in a most magnificent manner by the cunning workmen, Bezaleel and Aholiab, whom God had endowed with extraordinary wisdom for that purpose. Everyone donated these materials voluntarily in such an abundant measure that a proclamation had to be made that no one should bring any more. These voluntary gifts represented a value of multiple millions of pieces of gold. Add to these the half shekel contributed by every numbered male in Israel after the shekel of the sanctuary, concerning which no one was permitted to give either more or less. As the total of all the numbered men was 603,550, all of these together constituted a sum greater than could be imagined if God had not stated what it was. Where did this more-than-royal treasure have its origin, considering that Israel was in an uninhabited wilderness? The wood was possibly hewn from an adjacent forest. Furthermore, God had blessed Israel in an extraordinary manner prior to their oppression, and He had given them the most precious things of Egypt at their exodus. You will find these materials listed in Exodus 35:1-35; Exodus 36:1-38, whereas the entire construction of the tabernacle is described in the remainder of the book. From this we may learn that everyone must contribute something to the upbuilding of God's church. The most insignificant thing is as necessary as the best thing. All must be contributed without compulsion and with a willing heart. God gives more gifts to the one than to the other. Nevertheless, the weaving of the women was as pleasing to God as was the skill of Bezaleel. Neither gold nor silver is of any avail when it comes to the redemption of souls. Jesus paid the same price for the one soul as for the other.

Concerning the structural form of the tabernacle, we shall present every part with the furniture and tools pertaining thereto, and add a few applications. We wish to say first, however, that we can speak with certainty about only those matters explained for us in the New Testament. In all other instances we shall proceed according to our judgment. We do not wish to debate about this, for the foundation of this is certain: The tabernacle and all it contains had been instituted by God for the ceremonial ministry.

Here we must note the courtyard and the tabernacle itself. The courtyard, measuring one hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide, was a spacious area surrounding the tabernacle, and was encompassed with curtains made of netting, so that the people (who were not permitted to enter), while standing round about the courtyard could see what the priests did within. In this way one

could also behold the gospel, Christ, and the mysteries of salvation -- albeit from afar. These curtains, five cubits high, were suspended from fifty-six pillars, overlaid with silver. Thus, there was a separation between the courtyard and all that was external to it. The church is likewise separated from the world and surrounded by a wall of separation and preservation. The tabernacle had but one courtyard, whereas the temple had two -- one for the priests and one for the people. Herod had constructed a third area surrounding the others, called the court of the Gentiles.

Within this courtyard was the tabernacle. Its location was most likely not in the center. The brazen altar and the laver were located at the eastern end between the gate and the tabernacle. Since the sacrifices were performed here, more space was necessary. If we determine the distance from the gate to the tabernacle as fifty cubits and the tabernacle itself being thirty cubits, a distance of twenty cubits remained at the western end (all of which adds up to one hundred cubits). This distance was one cubit more than the space on both sides of the tabernacle, where a space of nineteen cubits remained. There were nineteen cubits on the one side; the tabernacle itself was twelve cubits wide, and there were nineteen cubits remaining on the other side -- adding up to fifty cubits. Inside the courtyard, between the entrance and the tabernacle, stood the brazen altar and the laver. The brazen altar, made of shittim wood, was covered within and without with brass. It had a brazen grating in the middle whereby a draft could make the fire burn that much better, while allowing the ashes to fall through. The altar was square, each side being five cubits wide, and three cubits high. From each corner protruded a horn to which the sacrificial animals were bound (Psalms 118:27). All the tools belonging to the altar were also made of brass, and consequently were thus suitable for their use: to withstand the fire. Neither gold nor silver were suitable in that respect. It stood in the open air between the entrance of the courtyard and the entrance of the tabernacle. It is here that the sacrificial animals were burned and the blood was sprinkled. The Lord Jesus is called an altar (Hebrews 13:10). In an external sense He had no glory, yet He was perfect, capable of reconciling the elect with God through His sacrifice, offered publicly before everyone's eyes, and the refuge of all who take hold of His strength. One cannot enter heaven except he have dealings with Him -- and thus enter through Him who is able to save to the uttermost all who go unto God through Him. The laver also stood in the courtyard between its entrance and the tabernacle's. It was made of brass. It should be noted that it was made of the brazen mirrors of the godly women, who, instead of using glass as we do, had mirrors of polished brass which also reflected an image. The purpose of the mirror is to show the blemishes on a person's countenance, as well as to see if his clothing is properly arranged. That which served the purpose of purification was given for that very purpose. The laver was always filled with water so that the priests could wash themselves and purify the sacrificial animals. Thus, one cannot enter heaven except through the blood of Jesus unto justification and by being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Christ is the fountain that has been opened against sin and uncleanness. The tabernacle itself had two chambers or compartments covered by one roof. The external layer of the roof consisted of badger skins in order to preserve the inner layers. Beneath this was another layer of ram skins dyed red and beneath this was a layer of goat's hair which constituted the tent itself. The walls, constructed of boards made of the very best shittim wood, rested on silver footings. The boards themselves were overlaid with pure gold and designed in a most artful manner. The tabernacle -- thirty cubits long, twelve cubits wide, and ten cubits high -- was situated in an east-west direction. Its entrance at the eastern end faced the gate of the courtyard, from which one, having passed the brazen altar and the laver, would enter the first compartment, called the

Holy Place. From here he would continue into the second compartment, called the Holy of Holies. These compartments were separated from each other by an expensive and artistically designed piece of tapestry, called the veil. This tabernacle and all that it contained was a type suitable for that time period. God -- who as far as His essence is concerned does not dwell upon earth, the heavens and the heaven of heavens not being able to contain Him -- is nevertheless said to dwell in an earthly sanctuary. He did so particularly between the cherubim and upon the mercy seat with an extraordinary manifestation of His presence. Yes, He Himself is a sanctuary for His people, just as the church is called the sanctuary of the Lord, in which He dwells with His grace. Believers are the temples of God, and the Holy Ghost dwells in them. However, within Christ, in whose bosom is the name of the Lord, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (in Greek: *hastabernacled*)."

He who has given Himself to be a sacrifice and a burnt offering, thereby being a sweetsmelling savor unto God, has entered in by way of the greater and more perfect tabernacle. Not only was the tabernacle in its entirety a type of Christ, but every part and whatever was to be found in it had reference to Him. We shall now proceed to reflect upon this. In the holy place the candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense were found. The candlestick stood on the north side. [Note: This contradicts Exodus 40:24, "And he put the candlestick ... on the side of the tabernacle southward."] It was made out of one piece of pure gold, had six tubes (three on each side), the upright shaft being the seventh one. At the top of every pipe there was a lamp which was filled daily with pure olive oil. They were lit in the evening and extinguished in the morning, having snuffers and snuffdishes made of pure gold. The Lord Jesus is the candle, the light, the sun, and the morning star who illuminates His church. He is the pillar and ground of truth. He is the candlestick who always has light within Himself and manifests it, He being lit by the Holy Spirit, with whom He is anointed. The table of shewbread stood on the south side. [Note: The table stood not on the south side, as à Brakel states, but on the north side Exodus 40:22.] It was made of shittim wood, was overlaid with pure gold, had a golden crown roundabout, and had a border of a handbreadth round about the table which in turn was surrounded by another golden crown. The table was two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one-and-one-half cubits high. It was covered with vessels, dishes, spoons, and covers -- all made of pure gold. Loaves of bread, placed in two rows, were always on this table and were replaced every Sabbath with fresh loaves. The Lord Jesus is the Bread of Life, who by way of the precious gospel is always displayed and offered. Whoever wills may come and eat of His bread by faith and be satisfied. The altar of incense was positioned centrally, a bit further into the holy place, and opposite to the ark of the covenant which stood behind the veil. It was made of shittim wood, overlaid with pure gold, and had a golden crown roundabout. It was square (each side being one cubit), and was two cubits high. Each morning after the lamps had been extinguished, cleaned, and refilled with oil, the incense was lit on this altar. This also occurred in the evening when the lamps were lit. When Christ, by the eternal Spirit, offered Himself as a sin offering upon the cross, He was seen by everyone.

While upon earth, however, He more often offered prayers for His own in secret -- just as He does presently in heaven, where He prays for His own without being seen. Our prayers and thanksgivings, offered before God in Christ, are as incense laid and ignited upon the golden altar which is before the throne, and are thereby pleasing to God. He who desires to go to heaven must go to the congregation of the Lord. There he will find Christ, who dwells there as within His temple. There he will receive light, be strengthened, and enjoy sweet comforts unto his refreshment. The

Holy of Holies, into which the High Priest entered once a year, signified Christ's entrance into heaven. Here we need to consider the veil and what was to be found in the Holy of Holies. The veil was an artful and exquisite piece of tapestry made with colors of extraordinary beauty: heavenly blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen, embroidered in a most skillful manner with cherubs. This veil was suspended from four pillars which rested on silver footings and were made of shittim wood overlaid with gold. It was attached at the top with golden hooks and extended from the one wall to the other. It was ten cubits high and twelve cubits wide, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This veil either had an opening through which the high priest entered or it had to be lifted on one side. In a special sense, the veil had reference to the human nature of Christ. It rent from the top to the bottom when the Lord Jesus died -- His death whereby He merited eternal glory and an entrance into heaven for His people. We may thus have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19-20). This veil signified at the same time that Christ -- the Way, the Truth, and the Life -- had not yet been made fully manifest; that is, He had not yet come in the flesh. Just as a shadow ceases when the body itself is present, Christ annulled all the ceremonies with His coming -- all those representations which were to the benefit of the church prior to His coming. Within the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant. This was a chest made of shittim wood, completely overlaid with gold and having a crown round about made of pure gold. It was two-and-one-half cubits long, a half cubit wide and one-and-one-half cubits high. It had a covering made of pure gold, called the mercy seat. [Note: The Dutch word is "verzoendeksel," that is, "the covering of atonement."] At either end of the mercy seat was a cherub made of pure gold, whose elevated wings were bent toward each other and whose countenances gazed toward the mercy seat. It was there that God revealed His gracious presence; therefore He is said to dwell between the cherubims. Within the ark were the tables upon which God had written the ten commandments, as well as the golden pot containing an omer of manna and Aaron's rod that had blossomed. In 1 Kings 8:9 mention is made only of the two tables of the law, whereas in Hebrews 9:4 the golden pot and Aaron's rod are also mentioned. The reason for this is that in Hebrews Paul speaks of the tabernacle; however, the reference in 1 Kings 8:9 is to the temple. Paul also posits that the golden censer was in the Holy of Holies -- either kept there and removed on the Day of Atonement, or restricted for use only in the Holy of Holies. The Lord Jesus is hylasterion; that is, He Himself is the atonement by His blood. He delivers His people from the curse of the law, accomplishes the law for them, and clothes them with holiness. The Father is pleased in Him as Surety; therefore He is said to dwell upon the mercy seat, between the cherubims. The angels are desirous to observe Christ in the execution of His suretyship. Therein they behold God's perfections and glorify Him in response thereto, teaching us also to look unto Jesus continually.

The Persons who Performed the Ceremonies: The Priests and Levites

Having considered the location where the ceremonial worship occurred, we shall now proceed to consider the ceremonial persons, the priests, and the service they performed. As far as we know there was no law prior to Moses regulating who would sacrifice and administer the holy things. The fathers of the families generally did this. Nevertheless, everyone was free to do so; it was by no means the exclusive privilege of the firstborn. God claimed the firstborn for Himself after He had slain the firstborn of the Egyptians and had spared the children of Israel. This was, however, not for the purpose of ministering in holy things, for God had also claimed the firstborn of the beasts for Himself. These, men as well as beasts, God claimed for Himself, and were therefore not

permitted to be counted among the congregation. After the Lord chose the tribe of Levi, however, the firstborn of men and beasts had to be redeemed with money and be purchased from the Lord.

God did not reject the firstborn because of the sin with the golden calf, as evidenced by the fact that Aaron and his sons were already chosen to the priesthood prior to this incident. Also, thereafter, the firstborn remained the Lord's as a perpetual institution, for else they could not have been redeemed. Furthermore, it is stated nowhere that the firstborn had made themselves guilty of this sin. It is a fact that the firstborn, who were then still small and young, could not have done so -- and thus could also not have been rejected for this. Moreover, it is also not recorded anywhere that God rejected the firstborn because of the sin of the golden calf. Did God then also reject the firstborn of the cattle because of this sin? Were they no longer permitted to be placed on the altar? Nevertheless, the firstborn of the beasts of the Levites took the place of all firstborn animals (Numbers 3:41). When it is written in Numbers 3:12, "And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn," then the reference is to proprietorship rather than ministry in the sanctuary. The tribe of Levi was not chosen in its entirety to sacrifice and enter the sanctuary; this was true only for Aaron and his sons. God had given the beasts of the Levites in the stead of all the firstborn among the beasts of the children of Israel. Nevertheless they remained the Lord's. The unclean among them had to be redeemed, but not the clean animals; they had to be brought to the sanctuary. There they were killed and part of the animal was sacrificed upon the altar, whereas the other part had to be eaten before the countenance of the Lord (cf. Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6-17; Deuteronomy 14:23). Moreover, the role of the firstborn in the inheritance in Canaan did not agree with ministering in the sanctuary. It would have hindered them in their task. It was therefore not an angry rejection of the firstborn, but rather a promotion. The tribe of Levi, having been chosen for the holy ministry, was divided into common Levites and priests. The common Levites did not enter into the sanctuary, but assisted the priests. They had no inheritance in Canaan, for the Lord was their inheritance; they lived from the sanctuary. The priests, by way of a lawful marriage, had to be descendants of Aaron, for they and their sons were called to that office by the Lord. Their calling was confirmed by the blossoming of Aaron's rod and its bearing of almonds. They were therefore very careful in preserving their genealogy. Thus, after the Babylonian captivity, some claimed to belong to the priestly family but were not able to produce their genealogy; they were barred from the priesthood as unclean persons. Not only did the priests have to be descendants of Aaron, but they also had to have a perfect body -- without blemish. If anyone had a visible or secret blemish, he was not permitted to minister in the priest's office, even though he was a descendant of Aaron. He was not permitted to take a harlot, a desecrated woman, or a rejected woman as his wife. Furthermore, the high priest was forbidden to take a widow to wife. He was only permitted to take a virgin.

There was a distinction between the common priests and the one high priest. The common priests, upon the express command of God to David, were divided into twenty-four ranks. These ranks did not pertain to worthiness or superiority, but only to the time and order of ministry. At the head of each rank or class was a chief priest. The high priest was not elected upon the death of the predecessor. Rather, his son -- or in the absence of a son, his nearest relative -- took his place by reason of birth. The priestly order was not inaugurated by way of oath-swearing; nevertheless it was done in a very solemn manner. Aaron and his sons were led to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. There Moses washed them with water from the laver and dressed them with the

holy garments. He caused them to place their hands upon the head of the heifer to be slain as a sin offering. Following this, a ram was slain for a burnt offering, after which another ram was brought forward. Aaron and his sons would place their hands upon its head; it was then slain. Moses would apply the blood of this ram to the earlobe, the right thumb, and the right great toe. The blood was also sprinkled upon them and upon their clothing. This was followed by the sacrificing of the ram of consecration. Moses then anointed them with the holy oil which had been skillfully prepared from the most eminent spices: pure myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. There was to be no imitation of this holy oil by anyone, nor was anyone permitted to anoint himself with it. Its smell, signifying both ordination and qualification, was not to be upon anyone except those upon whom it had to be according to God's command. Aaron and his sons were not only installed into their offices, but at the same time into the priesthood in its entirety, which also encompassed all their descendants. Therefore, a renewed anointing did not occur each time. Nevertheless, there was a difference between the anointing of Aaron as high priest and the anointing of his sons, the common priests. The difference was this: The anointing oil was poured out upon Aaron's head in such an abundant measure that it descended upon his beard and from there to the hem of his garments -- that is, the upper hem which was near his neck. His sons, however, were sprinkled with the anointing oil in like manner as they were anointed with the blood of the ram -- be it individually or as a group. There was also a difference between the garments of the high priest and the common priests. They wore these garments (which were kept in a dressing room) only while they were serving.

They were made in a very skillful and splendid manner. The common priests had linen garments, whereas the high priest had two sets of garments. One was made of linen and was worn on the great Day of Atonement when entering into the Holy of Holies. However, when he entered the holy place on any day other than the Day of Atonement, he would wear the most eminent, beautiful, and elegant garments wrought with gold. These garments consisted of a robe, a coat with pomegranates and golden bells hanging on the bottom thereof, an ephod with two stones upon the shoulder pieces, a breastplate attached to the ephod which contained twelve stones whereon the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraven (which also contained the Urim and Thummim), a curiously wrought girdle, a beautiful mitre, and upon his forehead a golden plate on which was engraved: Holiness to the Lord. The entire priesthood, and particularly the high priest, was a glorious type of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the apostle subsequently shows us in his letter to the Hebrews. Furthermore, each particular matter had its specific meaning. However, we do not presume to be an expositor of each particular. We do indeed have our thoughts concerning this subject, and find meditation thereon a sweet work, but as we cannot speak about it with certainty, we shall remain silent, leaving everyone free in his thoughts concerning this. I wish to neither concur nor contradict, since we would not be able to agree with others in all things. The Ceremonies Themselves

Having spoken of the location where the ceremonies were performed and of the persons who functioned as types, it remains yet to speak of the ceremonies themselves, which preeminently consisted of the sacrifices -- noting the things which were sacrificed and the sacrifice itself.

First, the sacrifices consisted of 1) four-footed, clean animals such as heifers, oxen, cows, sheep, and goats; 2) birds, such as doves and turtledoves; and 3) the fruits of the field, such as green ears, dried flowers, oil, frankincense, salt, and wine.

Secondly, as far as the sacrifices themselves were concerned, there was great variety.

(1) As far as manner and purpose were concerned, there were the offerings by fire which were burned by the fire which came down from heaven and was continually maintained: the burnt offering, meat offering, drink offering, offering of consecration, sin offering, trespass offering, thank offering, peace offering, and the memorial offering.

(2) As far as time was concerned, there were the daily morning and evening sacrifices, and the sacrifices upon the Sabbath, new moon, feast days, and the Day of Atonement. There were also sacrifices offered at the occasion of committed sins or defilement; for the cleansing of an impurity; or if someone were inclined to offer a freewill offering to the Lord.

(3) Regarding persons, there were sacrifices for priests, elders, the entire congregation, the common man, the rich or the poor. Such a person would enter the courtyard with the sacrificial animal and go as far as the brazen altar. There, while confessing his sins, he would lay his hands upon the sacrificial animal, after which the priest would take and sacrifice it in accordance with the nature of the sacrifice. Some were burned completely and some partially. In the latter case, the remains were for the priest and for him on whose behalf it had been sacrificed. They would then eat these remains before the countenance of the Lord.

(4) All these sacrifices were excelled by the sacrifices of the High Priest upon the great Day of Atonement. The high priest had to wash himself with water, put on the holy linen garments rather than his beautiful garments, and then take a heifer both for himself and for his house. He had to take two goats from the congregation, cast the lot upon them, and then sacrifice one as a sin offering and present the other alive to the Lord; afterwards he would send it away into the wilderness. He would then have to kill the heifer and with its blood and his censer enter into the Holy of Holies. Once there, he would create a cloud of incense by placing the incense upon the fire in his censer. He would then take of the blood of the heifer and sprinkle it upon and before the mercy seat, thereby making reconciliation for himself and for his house. The high priest would thereupon exit and take the ram which was for the people, kill it, and carry its blood and the censer into the Holy of Holies. He would then perform the identical procedure as he did with the blood of the heifer, thereby making reconciliation for the sins of the people. Thereafter he would take the blood, both of the heifer as well as of the ram, and apply it to the horns of the altar by sprinkling it with his finger seven times. He would thus accomplish the ministry of the sanctuary, where from the moment he entered until the moment he exited, no person -- not even a priest -- was to be present. Thereafter he would take the living goat and lay his hands upon its head. He then directed someone to send it into the wilderness. Thus, in regard to the day, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies once in a year; that is, at no other time but on the Day of Atonement. However, on that very day he would enter twice: first for himself and thereafter for the people. In addition to these laws, God had given many other institutions pertaining to the conduct of every individual -- relative to clothing, foods, clean or unclean animals, and also pertaining to pollution and purity. The purpose of all these laws was the preservation of the people's health according to the body, while also instructing them about the impurity of the soul.

We have thus briefly presented the most important elements of the ceremonial worship. All these ceremonies were not given for the purpose of being justified before God and to please Him with the performance of these acts. The apostle makes this plain in his letter to the Hebrews. Instead,

they were given to depict the Savior who was to come -- to display Him in a lively manner in His holy nature, suffering, and death, as well as in His efficacy to bring about the reconciliation of believers with God and to merit eternal salvation. Herein is manifested the unsearchable wisdom of God, His awesome holiness, His wondrous goodness, and His faithful care for His adopted people. The Lord gave the priests and prophets, whom he sent time and again, the knowledge and ability to explain the types to the people and thus to lead them to Christ -- as the godly indeed were acquainted with the types and thereby believed in Christ. We have spoken of this and presented Christ in His priestly administration in volume one, chapter 20, "The High-Priestly Office of Christ," and will speak of this further in the next chapter. We shall show that these types were already instituted prior to the sin with the golden calf, and subsequently did not receive another form. The types did not become punishments for this sin, but solely were and remained evangelical blessings. On the other hand, however, one cannot read without being emotionally stirred about the wickedness, unbelief, distrust, and idolatry of that people toward whom the Lord had manifested so much goodness and longsuffering.

It was God's will that this divinely instituted worship would be maintained without change until Christ, the substance of the shadows, would come, at which time it would have served its purpose and be annulled. How little came of this observance will become evident when we briefly sketch the state of the church in the wilderness, in Canaan under the rule of the judges, under the rule of the kings, and thereafter during the captivity in Babylon and the return which followed -- until the days of Christ. Israel's Grievous Conduct in Response to Their Gospel Privileges That people who had seen so many of the wondrous deeds of the Lord in Egypt -- that people who had experienced the wonder of the separation of the waters of the sea, having crossed its bottom dryshod, and witnessed the drowning of Pharaoh and his host -- that people who had seen the hand of God in the changing of the bitter water into sweet water, in having (without sowing or harvesting) fresh supplies rained down daily from heaven, in providing a rock to bring forth water abundantly, in satisfying them for a month with the flesh of quails, covering the camp by reason of their quantity, and in defeating Amalek before their countenance, whereas humanly speaking, Amalek would have slaughtered them as a flock of defenseless sheep -- that people who only recently had so solemnly entered into covenant with their God and subsequently had heard God's voice pronouncing the ten commandments -- that people became repugnant and immediately involved themselves in idolatry. For, after Moses had ascended the mountain and did not return for forty days, the people thought that he would never return. They wanted to serve the Lord in a manner pleasing to themselves. They wanted a physical object by which to serve God, and said to Aaron: "Make us gods." They gave him their golden earrings which he melted and fashioned into a calf. He did this either to mock with them or to imitate the idolatry of Egypt. He also built an altar for the calf, whereupon the people offered burnt and peace offerings, sat down to eat, and arose to dance and to play. When Moses subsequently entered the camp, he, with vehement zeal for the Lord, broke the two tables of stone which the Lord had given him with the law inscribed upon them, because the people had broken the covenant with their God. Moses then ground the calf to powder, sprinkled this powder upon the water, and caused the people to drink it. Upon the command to take vengeance upon the idolaters, those who were zealous for the Lord fell upon the camp and killed about three thousand men. Subsequently, God refused to go up with Israel; however, He permitted Himself to be entreated by Moses. Then Moses again ascended the mountain with two tables of stone he had made at the command of God. He again remained there

forty days, and God wrote His law upon these tables. Moses then descended the mountain once more, having the new tables in his hands -- and behold, his countenance, without his knowledge, shone to such an extent that the people were afraid to look at him. Since they could not endure this radiance, he covered his face when he spoke with them. The Old Testament Church During the Forty Years in the Wilderness

Shortly after all that had transpired at Mount Sinai, Moses proceeded with Israel to Canaan. Having arrived in its immediate proximity, Moses sent spies into the land of Canaan. When these spies returned from Canaan and brought up an evil report that the people were too mighty and the cities too strong for Israel to conquer, the people immediately began to murmur and rebel. They wanted to appoint a leader to return to Egypt, and desired to stone Moses. God wanted to kill the people, but once more He was entreated. Nevertheless, God killed the spies (Joshua and Caleb being the exceptions) who had been sent forth and discouraged the people from marching toward Canaan. God then declared that they would now wander for forty years in the wilderness, that they would all die in the wilderness, and that He would give Canaan as a possession to their children. When they heard this, they wanted to invade the land despite the warning of Moses. Though they began courageously, they were thoroughly defeated.

It did not take long before that stiffnecked people relapsed into bitterness and murmuring against God. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram stirred up the people against Moses and Aaron. As a punishment for this offense, they descended alive into the earth with their families and possessions. The people, instead of fearing the Lord, rose up against Moses and Aaron, saying that they had killed those men. Upon this, God sent a plague into the camp which consumed fourteen thousand seven hundred people in a moment. However, the Lord permitted Himself to be entreated once more. He stayed the plague and confirmed Aaron's calling to the priestly office by causing his staff (which had been laid up before the countenance of the Lord along with the staffs of the other tribes) to blossom and bring forth almonds.

However, the people continued to murmur against the Lord and to rise up against Moses. In response, God sent fiery serpents among them, resulting in the death of many people. God permitted Himself to be entreated once more and commanded Moses to construct a brazen serpent, which, due to its smoothness and coppery color, resembled one of those fiery serpents. He was then directed to erect this serpent upon a pole, so that if any who had been bitten by a serpent looked upon the brazen serpent, he would live. A sin such as this engenders a penalty according to its nature. This brazen serpent would stimulate them to think of the first sin, committed upon the suggestion of the serpent. Their depravity proceeded from this sin, and all their evil deeds toward the Lord proceeded from this depravity. Herein was the reason they were punished with serpents. At the same time, the raising of the serpent upon a pole would be suitable to cause them to look forward to the Redeemer to come. Indeed, in retrospect, we can observe (the Lord Jesus having expounded it as such Himself) that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up -- that is, be hung on the pole of the cross. The serpent itself does not come into consideration. It is neither a type of nor an allusion to Christ. Rather, it is the lifting up of the serpent and the crucifixion of Christ which resemble each other.

After Israel had wandered in the wilderness for a lengthy period of time, they again approached Canaan -- from a different side than the former time. They did so after a period during which they

were guilty of much bitterness toward and tempting of the Lord, who with great longsuffering had borne with them for those forty years. He did not cease to give them bread from heaven and water from the rock, while shielding them during the day from the scorching heat of the sun with a cloud, which at night also functioned as an illuminating fire. Thus, their lives were perpetuated by means of miracles. Balak, king of the Moabites, then hired Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam was indeed a prophet, but he lived an ungodly life, having a love for the wages of unrighteousness. Even though he desired the money, Balaam nevertheless did not want to go unless God permitted him to do so. After much pleading for permission, God did permit him to go. During his journey, he was met by an angel, who appeared to be intent on killing him. The donkey upon which Balaam rode saw the angel, and repeatedly turned aside until she could no longer do so. The donkey laid down, and when beaten by Balaam, she rebuked him, speaking in human language. Thereupon Balaam saw the angel, after which he offered to return. He did receive permission to proceed, however, with the stipulation that he would say nothing else but what the Lord commanded him. Thus he who came to curse Israel blessed Israel; and as he sought to get permission to be able to curse, moving from one place to the other, he was compelled to bless time and again. Perceiving that he could not obtain the money, he suggested the evil advice to seduce Israel to commit physical and spiritual fornication, that is, idolatry. For having given this counsel, he was later punished by being put to death with the sword of the children of Israel. His advice bore fruit. Israel committed fornication with the daughters of the Moabites, linked itself with Baalpeor in idolatry, and bowed itself before the idols. God then commanded that the guilty one be punished with death. The princes of the people who took the initiative in this transgression were hung at sunrise, whereas the others were put to death. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, being informed that a man of Israel was lying with a Moabitish woman, entered into their tent. Driven by a holy zeal, he put both to death. Hereby he pleased God, who had commanded that such be put to death. God then commanded that war be waged against the Moabites in retaliation for their seduction, and gave Og, the king of Bashan, and Sihon, the king who dwelt at Heshbon, into the hands of Israel. The Israelites put everything to death, destroyed all the cities in their land, and took all the land and cattle into their possession. The tribes of Reuben and Gad requested that these lands be given them as an inheritance, stating that they would not inherit anything on the other side of Jordan -- promising, however, to help conquer it. Moses bestowed these two kingdoms as an inheritance upon the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. This was the initial bestowal of their inheritance.

Thereafter Moses ascended the heights of Mount Pisgah, where God showed him the land of Canaan. He saw it from afar and requested that he might enter; however, God refused him. After having completed his task of leading Israel, and after having made known to them that he would die, he ascended Mount Nebo at the heights of Pisgah. There he died, being one hundred twenty years old and having his full strength. God buried him in a valley, so that no one has ever known where he was buried. When the devil wanted to unearth the body of Moses, he was prevented from doing so by Michael, the archangel. And thus Moses, whose faithfulness Paul magnifies in Hebrews 3:5, completed his great work and life -- however, not as a type of the Lord Jesus. Rather, he resembles Christ as servant and as lord. In retrospect, there are indeed similarities between Moses and Christ which might be applied. However, similarity does not constitute something to be a type. A type must be divinely designated as such, which is lacking in this instance. The Old Testament Church During the Period of the Judges

Following the death of Moses, Israel was governed by Judges. The first was Joshua, who, while Moses was yet alive, had already been appointed by God to be the successor. As long as Joshua was alive, Israel fared well and lived according to the instituted form of worship. Joshua sent two spies who, upon arriving in Jericho, spent the night in the house of Rahab. She shared with them the perplexity of the people, granted them lodging, and secretly permitted them to escape after they had promised to spare her and whoever would be in her house when the children of Israel would conquer Jericho. Upon their return, the spies related everything to Joshua, who upon God's command marched forward with the people. The ark, carried by the priests, went before them, and as soon as the feet of the priests touched the water, the Jordan separated and Israel crossed dryshod as they previously had done at the Red Sea. Joshua then took twelve stones from the Jordan and placed them near the brink of the river as a memorial. This place was called Gilgal (that is, a turn), because the Lord had turned the shame of Egypt from them and elevated them to a position of honor and respect. At Gilgal the entire nation of Israel was circumcised, for circumcision had been neglected in the wilderness. There they also observed the Passover with unleavened bread and ate the corn of the land, at which time the falling of manna ceased. Joshua, having been strengthened upon the appearance of the Lord Jesus to him, marched forward to conquer Canaan. Arriving at Jericho, the city walls collapsed of themselves, after the ark and the men of war had gone about the city for seven days -- one time each day, and seven times upon the seventh day. They conquered the city and destroyed all that was to be found in it, except for Rahab and all who were in her house. Contrary to God's command, Achan took of the accursed thing, for which reason Israel failed in her quest of Ai. Thirty-six men perished, causing the heart of Israel to melt and become as water due to their distrust of the Lord. Joshua, having been strengthened by the Lord, encouraged Israel and punished Achan. Ai was then conquered. The Gibeonites, being fearful, feigned to come from a far land and made peace with Israel. Five Canaanitish kings then conspired to eradicate Gibeon; however, the Lord gave these kings into the hands of Israel and slew them with great hailstones from heaven. In order to eradicate them to an even greater extent, upon Joshua's request the Lord caused the sun and moon to stand still. Thereafter all the kings of Canaan gathered against Israel; however, they were completely routed and Israel conquered all of Canaan. Joshua then divided the land among the tribes of Israel by the casting of the lot. The Reubenites, Gadites, and half of the tribe of Manasseh were sent home, having already received their inheritance, at which time they built an altar on the other side of the Jordan. When the other tribes heard of this, they came up against them, thinking that they had involved themselves in idolatry. This is how zealous they were at that time! Once they understood the true reason for it, they returned home to their inheritance. Soon afterward, Joshua, having earnestly exhorted Israel, died at the age of one hundred ten years.

After the death of Joshua, Israel corrupted itself exceedingly. The people departed from the Lord, became involved in all manner of idolatry and served the gods of the nations whose lands they had conquered -- many of whom they had not destroyed, contrary to God's command. The wrath of the Lord was therefore kindled against Israel, so that the people were not able to resist those who stood up against them -- and then Israel became a spoil to all.

439 Among those who had dominion over them were the following: 1) Cush, the king of Mesopotamia; 2) Eglon, king of the Moabites; 3) Jabin, the king of the Canaanites; 4) the Midianites; and 5) the Philistines. There were also civil wars whereby Israel destroyed itself. Thus,

Israel was often in a more miserable condition in Canaan than they ever had been in Egypt.

However, the Lord did not want to eliminate His people. Therefore He sent them judges time and again to deliver Israel out of the hand of their enemies. Israel persisted, however, in departing from the Lord and in engaging in the most abominable forms of idolatry. Sometimes they gave heed to the judges in some measure; but generally this was not so, even though the Lord delivered them time and again. The judges whom the Lord gave did not succeed each other without intermission. Rather, God raised them up each time when the need was most acute. Then, after Israel had been delivered, their rest would not be of long duration. The longest period during which the land was at peace was eighty years. The judges were the following:

(1) Joshua.

(2) Othniel.

(3) Ehud.

(4) Deborah, who made use of Barak, cursed Meroz because this people did not come to battle, and praised the heroine, Jael, who, with a hammer, drove a large nail through the head of Sisera.

(5) Gideon, who, with three hundred men, defeated the entire army of the Midianites.

(6) Abimelech, who, during a civil war, was killed by a woman who threw a large stone from the city wall, crushing his skull.

(7) Tola.

(8) Jair.

(9) Jephthah, who made an ill advised vow that he, were he to return victoriously, would sacrifice to the Lord as a burnt offering the very first thing coming to him from his house, thinking that this could but be a heifer, sheep, or goat. It proved to be his own daughter -- and thus, had he indeed killed her, would have responded to God's blessing with an abominable act.

(10) Ibzan.

(11) Elon.

(12) Abdon.

(13) Samson, who according to a promise made by an angel, was born to Manoah and his wife. He performed many wondrous deeds to the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines. In the end, he was betrayed by the harlot Delilah and lost his eyes. Upon taking vengeance for his eyes he caused the idol temple to collapse, thereby killing himself along with a large multitude of Philistines.

(14) Israel having degenerated to practice the worst sort of ungodliness, God raised up Samuel, the prophet. The ark of the Lord, having been preserved -- either because it was hidden by the Israelites, or because the enemies, by divine direction, had too much respect for this sacred object -- was brought into the camp of the children of Israel, whereby the Israelites assured themselves of victory. They were defeated, however, and the ark was captured. God plagued the Philistines for

this in such a measure that they returned the ark. From that time forward, Israel's condition improved due to Samuel's government. He appointed his sons to be judges, but they conducted themselves in an unfaithful manner, thereby prompting Israel to demand a king. They indeed received one after having been sharply rebuked by God through Samuel. As far as the external condition of Israel was concerned, matters had degenerated to such an extent that there was no blacksmith to be found in Israel. Anyone who therefore needed something constructed or sharpened had to go to the Philistines. Consequently, the Philistines oppressed Israel to such an extent that they could make neither sword nor spear. With the advent of the kings, however, Israel's outward manifestation improved. The Old Testament Church During the Reign of Saul, David, and Solomon

Israel's first king was Saul. He was indeed a capable statesman, but in regard to religion he was a failure. Saul used religion for his own advantage. Since he laid hands on religion in this way, he was rejected of God. He gathered an army of 330,000 men to deliver Jabesh in Gilead. There was, however, no one who had a sword, except Saul and his son Jonathan. Nevertheless, God gave the enemies into his hands and he prospered everywhere, delivering Israel to a large extent from the hand of the Philistines. However, for having assaulted and killed the priests, God caused him to perish during a battle with the Philistines. This occurred in such a manner that he became his own executioner by thrusting himself through. He reigned for thirteen years. The second king of Israel was David, who hailed from the tribe of Judah. He was a valiant war hero who not only delivered Israel from the hands of her enemies, but also had dominion over many nations, which were thus included in his territory. He thereby brought Israel to the pinnacle of glory and renown. In addition, he was an eminently Godfearing king, a man after God's own heart. The church, being the object of all his delight and care, was brought to a noble and orderly condition. Upon God's command, he organized the priests into twenty-four ranks, who, each at their own time, performed the holy service. He brought the ark to Jerusalem and erected a tent for it until a temple for worship was built. It was his intention to do this himself; therefore he amassed a vast treasury of gold, silver, copper, and whatever else could be of use for such a great and glorious building. It was not God's will, however, that David would do so, because he had shed much blood in all the wars he had fought. Nevertheless, his desire and intention were pleasing to the Lord, who promised him that the Messiah would be born from his seed. God also gave him a pattern after which his son Solomon would build the temple. Having brought both church and state into a flourishing condition, David died after reigning forty years.

Israel's third king was Solomon, who was full of wisdom and was granted riches, honor, and glory. He found the kingdom at peace, possessed it in peace, and left it in peace. He was pleasing to the Lord, and He therefore directed the prophet Nathan to call him Jedidiah. It is he who built the temple, doing so primarily after the pattern of the tabernacle. However, it was much greater and more glorious. Thus, it excelled all the wonders of the world in design, beauty, and glory. Solomon reigned forty years.

During the reigns of David and Solomon, the church of the Old Testament reached her pinnacle of glory. Immediately after Solomon's death, she rapidly lost her luster and purity. The kingdom was divided into two sections. Ten tribes defected from the house of David and retained the name "Israel." The tribes of Judah and Benjamin, being neighbors, united with each other, as they had become virtually intermixed. Thus, even a portion of Jerusalem belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

These remained with the house of David and were called the Kingdom of Judah. The Old Testament Church During the Period of the Divided Kingdom The first king of Israel was Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. In order to keep his subjects away from Jerusalem, and thus from observing the religious worship instituted by God in the temple, he designated two cities -- Dan and Bethel -- to be centers of worship. In each locality he placed an idol -- a golden calf. Since the priests had left Israel, having defected to Judah and Jerusalem, he took a number of evil men and bribed them to become priests. In order not to draw the people away from true religion too rapidly, Jeroboam imitated the true form of worship to some extent by appointing a feast on the very day that a feast of the Lord would be celebrated in Jerusalem. Furthermore, he offered sacrifices to the idols at Dan and Bethel. He thus seduced Israel into idolatry. All his royal successors followed in his footsteps; consequently Israel did not have a single good king. Rather, she had only ungodly kings, by which the entire kingdom fell into idolatry -- albeit God preserved His own even under their reign. Jeroboam reigned twenty-two years. The second king was Nadab, who reigned two years. The third was Baasha (23 years); the fourth Elah (1 year); the fifth Zimri (7 days); the sixth Omri (11 years); the seventh Ahab (12 years); the eighth Ahaziah (2 years); the ninth Joram (12 years); the tenth Jehu (28 years); the eleventh Jehoahaz, who as yet called upon the Lord when he was oppressed (16 years); the twelfth Jehoash (16 years); the thirteenth Jeroboam II (41 years); the fourteenth Zachariah (6 months); the fifteenth Shallum (1 month); the sixteenth Menahem (10 years); the seventeenth Pekahiah (2 years); the eighteenth Pekah (20 years); and the nineteenth Hoshea (9 years). It was then that Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, conquered Samaria with the entire kingdom of Israel, and led it captive to his nation. These tribes never returned to their land, but were partly assimilated among the Gentiles. A remnant did gradually return to Jerusalem and dwelt throughout Judah, whereas another part remained dispersed while maintaining the Jewish religion -- as is now true for the entire nation. That which the Jews fabricate concerning the ten tribes are fables. Thus, the entire kingdom of Israel was annihilated. The kingdom of Judah had twenty-three kings, all of whom were direct descendants of David. The fourth king was Rehoboam, who with his subjects, departed from God and did that which was evil in His sight. He reigned seventeen years. The fifth king was Abijah (3 years); the sixth king was the God-fearing Asa (41 years); the seventh king was the God-fearing Jehoshaphat (25 years); the eighth king was Jehoram, who was an ungodly king (8 years, four of which were together with his father); the ninth was the ungodly Ahaziah (1 year); the tenth was Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, even though the kingdom belonged to Joash (6 years); the eleventh king was Joash, who was brought to the throne by his uncle Jehoiada, the high priest, when he was seven years old (40 years). Joash was a good king as long as Jehoiada lived, but thereafter he was an ungodly king. The twelfth king was Amaziah, who at first reigned well, but not with a perfect heart -- which he subsequently revealed in his ungodly deeds (29 years); the thirteenth was Uzziah, who partially reigned well, but when he laid hands on that which was holy, the Lord smote him with leprosy (52 years); the fourteenth king was Jotham, who was godly (16 years); the fifteenth was Ahaz, who was exceedingly ungodly (16 years); the sixteenth was the godly Hezekiah (22 years); the seventeenth was Manasseh, who was first ungodly and thereafter repented (55 years); the eighteenth was Amon, who was ungodly (2 years); the nineteenth was the godly Josiah (31 years); the twentieth was Jehoahaz (3 months); the twenty-first was the ungodly Jehoiakim (11 years); the twenty-second was the ungodly Jehoiachin (3 months); and the twenty-third was the ungodly Zedekiah (11 years).

During Zedekiah's reign, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and all of Judah was taken captive to Babylon. Thus, subsequent to the time of David and Solomon, Judah had only five or six kings who made it their business to reform religious worship and the people. However, the ungodly kings were in the majority. The church became very corrupt, and often did not even exhibit the appearance of godliness -- generally being totally immersed in abominable idolatry. Even though the Lord had sent many prophets to them who very earnestly and boldly rebuked, warned, admonished, and instructed them (whereby the godly were stirred up and comforted), the people nevertheless stubbornly persevered in their idolatry. At all times there have been many godly in the church of the Old Testament. So it was during the time of Elijah, who believed that he alone was left, whereas there remained yet seven thousand, that is, many thousands. How great must the number of the godly have been then during the time of David, Solomon, and other pious kings! There is thus reason to esteem the church of the Old Testament in some respects; on the other hand there is reason to be amazed about the longsuffering of God concerning such an ungodly people. The Old Testament Church During the Period of the Babylonian Captivity

After many threats, God sent Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, who destroyed Canaan, Jerusalem, the temple, and everything else. He removed the spoil and the entire population to Babylon into slavery. There they mourned and wept when they thought of Zion. The temple and religion, for which they had previously no desires, had now become precious and desirable to them. Nevertheless, God was good to them and gave prophets who supported and comforted them concerning their future restoration. Frequently the Lord caused them to find grace in the eyes of their captors. They were assigned to a rugged area in order to cultivate it; thereby the majority of the Jews remained together. It was also to the advantage of the teaching and preserving of the true religion. As they lived in subjection to the heads of the families in their appointed land, there were also prominent individuals at the court of the king who promoted their welfare. Among those was Daniel, who, by divine direction, was highly respected at the court of the king. The Jews remained in this captivity for a period of seventy years -- which, generally speaking, constitutes the longest portion of a man's life. Just as God did not want those who left Egypt to arrive in Canaan, but rather their children, God likewise did not want those who had been exiled for their sins to be brought back to Canaan. They died in Babylon instead -- with the exception of some who returned at a very great age together with the children of those who had died. These still had memories of the temple of Solomon. Even though it seemed highly improbable that the Jews would ever be restored to their land again, nevertheless the Lord, who has the hearts of kings in His hands and for whom nothing is too wonderful, did cause them to return after the seventy years foretold by Jeremiah had been completed. He did so by means of Cyrus, who long before had already been identified by name. Yes, not only did the people return, but the holy vessels of the temple were also returned to them. This was in order that they might be used in the service of the Lord in that temple for which they had received permission and commandment to rebuild. The return from Babylon occurred in a similar fashion to the exile. The exile first pertained to a few, and thereafter to all. Likewise, all the people did not return at once -- yes, many never returned, even though they were at liberty to do so. Instead, they remained voluntarily in exile, being more fond of their earthly possessions than of Canaan and pure religion -- even though the majority adhered to the Jewish religion and remained isolated without intermingling with the heathen. As Israel left Egypt with great riches, so did they when they left Babylon. They departed under the direction of Zerubbabel, the prince from the seed of David; Joshua the high priest; Nehemiah, the man of zeal; and others.

Their first task was to build the altar and offer the morning and evening sacrifices thereon. Subsequently, they zealously undertook the task of building the walls of Jerusalem, which, to everyone's amazement, was accomplished in a very short time. The foundation for the temple was also laid, but the building of the temple itself proceeded slowly, as everyone worked primarily on his own house. The Lord rebuked them concerning this by means of the prophet Haggai. The second temple was a much simpler structure than the first, and thus the elderly who had seen the first temple wept when they looked upon the foundation. Furthermore, there were several things absent which were present in the first temple. Nevertheless, the glory of the latter temple would be greater than that of the first, since the substance of all shadows, the Lord Jesus Christ, would be present there. With His radiance He would drive away all darkness. The Old Testament Church During the Inter-testamental Period

Also after the return there was little rest and unity. The princes of the house of David had little authority. The high priests assumed too much power in political matters, so that at last they gained the upper hand and, during the Maccabean period, took over the entire government. The people of Israel were oppressed by the wicked Antiochus, so that there was neither rest nor stability anywhere in Israel. At last Israel became subject to the Roman emperor, who, by means of Herod, provided government and external rest. After the return from Babylon, we do not read that the Jews returned to idolatry. Religious affairs were more diligently managed and maintained in accordance with the divine precepts given by Moses than ever was the case since Israel entered Canaan. However, the church became overrun with hypocrisy, superstition, and a variety of errors. The most prominent proponents of these were the Pharisees (the least serious error), the Sadducees, and the Essenes.

If one thus observes the church in Canaan from its inception to its conclusion, one must be amazed that Canaan is designated as a type of heaven. There is no resemblance between the two; there is nothing but dissimilarity. Nevertheless one can and may make sweet comparisons and consider the journey of the children of Israel to be an allusion to the journey of God's children to heaven -- a journey in which they encounter both tribulations as well as divine deliverances of the soul, experiencing these while in the body. Canaan can be alluded to as representing all that pertains to the flesh -- that is, when in the world all is at its very best, it is yet sorrow and grief; and also that one neither ought to seek nor expect rest here below. Furthermore, a consideration of the state of the church during the Old Testament will cause one to perceive how the glory of the New Testament church excels that of the Old Testament church. One rightfully complains about the wretched condition of the church in our days, when comparing it with the perception of what she ought to be. When comparing her with the church of the Old Testament, however, the very worst of that which is in truth is far better than the best at that time. We have therefore reason to thank and magnify the Lord.

114. Chapter 4: The Nature of the Suretyship of Jesus Christ During the Old Testament

----- CHAPTER FOUR ----- The Nature of the Suretyship of Jesus Christ During the Old Testament

Thus far we have considered the state of the church during the Old Testament in general terms. Presently we shall consider the state of believers in particular, as there are various opinions among the Reformed concerning this. We shall present them in an orderly fashion by dealing with some questions pertaining to 1) the Surety and 2) Old Testament believers. In this chapter we shall speak of the nature of this Suretyship.

Conflicting Views Examined The following questions need to be considered: Did the Lord Jesus take upon Himself and fully remove from Old Testament believers their guilt and punishment? Did He do so by obligating Himself before God, in accordance with His will, to make satisfaction for them? Or did these believers remain subject to their guilt and punishment by consequence of God reserving for Himself the authority, right, and liberty to punish their sins in them until the Surety would have made satisfaction?

These are the main issues as well as the reason for the subsequent differences of opinion. The very honor of the Lord Jesus is at stake. First we shall consider the various types of sureties, then a few matters in which the opposing parties agree, followed by their differences.

First, civil law knows of three sureties. (1) The first is called Fide-jussor, under benefit of ordinis et excussionis; that is, one person becomes surety for another person, the condition being that the debtor retains his debt, being first obliged to pay as much as he is capable of. Should the debtor come up short, the surety will make satisfaction for the remainder until the full sum has been paid.

(2) The second is called Fide-jussor, with renunciation of the benefit of ordinis et excussionis; that is, the surety places himself on the same level as the debtor. This means that the creditor may file a claim and demand payment of whomever he wishes, be it the debtor or the surety; both remain under obligation. Thus, if the claim is initially filed against the surety, and he is not able to render full payment, the debtor has to make restitution for the remaining sum -- or if the claim is initially filed against the debtor and he is not able to render full payment, the surety is required to make restitution for the remaining sum.

(3) The third type of surety is called an Expromissor, who, with the concurrence of the creditor, assumes the debt as being his own in order to personally pay it. The debtor is thus released from all debt, is no longer under obligation, and can never be held accountable again -- even if the surety were to be remiss and would neither be willing nor able to pay.

These three types of sureties only play a role in settling monetary debts between individuals; therefore, these cannot be transferred and applied in all particulars to the suretyship of the Lord Jesus. For relative to that suretyship, God comes to the foreground as Judge, executing justice

upon the defendant in both the sentencing and carrying out of this sentence. We are dealing here with a debtor who is worthy of death; therefore, either he or the Surety must die. Payment cannot be made jointly in this case. This Surety is both God and man and is capable of bearing and fully exhausting the punishment. Since the three types of suretyship are really not applicable here, we shall neither dwell upon these words nor shall we get involved in any disputes over those things one may wish to extract from them. If, however, we would be compelled to use one of these terms, then we maintain that Christ neither is, nor can be, a surety Fide-jussor, for this would be to imply imperfection in the surety or his suretyship. Such a surety would neither be of any benefit to a sinner nor could he render any comfort. Rather, we say that Christ is a Surety Expromissor who has taken upon Himself both guilt and punishment as being His own, and has given Himself in the place of the sinner. The Father ordained this to be so. He Himself sent the Surety, and was satisfied and well-pleased with the suretyship of His Son. Whether He would, or actually had made satisfaction, was equally certain with God. The future is with God as if it were in the past.

Secondly, the matters in which there is agreement are the following:

- (1) Old Testament believers were taken into heaven immediately upon their death, there enjoying eternal bliss.
- (2) They were not saved apart from the satisfaction of God's justice.
- (3) They were saved solely on the basis of the suffering and death of the promised Messiah, who at the appointed time would pay for their sins.
- (4) God has decreed from eternity never to punish the sins of the elect in themselves personally, but solely and in no other way than in the Surety Jesus Christ.
- (5) After the fall, God established only one covenant of grace with man. This commenced with the first promise in Paradise, and is and remains immutable until Christ's coming unto judgment. It is by way of this covenant that Old Testament believers were and New Testament believers are saved.
- (6) Thus, God has only one church upon earth, which is and remains the same in essence from Adam until the judgment. In these points there is agreement, and one is mutually opposed to those parties who challenge any of these truths. Both sides consider all those, who in any of these points lean toward such opponents, to be opponents as well.

Thirdly, the difference of opinion consists in this: The common sentiment among the Reformed is that the suretyship of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament was identical to that of the New Testament. We believe that He took upon Himself and removed all the sins of all the elect (and thus also of all Old Testament believers) in order to pay for them by His suffering and death. Old Testament believers have thus been as free from guilt and punishment as are New Testament believers. Others maintain, however, that in the Old Testament the Surety did not take upon Himself the guilt of His people in an absolute sense. Rather, He would only have been an assisting, helping Surety who obligated Himself only upon the condition that it would please God to punish their sins in Him and not in them. They would thus remain subject to guilt and punishment while God retained the authority, right, and liberty to punish their sins in themselves until such a time when the Surety would render payment in full. In the event the Surety would fail to do so, and

would either be unable or unwilling to render payment, they would then eternally be punished themselves. If one wishes to define the difference in terms of the various suretyships, then the commonly understood difference is this: Christ has been Expromissor in both the Old and New Testaments, whereas others maintain that in the Old Testament Christ was only a Fide-jussor rather than an Expromissor. If anyone asks how the latter proposition harmonizes with the propositions posited in the above (to which both parties subscribe), I answer that I neither know nor am able to tie them all together. I leave that to those who propose both to be true. The Lord Jesus Was Surety in the Old Testament in the Absolute and Full Sense of the Word. That the Lord Jesus was such an absolute and vicarious Surety in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament is proven as follows:

Proof #1: There is one single covenant of grace which is and remains the same from Adam until Christ's coming unto judgment -- a covenant in which all partakers have an equal portion and the same rights, and of which Jesus Christ is Surety (Hebrews 7:22). Since there is but one covenant and one Surety, and all the partakers of the covenant have equal rights and partake of this covenant in the same way, Christ must also be the same Surety at all times, and His suretyship must be of the same efficacy both before as well as after His actual satisfaction.

Proof #2: The apostle states in express terms that Christ was the same Surety in the Old Testament as He was in the New Testament: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). Yesterday pertains to the past; that is, the days of the Old Testament when those were alive of whom the apostle states in verse 7 that we should follow their faith and consider the end of their conversation. Today pertains to the present time, that is, the days of the New Testament. The thrust of the apostle's argument is that we should no less put our trust in Christ and have no less expectation of a good outcome than did the believers in the Old Testament, since the Lord Jesus is the same now as He was then. Thus, in respect to His Person He is the eternal and unchangeable God, and in regard to atonement and the meriting of all redemption and salvation, His Suretyship in the New Testament is of the same efficacy as previously in the Old Testament. He is presently as much our altar (vs. 10) as He was then, and He presently sanctifies His people with His own blood as He did then, they being one and the same people (vs. 12). Furthermore, He is not only given to be the atonement for the transgressions of those who were under the first Testament, but also is given as the atonement of New Testament believers. Therefore the apostle desires that we would strengthen our hearts with grace and not cleave to external things. Since the apostle derives the foundation of comfort and confidence from Christ as He was for His people in the Old Testament, in order to strengthen us in the New Testament, it is therefore a certainty that Christ was as efficacious a Surety in the Old Testament as He is in the New Testament. Since Christ is one and the same in both the Old and New Testaments, and since in the New Testament Christ is a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word, then He has also been so in the Old Testament.

Proof #3: The nature of Christ's suretyship in the Old Testament accords with His assumption of that suretyship in the covenant of redemption or the eternal Counsel of Peace, and as He has been in the execution of that suretyship. Since in this counsel and in the execution of His suretyship He has been a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word, He has necessarily also been a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word in the Old Testament.

(1) That He has given Himself as a vicarious Surety in the eternal Counsel of Peace is self-evident in light of God's wisdom, truth, and other attributes. God's objective was the salvation of the elect in the absolute sense of the word. He chose them in Christ to the praise of His glorious grace (Ephesians 1:5); God gave them to Christ in order that He would save them (John 17:6); and Christ has written them in His book (Revelation 21:27). There is not the least contingency. How could God oblige the elect to pay for their sins when He had decreed from eternity not to punish sin in the elect, but only in the Surety? To what purpose would God, in the covenant of redemption, keep the elect subject to eternal condemnation? Did God not trust His Son? Was He not sufficiently powerful? Did the Son of God have need of guarantees, so that in the event that He would fall short, men would then assist Him and pay the remainder? Or did the Son commit Himself upon the condition of rendering payment if the Father were pleased to lay hold of Him rather than the elect -- and not know this until He would enter the world in the fullness of time -- so that it could have happened that He would not have had to suffer and render payment? Or else would God deal with His elect in this time state in a manner differing from His original intent, and thus think and act differently? As you see, all these absurdities show that the true, omniscient, and all-wise God could only deal with the Son in a way whereby He ordained Him to be a vicarious Surety for all the elect in the absolute sense of the word -- and thus without treating the one elect person differently from the other. The Son could do no differently than to give Himself to be a vicarious Surety to the fullest degree for all the elect on equal terms.

(2) Just as the Surety has been ordained in God's eternal purpose to be a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word, Christ has also executed His suretyship as such a Surety. He has rendered payment in full for the one as well as for the other. Without any reservation or condition, He has taken the place of all the elect, doing so upon equal terms. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ... the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted" (Isaiah 53:57). The prophecies were to the benefit of the people who were living during that time period, and to whom they were proclaimed. Thus, the believers of that time understood the Surety to have taken their sins upon Himself, and that He would make satisfaction for them at the appointed time. Therefore, He executed His suretyship in agreement with His eternal appointment as Surety. It is in this way alone that He could be presented as the object of faith, for the object of faith must necessarily be true. It is therefore incontrovertible that Christ has been a vicarious Surety in the Old Testament in the absolute sense of the word.

Proof #4: To believers in the Old Testament, Christ was held forth in no other way than as a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word -- as a Surety who took their place, and who took their sins from them upon Himself in order to make satisfaction for them. This is evident for the following reasons:

(1) The sacrifices were types of Jesus in His making satisfaction by way of suffering and dying. When a sinner came to the temple with a sacrificial animal, surrendering it to the priest for sacrifice, the sinner would lay his hands upon the sacrificial animal, signifying thereby that he laid his sins upon the future Messiah who was typified by that sacrificial animal. That animal would then be put to death in the place of the sinner, and consequently he would go home justified. By way of the sacrifices there was an absolute transfer of sins to the Messiah. Here faith was exercised in the Messiah -- it being a certainty that He would render payment. Here justification by

faith occurred -- faith which must have truth as its object. Thus, in the Old Testament, Christ was a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word.

(2) Furthermore, Old Testament believers either did or did not know that they were still subject to guilt and the punishment of eternal condemnation. They also either did or did not know that God would not punish their sins in themselves, but rather that He willed and would punish them in the Surety. Had they understood that they were still subject to guilt and punishment, while not knowing that God willed and would punish their sins, not in them, but in the Surety, they would not have been able to believe in the future Messiah, since there was not a sure promise which faith necessarily requires. They would still have been and remained subject to guilt. Thus, having had no faith, they would not have been saved. If they indeed did have faith, however, which they certainly did, there had to be an absolute promise; consequently, there had to be a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word. If, in fact, they did not know that they were and remained subject to guilt and punishment, the implication would be that God had hidden their obligation to bear the punishment themselves in His secret counsel, and not made this known to them. Had they actually known, however, that God willed and would punish their sins in the Surety, they could only have considered Christ as being a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word, and thus believing in Him, they could be at peace and consider themselves as being free from guilt and punishment. Otherwise the concern would remain that the Surety would come short, or that His payment would be insufficient and that they, being the primary debtors, would therefore have to render either a full or partial payment. What a dreadful thing it is, however, to think of God and of the almighty and faithful Jesus in such terms! He would not even have been a perfect Surety. If, however, He became Surety with the Father's approbation, then, upon the debt having been transferred, the justified debtor could never be held accountable for his debt again.

(3) If one maintains that these believers indeed knew that Christ alone, and not they themselves, would render payment, but that God, nevertheless, made known to them that He reserved the right and the authority to punish sin in them rather than in the Surety -- then I answer that it is contradictory to know on the one hand that Christ would most certainly render payment, and to know on the other hand that God is at liberty not to require payment from the Surety, but rather to punish them. God cannot command faith in contradictory matters. It thus remains a certain fact that Christ has been a vicarious Surety in the Old Testament.

Proof #5: Old Testament believers were saved and translated into heaven immediately upon their death. This is not a point of contention. However, either they were in heaven while yet subject to guilt and punishment until Christ died; or they were fully justified from all guilt and punishment, and declared to be heirs of the eternal salvation they already possessed. If they were still subject to guilt in heaven, they would also have to fear that the moment would arrive when subjection to punishment would yet be required, and that it would be possible for them to be expelled from heaven and be cast into hell. These are contradictory matters indeed: to be saved in heaven while yet being subject to guilt and punishment, fearing the possibility of expulsion. If they were fully justified, this occurred either without total satisfaction of God's justice -- which is impossible -- or by virtue of the perfect suretyship of the Messiah who, though He had not yet rendered payment, had in the absolute sense of the word removed their sins from them and taken them upon Himself in order to render payment for them at the appointed time. If the latter is true by virtue of the satisfaction of Christ, then Christ, in the absolute sense of the word, was in the Old Testament a

vicarious Surety to believers after their death. Thus, relative to this suretyship, future payment and actual payment are of equal efficacy. If Christ is the vicarious Surety of believers subsequent to their death, He is also such prior to their death. They are the very same elect; God does not change toward them, and Christ did not change relative to His suretyship each time a believer died. Thus, in the Old Testament the Lord Jesus was a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word.

Proof #6: Old Testament believers had the benefits of reconciliation with God, the adoption of children, true saving faith, full justification, peace with God, etc. We shall prove this to be true in what follows. They could not be partakers of those benefits except by way of a perfect, vicarious Surety. The Lord Jesus was therefore such a Surety in the Old Testament.

Objections Answered

Objection #1: If the Surety were to be remiss, would believers in the Old Testament have been saved? The justice of God would not permit this, and therefore the fathers of the Old Testament had to remain subject to guilt until the Surety had in actuality made satisfaction.

Answer (1) Then those believers who had the promise prior to Sinai would be in one and the same state as those who lived subsequent to Sinai. However, the opposing party exalts the state of the former far above the state of the latter.

(2) Would the souls of the just made perfect then be expelled from heaven if the Surety would prove to be remiss?

(3) It is a dreadful thing to believe, let alone to say, "if the Surety would prove to be remiss." God cannot lie, the counsel of the Lord will stand, and the Lord Jesus is both obedient and faithful. Thus, what room is there for such a foolish argument?

Objection #2: If Christ were to have taken the guilt of the elect upon Himself in the absolute sense of the word, He would then have to render payment for His own guilt, and believers would then be redeemed by having their guilt assumed, rather than by satisfaction.

Answer (1) One could maintain the same thing by positing Christ to be only a promising Surety -- one whose suretyship is contingent upon conditions.

(2) Christ has rendered payment for the sins of the elect, whose guilt He took upon Himself in order to make satisfaction for them in their stead.

(3) The same would be true in the New Testament.

Objection #3: "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). This proves that one had to render payment himself if the Surety proved to be remiss. Thus, Christ was not a vicarious Surety in the Old Testament; instead, believers remained subject to guilt until the Surety had rendered payment.

Answer (1) In using the word "you" and "ye," the apostle is speaking of the New Testament period, stating the condition believers would be in had Christ not risen. Would one then conclude thereby that Christ is but a Fide-jussor in the New Testament -- that is, a supporting and assisting Surety who will step in when man cannot render payment? Or are we to conclude that if God were to

require restitution from either or both of the parties, that New Testament believers would yet be subject to guilt and punishment?

(2) The apostle declares it to be an impossibility that Christ, being God and man, would not have arisen from the dead. He establishes with certainty that our faith is not in vain and that we are not in our sins.

(3) He proves the resurrection of the dead, which some denied, by the resurrection of Christ, proving that Christ had arisen by stating the absurdities which would follow had Christ not risen. It is therefore not the apostle's objective to teach what the consequences are of Christ not having risen, but rather what absurdities and impossibilities follow from such a position.

(4) The subject under consideration is neither the state of Old Testament believers nor the notion that they, for fear that Christ would be remiss, would have remained subject to guilt and punishment until Christ had rendered payment. *Conditio impossibilis nihil ponit in esse*: An impossible condition does not establish anything. It was impossible that Christ would not perfectly execute everything required by His suretyship. It is therefore foolishness to imagine certain matters which would follow if there were no satisfaction.

Objection #4: Since payment had not been rendered for guilt, it remained until full payment had been made.

Answer: What sort of conclusion is this? Is Christ therefore not a vicarious Surety? One denies this, insisting that Christ is a vicarious Surety. This means therefore that Christ was a vicarious Surety who at the proper time would make satisfaction. Believers did not remain subject to guilt; the Surety had taken it upon Himself. It had not been paid as yet, but the infallible One would make satisfaction for it.

Objection #5: For Old Testament believers, the handwriting against them had to be rescinded daily (Colossians 2:14). Hereby they obligated themselves to render payment; thus Christ was not a vicarious Surety.

Answer: It is not true that believers obligated themselves daily to render payment for their sins. The word "handwriting" does not imply this. Rather, it signifies that the sacrifices could not remove their sins, but that their sins would most certainly be paid for by the Surety who had taken their guilt upon Himself. Of this the sacrifices assured them. This handwriting was in some way not entirely against them, as the promised Messiah neither had come as yet nor had made satisfaction for everything. This did not weigh them down, however, nor result in less assurance concerning the payment by the Surety.

All errors in this matter arise from comparing God and His doings with man and his doings -- which conflicts with Isaiah 55:8 -- and from comparing the Surety Jesus Christ relative to death and the righteous judgment of God, as Judge, with the functioning of human sureties relative to monetary debts. We have refuted this, and have confirmed that Jesus Christ as Surety, as to method and efficacy, is the same in both the Old and New Testament; that is, in having taken both the guilt and punishment from the elect upon Himself. It thus follows that in regard to the essence of the matter, Old Testament believers have been in the same state of reconciliation, sonship, peace, and friendship with God as have New Testament believers. We shall discuss this subject in the next

chapter.

115. Chapter 5: The State of Old Testament Believers

----- CHAPTER FIVE ----- The State of Old Testament Believers

Between Old and New Testament believers there are significant differences in regard to the measure of light, faith, comfort, and various other matters -- a few eminent saints being the exception. However, as far as the essence of the matter is concerned, there are no differences. They have the same Spirit, the same faith, the same justification and forgiveness of sins, the same peace of conscience, and the same sonship. There are some, however, who maintain that the difference does not pertain to the measure of application, but rather to the essence of this application and to their state as such. Several questions need to be addressed concerning this issue.

Old Testament Believers Enjoyed the Full Forgiveness of Sins

Question: Were Old Testament believers, prior to Christ's coming, reconciled with God, fully justified by a true, saving faith, and did they have the full forgiveness of sins; or were they in an unreconciled state, not justified by faith, and without the full forgiveness of sins?

Answer: These matters are interrelated and pertain to the true essence of the state of believers. The confirmation of the one matter will at once confirm the other. We have therefore joined them together and answer the latter part of the proposed question negatively, and the first part affirmatively. There are others, however, who have denied the first and maintained the second. Such propositions appear at first glance to be entirely Socinian, and those who adhere to such propositions will have a considerable task in refuting the Socinian. Nevertheless, we do not accuse them of Socinianism. We declare the wise and stable among them, based upon their explanations and declarations, to be free of Socinianism.

We deal with them as brothers, albeit as weak brothers who in some respects are in error. The radicals who know not what they are saying and affirming, we shall let fend for themselves; they are not esteemed by either party. The one party maintains that in the Old Testament Christ as Surety was not a vicarious Expromissor, but rather a promising, supporting, and assisting Fide-jussor. They maintain that God made known to the Old Testament saints that one day there would come such a Surety, who at the appointed time would make satisfaction for their sins, and that they had to view the sacrifices as types -- and thus had to believe in Him in that manner. However, as long as the Surety had not rendered payment, they, as the primary debtors, would remain subject to guilt. Thus, they were also subject to the curse and wrath, since God reserved the right and authority to pour this wrath out upon them, even though He neither wanted to, nor actually did so.

They maintain that God tolerated them until the Surety had paid; that is, even though He did not forgive their sins, He bypassed them. He closed His eyes to their sins and overlooked them as if He did not see them, for He Himself knew that one day the Surety would render satisfaction. This passing by they express with the word pæsis, insisting that this word is the antonym of the word

aphesis. They relate the first word to the Old Testament and the latter to the New Testament. During the time of my youth and academic studies, when these sentiments initially surfaced and began to get a foothold, there were intense arguments about the words aphasis and paresis, but later on those with clearer understanding came to realize that on the basis of these words a distinction cannot be maintained between forgiveness in the Old and New Testaments. Thus, they discontinued the debate about these words, but nevertheless preserved a distinction within the matter itself, and made use of these words only to express their understanding of the issue.

We believe that we have hereby clearly expressed the very nature of the difference. We shall now proceed to prove our viewpoint, and thereafter consider the thrust of the arguments advanced for the contrary views.

Proof #1: It is evident from the suretyship of the Lord Jesus that Old Testament believers have been reconciled with God, have been fully justified by a saving faith, and have had the full forgiveness of sins. If in the Old Testament the Lord Jesus has been a vicarious Surety in the absolute and complete sense of the word, then those believers have been in the state as just described. And whereas Jesus has been such a Surety in the Old Testament, believers were indeed in that state. The first premise is a certainty, and we believe that none will deny or argue the premise. If all sins have been fully and forever removed from believers and have been imputed to the Surety, and if these sins have been taken upon Himself upon the command and with the consent of God as the Judge of heaven and earth, they are then not liable for anything, and all the merits of the Surety are their portion. In Him they are righteous before God, reconciled, and have complete forgiveness. The second premise is equally certain, as has been shown and confirmed in the previous chapter. The conclusion is thus a certainty as well.

Proof #2: We derive this proof from clear texts of Scripture which not only state expressly that Old Testament believers have been reconciled and justified, and have had the forgiveness of sins, but which express these matters in those very terms -- terms which are identical to those whereby reconciliation, justification, and the forgiveness of sins of believers are expressed in the New Testament. There being too many, we shall only present a few.

(1) Kipper "... when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls" (Exodus 30:15); "... to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11); "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers" (2 Chronicles 30:18-19); "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away" (Psalms 65:3). The New Testament uses this same word to express reconciliation on the basis of the actual payment of the Surety. "Seventy weeks are determined ... to make reconciliation for iniquity" (Daniel 9:24).

(2) salach "... pardon our iniquity and our sin" (Exodus 34:9); "And the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them" (Leviticus 4:20); "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive" (Psalms 86:5); "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Psalms 103:3). David speaks of himself, praises God for the benefits bestowed upon him, and rejoices in the enjoyment of them. Forgiveness in the New Testament is, however, expressed with the same word: "I will forgive their iniquity" (Jeremiah 31:34). Everyone concurs that this prophecy pertains to the New Testament era.

(3) nasa "... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exodus 34:7); "Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now" (Numbers 14:19); "Thou wast a God that forgavest them" (Psalms 99:8). This same word is found in Psalms 32:1-2 : "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." The one party insists adamantly that this is a prophecy relating to the New Testament. Let us assume that this is so. We then conclude on the basis of their own testimony that forgiveness expressed by the word nasa is the forgiveness bestowed upon Old Testament believers. However, such forgiveness as expressed by the word nasa is the forgiveness granted to Old Testament believers. This is evident from the texts quoted above, as well as many others. Thus, Old Testament believers had the same complete forgiveness as did New Testament believers. We do deny, however, that this text only pertains to the days of the New Testament. David speaks of himself and applies this forgiveness to himself to his own comfort. "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalms 32:5). He presents this benefit bestowed upon him as an encouragement for everyone to seek the Lord when He is to be found (vs. 6). The apostle quotes this text in Romans 4:6-8 -- however, not as a prophecy, but as proof for his proposition that man is freely justified, without the works of the law. It is noteworthy that the apostle translates the word nasa with aphienai. Thus, Old Testament believers had aphenai; he shows that such forgiveness already occurred in the Old Testament at the time of Abraham, prior to circumcision. In Romans 4:9 he asks: "Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?" He answers in Romans 4:10 that Abraham was a partaker of this blessedness, consisting in the forgiveness of sins, when he was still uncircumcised: "How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision." In the New Testament it is stated expressly that in the Old Testament, and antecedent to Christ's incarnation, believers had the satisfaction and forgiveness expressed by the word aphenai: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). John the Baptist preached "the baptism of repentance unto the forgiveness (aphenai) of sins" (Mark 1:4). The Lord Jesus taught His disciples already prior to His death and resurrection to pray: "Forgive (aphenai) us our debts" (Matthew 6:12). He said to the palsied man: "ἀφεναι, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Matthew 9:2). All these texts prove that Old Testament believers have had the forgiveness of sins -- a forgiveness as New Testament believers have, as expressed by the word aphenai.

Proof #3: We derive this proof from justification by faith, of which Scripture speaks expressly in respect to the Old Testament believers. That they did have true saving faith is evident from Romans 4:3 : "Abraham believed God." Yes, he is even called the father of New Testament believers: "... that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also" (Romans 4:11). David believed: "I believed" (Psalms 116:10); "I have believed Thy commandments" (Psalms 119:66). Daniel believed: "... because he believed in his God" (Daniel 6:23). In Hebrews 11:1-40 Paul gives a long list of Old Testament believers from Abel onward. To believe is to accept, surrender to, lean upon, rely upon, and entrust one's self to Jesus in order to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. By this faith, Old Testament believers have been justified. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:2-3; cf. James 2:23). Justification is a work of God as righteous Judge. If God is to justify anyone and pronounce the sentence of acquittal, there must be a perfect

righteousness -- a righteousness no one had of himself in the Old Testament, even as none have it in the New Testament. Therefore, if anyone is to be justified, the righteousness of the Surety must be applied to him -- from God's side this happens on the basis of suretyship by way of imputation, and from man's side by way of the acceptance by faith upon the basis of the divine offer. There is no room here for a turning away, overlooking, or passing by of something as unnoticed. God's judgment is righteous and in truth; one is either guilty or righteous. If God did indeed justify Old Testament believers -- which He most certainly did, as we have shown from the justification of Abraham -- then the full righteousness of the Surety has been applied to them, and they have thus been fully acquitted from their sins and have been declared the heirs of salvation.

Proof #4: This proof we derive from the covenant of grace. Those who are in actuality in the covenant of grace are in actuality reconciled with God and have their sins forgiven. Since, however Old Testament believers have truly been partakers of the covenant of grace, they have in actuality been reconciled with God and have had forgiveness of sin. The first premise is self-evident, for the covenant of grace encompasses the deliverance from all evil, participation in all good, and particularly also the forgiveness of sins; that is, the removal of all guilt and punishment. "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord ... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:33-34); "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity ... and I will pardon all their iniquities" (Jeremiah 33:8).

Evasive Argument: These texts speak of the days of the New Testament, so that one cannot draw a conclusion about forgiveness in the days of the Old Testament.

Answer: These promises pertain to the benefits of the covenant of grace, and not to the manner of its administration. The New Testament was neither before nor during the days of the Old Testament. Rather, it came thereafter and in its place. If, however, these promises were only in force during the days of the New Testament -- and thus by virtue of the New Testament rather than by virtue of the covenant of grace, which, as all concur, has remained unaltered from Adam and will be so until the Day of Judgment -- then Old Testament believers would not have been privy to these benefits, among which is the forgiveness of sins. The following promise would also not have pertained to Old Testament believers: "I ... will be their God, and they shall be My people" -- a promise found in both Jeremiah 31:33 and Jeremiah 32:38, and placed on the same level as the forgiveness of sins. But was God not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Was not this the express promise of the covenant of grace made with Abraham and his seed in Genesis 17:8? However, since God was the God of Old Testament believers by reason of the immutable covenant of grace and not by virtue of the New Testament (which did not exist during the Old Testament), Old Testament believers also had the forgiveness of sins -- not by virtue of a new administration, but by virtue of the covenant of grace itself. The two promises mentioned in this text, "I ... will be their God," and "I will forgive their iniquity" Jeremiah 31:33-34, are benefits of one and the same covenant, called a new covenant due to its new administration. I ask, "Is not the Old Testament the covenant of grace?" If not, then God is not the God of believers. Then believers do not have the forgiveness of sins by reason of the covenant of grace, but by reason of another covenant which did not commence until the days of the Lord Jesus, and did not exist previous thereto. Then Old Testament believers did not have God as their God, since there was no covenant. If the Old Testament is the covenant of grace, then Old Testament believers who truly were in the covenant of grace have been partakers of all the benefits of this covenant -- and thus

also of these promises: I shall be their God; and I shall forgive their unrighteousness, and remember their sins no more. The covenant is called new here by reason of its new administration and not relative to its essence.

Proof #5: We derive this proof from the state of Old Testament believers prior to, and after their death. Prior to their death they were God's regenerated children and God was their reconciled Father. They did indeed have assurance of their blessed state, did indeed have peace with God in their conscience concerning their justification, and did indeed rejoice in God. We shall demonstrate this in our response to the questions which follow. After their death they were taken into heaven -- into eternal bliss and glory. Concerning these facts both parties concur. If, therefore, Old Testament believers enjoyed salvation in the fullest sense of the word after their death, then they were completely justified, had the complete forgiveness of sins, and were completely sanctified. The souls of the dead believers are "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23). No one can enter heaven except it be upon the foundation of being fully justified before God, the righteous Judge. To be in heaven enjoying perfect communion, perfect joy in God, and perfect felicity, while yet being in an unreconciled state, subject to guilt and punishment, and unjustified, are contradictory matters which cannot coexist. Likewise, not having a perfect holiness and to be reconciled are mutually exclusive matters. Justification and sanctification cannot be separated. Those whom He has justified, He has also glorified (Romans 8:30). Also the reverse is true: Those whom He has glorified were also predestinated, called, and justified. From all this it is certain and sure that Old Testament believers were not in a state wherein they were unreconciled, not justified, and laden with guilt and punishment. Instead, they were fully reconciled with God, were fully justified by God, and had the complete forgiveness of sins. In justification there are no degrees. Either one is fully and completely justified, or he is not justified at all.

We shall now consider and respond to the objections of those who are of a different persuasion.

Ten Objections Refuted

Objection #1: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Romans 3:25). The Old Testament is here called the time of God's forbearance. Wherever forbearance is exercised, there is neither reconciliation nor forgiveness. Both curse and wrath are and remain in effect. Sins are only overlooked and bypassed. This is the reason why the word pæresis is used, which stands in opposition to aphesis. The latter constitutes forgiveness in the true sense of the word, and only takes place in the New Testament.

Answer #1: We admit that the word "forbearance" signifies a time frame: the time of the Old Testament. This is all the more evident since the apostle, speaking of the same matter, calls this time the time of the Old Testament. "... for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament" (Hebrews 9:15). We admit that the word pæresis is found here, and is translated as "to forgive." We deny, however, that the conclusion drawn from this is valid.

(1) "To forbear" neither signifies to leave unreconciled and unforgiven, nor does it mean to overlook curse and wrath. Rather, "to forbear" is to refrain from punishing sin, and to postpone judgment. One can observe this in Romans 2:4, "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance?" and also in Romans 9:22, "What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His

power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" God neither overlooks the sins of the unconverted nor does He shut His eyes and pass them by. He only postpones His punishment and by His forbearance gives them space to repent. God also tolerated sin in the Old Testament in this manner. He postponed His judgments upon the unconverted. He did indeed punish Israel, but He did not eliminate this ungodly nation. Rather He bore with them until after Christ's ascension. Then He punished them with total destruction. God did also bear with the sins of believers; that is, He did not punish them immediately. He postponed the punishment, but not to leave their sins unpunished. God's justice would not permit this. If he did, we would have no need for Christ. Rather, He would punish them at the appointed time -- not in themselves, for then they would have been eternally lost. Instead, their sins would be punished in the Surety Jesus Christ at the appointed time, who as Expromissor, as vicarious Surety, had removed the sins of the elect by taking them upon Himself. The forbearance of which the apostle speaks here has reference to the Jewish nation which was in a covenant relationship with God, and was the church of God. She was ungodly and tempted God; however, God did not want to eliminate her. He bore with her until the appointed time of her total destruction. This is what is meant by the time of forbearance or longsuffering of God. Thus, it is incorrect and contrary to the text to maintain that forbearance applies to a forgiveness of sorts, a closing of the eyes, an overlooking, or a bypassing of the sins of God's elect.

(2) The word "forbearance" can neither be connected with "forgiveness of sins," nor with "remission of sins that are past." Rather, it is connected with "to declare His righteousness." God has declared His righteousness during the time of His forbearance in the Old Testament by forgiving sins for the sake of the merits of Christ, received by faith. This is evident from the apostle's objective in this chapter, which is to show that man is not justified by works, but upon the basis of the atonement -- through the merits of Christ, embraced by faith. (cf. Romans 3:20-22; Romans 3:28). He shows that justification without works, through the merits of Christ, and received by faith, occurred in both the Old and New Testaments. As far as justification is concerned, there was no difference. In the Old Testament the Jews were equally a partaker of justification as were the Gentiles in the New Testament. Yes, the apostle establishes justification in the Old Testament as being certain, irrefutable, and acknowledged by all. His primary argument is that justification by faith, without works, occurred both in the New Testament among the Gentiles, as it did in the Old Testament among the Jews. "Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith" (Romans 3:29-30). The apostle declares that Christ is set forth in both the Old and New Testaments to that end as a propitiation (hilasterion) -- the name of the mercy seat of the ark, which is an extraordinary type of the Lord Christ. Furthermore, he shows that in both Testaments the righteousness of God shone forth in the forgiveness of sins by reason of the atonement set forth and embraced by faith. God's righteousness manifested itself in the giving of the Surety, in punishing sin in the Surety, in the forgiveness of sins, and in the satisfaction made by the Surety. In Romans 3:25 the apostle declares that this occurred in the past -- in the Old Testament, the time of forbearance. In Romans 3:26 he declares that this does occur in the New Testament -- in the present time. This proves that this text does not support the sentiments of some, but rather refutes them forcefully.

Answer #2: The proof derived from the word parestasis, that is, forgiveness, no longer is valid.

(1) This word stands here entirely by itself; it is found nowhere else in the Bible. The word aphasis is found neither in this verse, this chapter, nor in the entire letter to the Romans. Only in Romans 4:7 the verb aphethesan is found. Thus, there is not the least evidence that the word “to forgive,” here only expressed as paresis, is being contrasted by the apostle with forgiveness expressed by aphasis, the former only occurring in the Old Testament and the latter in the New Testament.

(2) Furthermore, paresis does not mean “to pass by,” or “to close the eyes,” or “to overlook.” Rather, it means “to loosen,” or “to release.” If one were to apply the word paresis to the time of the Old Testament, it would not support the above sentiment in the least. It would signify that God in forgiving sin in the Old Testament dispensation, loosed and released people from sin -- just as forgiveness is expressed by a variety of expressions, such as: to remove, to blot out, not to remember, to cast into the depth of the sea, not to impute, to forgive, to atone, etc. All these expressions signify a complete, real, and actual acquittal from guilt and punishment.

(3) The words aphasis and paresis are never contrasted with each other. Rather, they are used indiscriminately in the Bible (the word paresis being found but once and without comparison or contrast), as well as by the Greek translators of the Old Testament and the Greek writers.

(4) In Scripture the forgiveness of sins by way of aphasis is generally attributed to Old Testament believers. This we have proven above.

(5) The apostle Paul, speaking of forgiveness in the Old Testament in the identical circumstances as in the text posited here, expresses forgiveness in Hebrews 9:22 (combined with Hebrews 9:15) with aphasis--just as he does here with paresis.

(6) The text itself shows that the word paresis is expressive of a forgiveness which is both absolute and complete. The apostle speaks of such a forgiveness by which the righteousness of God is manifested. However, the shutting of the eyes to sin, the overlooking of, and the blind passing by of sin does not manifest the righteousness of God in the least -- neither in the punishment of sin in the Surety, nor by the forgiveness of sin due to the satisfaction of the Surety. This righteousness is only manifested in complete forgiveness.

Objection #2: “For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Romans 5:13). Here the apostle establishes two facts: 1) Sin was in the world prior to Christ’s coming, and beginning at Adam, remained upon believers until the actual satisfaction of Christ occurred; 2) the sin of the golden calf and other sins were not imputed as a result of the giving of the ceremonial law; that is, these sins were silently overlooked, payment was not required on account of them, and believers were not blamed for them. However, the sins committed after that time were imputed to believers; that is, they were held accountable for them, and were under and remained under obligation to pay for those sins. Thus, they neither had atonement nor forgiveness, but remained subject to guilt, wrath, and curse.

Answer (1) The apostle is not speaking here of either Old or New Testament believers, nor of those who lived either prior to or after Moses. Rather, he is speaking of all men as they have sinned in Adam and must die due to sin. This he had declared in the previous verse; consequently, this text does not apply at all to the controversy pertaining to the state of believers.

(2) To impute is to charge a person with, to hold him guilty, and to treat him as such. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account ... I will repay it" Philemon 1:18-19. Not to impute is the opposite; that is, a person is not charged with sins, and is thus considered free of guilt and sin. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Psalms 32:1-2). The one party insists that this text is prophetic, declaring what the state of New Testament believers would be. They refute themselves, however, by insisting that Romans 5:13 is applicable to the state of believers prior to Moses. These believers would then have had forgiveness and the non-imputation of sins such as New Testament believers have (since nonimputation in the New Testament means full acquittal and complete forgiveness), even though Christ had not made satisfaction as yet.

(3) The apostle speaks neither of the ceremonial law, or of the sin of the golden calf, nor does he imply a change from better to worse in the believer's state after that time. It is therefore entirely erroneous to infer such a change from this text.

(4) In this chapter the apostle contrasts Adam and Christ -- Adam as the cause of sin, and Christ as the cause of justification. He ascertains that sin has come upon all men through the fall of Adam (Romans 5:12). In Romans 5:13-14 he deduces this from the fact that death has reigned since Adam. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Where there is death, there is sin.

Evasive Argument: Where there is no law, there is no transgression. There was, however, no law prior to Moses, for the law was given by him.

Answer: The apostle states that there was indeed a law, for there was judgment upon sin, and thus there was sin. When there is sin, there is also a law. Prior to Moses, the moral law was impressed upon man's nature. Furthermore, there were ceremonial laws governing the making of altars, sacrifices, and the objects to be sacrificed. Upon the giving of the law at Sinai, sin has been more clearly defined; but sin, the punishment of sin, and death had previously existed.

(5) Even if one insisted that this text pertains to believers -- this being the point of contention -- it obviously would contradict the text which speaks of all men and even of small children who have no actual sins as yet. Thus, no other conclusion could be drawn than that believers did sin prior to the giving of the law at Sinai; but their sins were not imputed to them because the Surety had already taken all their sins from them upon Himself in order to make satisfaction for them.

Objection #3: "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). Here it is declared that no one in the Old Testament could be justified, sin not having been punished and atoned for. Rather, it states that justification takes place subsequent to Christ's satisfaction.

Answer: Such a conclusion is in direct conflict with the text. The apostle is not speaking of either a time prior to or after Christ, nor is he speaking of either the Old or New Testament. Rather, he is speaking of the cause of justification, which could not be accomplished by either the law of Moses, the moral law, or the ceremonial law. It could not be the moral law, for having been transgressed, it is incapable of rendering man righteous. It could not be the ceremonial law divorced from the antitype; for then the ceremonial acts would be divorced from the exercise of faith in the antitype. These laws neither did nor were capable of rendering a ransom unto God. The only thing he posits here is that Christ is the sole cause of justification to all who believe in Him -- be it in the Old

Testament where believers believed in Christ by means of the types, or in the New Testament.

Objection #4: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross" (Colossians 2:14). The ceremonies were a code of obligation, requiring the payment for incurred guilt. By participating in the ceremonies, the Israelites would daily concur in this. God could therefore require from them the punishment of sin -- which indeed He did by rebuking them for their sins and keeping them subject to guilt, curse, and wrath. It is thus very evident that Old Testament believers did not have the forgiveness of sins.

Answer (1) Everyone will admit that this text uses figurative speech. It is not a document which is under discussion, but rather animals which were killed and sacrificed. The ceremonial law, that is, the ceremonial procedures themselves are referred to as "handwriting," rather than anything believers presented to God. They did not present these ceremonies as they were not ceremonies instituted by them. Instead, it was God who had given them these laws and institutions. In sacrificing, believers did not obligate themselves to anything. They did not obligate themselves to render payment; nothing was further from the truth. The sacrifices pointed them to the fact that a Surety would come at His appointed time -- a Surety who had obligated Himself to render payment. The sacrifices sealed the forgiveness of sins to the believers through the satisfaction of the Surety. In that respect the handwriting was as a receipt, but not an obligation for which they were responsible. The nature of these divine institutions (the ceremonial laws) was such that in some measure they were a handwriting, declaring that payment would have to be rendered, and the repetition of those sacrifices indicated that the payment for that guilt had not been rendered as yet. Upon having rendered payment, the Surety Jesus Christ did remove the handwriting (the ceremonial institutions), having nailed them to the cross. He thereby terminated them as having been completed and having served their purpose. In that sense the ceremonies were as a handwriting, and it is evident from what is stated in the text that believers did not present a signed statement obligating themselves to the payment of their sins.

(2) When the apostle states that the handwriting was against us, he indicates thereby that it was not against Old Testament believers, but against the Gentiles. He states: "which was contrary to us" -- hyphenation; that is, there is something obscure there, something which is hidden and which is contrary. It means that as long as the ceremonies were in force, the Gentiles were deprived of the true religion. Thus, the ceremonial worship distinguished and separated the church from the Gentiles. The congregation of Colosse consisted primarily of Gentiles: "And you, that were sometime alienated ..." (Colossians 1:21). These converted Jews wanted to lead the believing Gentiles to the Jewish ceremonies. The apostle opposes this, showing in this text that the ceremonies were no longer of any benefit, having served their purpose by reason of the coming of Christ, who was the embodiment of the shadows.

(3) If one wishes this handwriting to be applicable to the Jewish church, then there was indeed also something in the shadows which was contrary to them. Aside from the fact that the ceremonies led them to Christ and sealed to them the forgiveness of sins, they would confess that the Surety had not yet come. They had not yet received the fulfillment of the promise of Christ coming into the flesh, for which they so yearned. Thus, they were deprived of the glorious state of the church, not then being permitted to behold that state. That is the meaning of this text.

Objection #5: "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18). Thus, when there are offerings, there is no forgiveness of sins. In the Old Testament there were offerings, and thus there was no forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament.

Answer (1) If this conclusion were valid, there would be neither aphasis nor paresis in the Old Testament. There would have been no forgiveness whatsoever, nor any overlooking of sin. The sacrifices of that time were neither able to remove sins nor to cause them to be overlooked. God's justice would neither permit sin to go unpunished nor grant the sinner admittance into heaven, since the sacrifice of Christ had not been accomplished in actuality. Besides, the Scriptures know of no distinction between aphasis and paresis; it makes no difference whether the one or the other word is used. By reason of such a conclusion, one would have to join the Socinians.

(2) This text states a general truth, which is dictated by logic, and neither is nor can be denied by anyone. When there is forgiveness of sins, there is no longer a need for a satisfying sacrifice. What purpose would it serve? That which it would accomplish has already been accomplished. It is very poor reasoning to conclude from this text that there was no forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament because there were offerings. Indeed, these sacrifices did not render satisfaction, but only typified the one perfect sacrifice of Christ -- that sacrifice which is of one and the same efficacy relative to the forgiveness of sins prior as well as subsequent to His actual sacrifice. He is the same yesterday and today.

(3) The apostle is not dealing here with the manner of forgiveness in either the Old or New Testament. Rather, he is speaking of the cause of forgiveness; that is, which sacrifice was efficacious to that end: either the ceremonial sacrifice or the sacrifice of Christ. The apostle contrasts these two, showing that the ceremonial law could never remove sin, but that Christ with one sacrifice has perfected forever them that are sanctified. He proved the ineffectiveness of the first by its continual repetition. That which needs to be repeated time and again is not a complete work. That which needs to be repeatedly sacrificed has neither made satisfaction for nor removed sin. Since Christ's sacrifice has made full satisfaction, however, it can no longer be repeated, for where there is forgiveness, there is no longer a purpose for a sacrifice. Since full satisfaction has been made through the sacrifice of Christ, the ceremonial sacrifices of the Old Testament no longer need occur; they have served their purpose.

(4) This text, therefore, neither speaks of the sacrifices of the Old Testament nor of the sacrifice of Christ. Rather, it declares the general truth that upon satisfaction for and removal of sin, a sacrifice no longer serves a purpose. There can no longer be any room for the performance of a sacrifice, for what the repeated sacrifices sought to accomplish has been accomplished. By this argument the apostle shows that the sacrifice of Christ, which had fully removed sin, could not be repeated, and that the typifying sacrifices of the Old Testament had served their purpose.

Objection #6: "And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). Here the apostle shows that those sins which had been committed during the Old Testament were first atoned for by the death of Christ; that is, at the time when Christ died. If they were then first atoned for, they were not previously atoned for, but constituted an outstanding debt charged to the account of believers who did not have the forgiveness of sins; their sins were only bypassed.

Answer (1) We state once more that Scripture does not differentiate between paresis and aphasis, or between forgiving and overlooking something. God's righteousness does not permit the one any more than the other. If He can bypass sin by overlooking it, He can also forgive sin -- yes, to forgive and to bypass are one and the same thing. If the sins of the Old Testament believers had not been atoned for because the actual satisfaction had not yet been made, then Old Testament believers would have had no forgiveness whatsoever. No matter how one wishes to express this, they would then have lived and died in an entirely unreconciled state, and consequently would have gone lost. Since they were saved, however, they were therefore also reconciled, and thus their sins had been forgiven them.

(2) We must make a distinction between the act by which the atonement was merited and the efficacy of this act. The act by which the atonement was merited occurred only once; it was accomplished at the time of Christ's suffering. In the Old Testament the act of atonement had not been performed as yet. Christ had not yet come into the flesh, and had neither suffered nor died. This is a known fact, admitted by everyone. However, the efficacy of the act of atonement does not only pertain to the New Testament and to sins which had not occurred but would be committed. Rather, it also pertains retroactively to the sins of Old Testament believers since the time of Adam. One will have to admit that the bearing with and the bypassing of sin in the Old Testament occurred by virtue of the efficacy of this act, and that believers by reason of this atoning act have been saved. This means that Christ's atoning act was already efficacious several thousand years prior to its actual occurrence. If it was efficacious unto the overlooking of sin and unto salvation, it was efficacious unto atonement and forgiveness.

(3) The text itself shows that Old Testament believers did have the atonement and forgiveness. It states very clearly that the death of Christ was for the redemption of the transgression of those who were under the first testament. Believers were therefore partakers of this redemption in the Old Testament. Or is it true that Old Testament believers first received redemption at the time of the death of Christ? Did those who were called not receive the promise of eternal inheritance until Christ's death; and did they only then enter heaven? Were they, prior to Christ's death, imprisoned in limbus patrum, a fabrication of popery? Did Christ only remove them from there after His death? Indeed not! They have received the promise of eternal inheritance already after their death. They have entered heaven -- as the opposing party admits and acknowledges -- by reason of the redemption of their transgressions through the death of the Mediator, who is here declared to be the cause of their receiving their inheritance. To have been in heaven and enjoyed a complete salvation while yet being unreconciled; to have enjoyed perfect communion with God for several thousand years, and not to have received redemption until thereafter -- consequently to have obtained the forgiveness of sins while in heaven -- is altogether contradictory.

(4) That Christ is called the Mediator of the New Testament is of no support to the opposing party, for they themselves admit that Christ was also Surety and Mediator during the Old Testament era. The covenant of grace is one and the same covenant since Adam and will continue unchanged until Christ returns unto judgment. This testament is called "new" relative to its administration. Upon the coming of the Mediator, who is the embodiment of the shadows, the entire ceremonial worship ceases, and the more excellent administration of this Mediator begins -- and thus He is called the Mediator of the New Testament.

Objection #7: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year" (Hebrews 10:1-3). Since in the Old Testament there was made an annual remembrance of sins, and believers were conscious of their sins, there was no forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament.

Answer (1) We fully concur that the ceremonial sacrifices did not remove sin, nor were they capable of doing so. We agree that the ceremonial law did not have the substance itself, but only the shadows, and the repetition of the sacrifices was proof that these were not capable of removing sin and purifying the conscience.

(2) When the apostle speaks of having conscience of sin, he is thereby not denying that believers had peace of conscience by reason of the forgiveness of sins. Rather, he states that this peace could not be obtained by means of the sacrifices, for he says that the law could never make "the comers thereunto perfect." The sacrifices could therefore not remove the consciousness of sin. He speaks here of the sacrifices and their efficacy, contrasting them with the sacrifice of Christ. He denies that the sacrifices have any efficacy to remove sin, to cleanse those who sacrificed, and to purify the conscience from sin of those who participated in the ceremonial service. He attributes that efficacy to the sacrifice of Christ and states in verse 14 that with one sacrifice He has perfected forever them that are sanctified. In Hebrews 9:14 he states that Christ has purged the conscience from dead works. This sacrifice of Christ was not only efficacious subsequent to His death, but also prior to His death, that is, in the Old Testament. He was Surety in the same measure then as He is presently in the New Testament; He is the same yesterday and today. By virtue of that sacrifice Old Testament believers were delivered from punishment, sanctified, and saved in just the same measure as are New Testament believers. Thus, there is no denial here of the matter to be addressed more comprehensively below, but a denial that these blessings were due to the efficacy of the sacrifices.

(3) When the apostle states, "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year," he is only expressing that upon the Day of Atonement (the day he has in view) it was demonstrated and confessed that the act whereby sin would be removed, that is, the atoning sacrifice of Christ, had not yet occurred, but was anticipated in faith, and that all the ceremonial sacrifices could not remove sin. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). The apostle immediately joins these words to the preceding passage, proving by way of the words "remembrance again made of sins every year" the impotency of the sacrifices, and that their repetition in the Old Testament taught that the sacrifices neither removed nor atoned for sin, but that the promised Mediator would do so. By His efficacy believers would become partakers of the atonement and not by any efficacy the typical sacrifices would have.

Objection #8: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). Here we have a pronounced contrast between the Old and New Testaments. In this contrast the forgiveness of iniquity and the not remembering of sin any more are solely and uniquely ascribed as belonging to the New Testament. This forgiveness is expressed by the word

aphesis (cf. Hebrews 8:12; Hebrews 10:17). Thus, Old Testament believers did not have complete forgiveness -- yes, they did not have forgiveness in the sense of aphasis. Instead, God remembered their sins; they continued to be unatoned for before the countenance of God; God continually upbraided them for their sins.

Answer (1) For the exegesis of this passage, and the defense of it, refer to chapter 2 of this appendix.

(2) The forgiveness promised here is expressed by the word *salach* -- the identical word whereby forgiveness of sins is referred to in the Old Testament (cf. Exodus 34:9; Leviticus 4:20; Psalms 103:3; Psalms 86:5). Thus, believers in both testaments have been partakers of the very same forgiveness.

(3) In the Old Testament they also had the benefits of the covenant of grace promised here to the church in the New Testament. The comprehensive summary of this is, "I shall be your God, and you shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33). This is promised to New Testament believers, and believers already had the benefits thereof in the Old Testament. The opposing parties do not deny this, but rather admit it -- a fact which could otherwise be proven from a multitude of texts. Therefore, that which is promised to the New Testament church has been equally promised in the Old Testament.

(4) The non-remembrance of sin which is here promised to the New Testament church was already a reality in the Old Testament and is expressed with the same word *zakhar*: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions" (Psalms 25:7); "O remember not against us former iniquities" (Psalms 79:8); "But thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob ... thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am He that blot out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:22; Isaiah 43:24-25); "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins ... all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him" (Ezekiel 18:21-22); "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him" (Ezekiel 33:16). [Note: In the Statenbijbel various forms of the verb "to remember" are used in all five texts.]

(5) God promises to establish the covenant of grace in the New Testament, even though both parties agree that it has existed without change from Adam until the times of the Messiah, and will remain so until the coming of Christ unto judgment. Just as one cannot deny the existence of the covenant of grace in the Old Testament, because it was promised in the New Testament, the reality of the forgiveness of sins and a not remembering of sins in the Old Testament can likewise not be denied simply because it has been promised to the New Testament church. From all this it can be clearly deduced that whatever is promised to the New Testament church in this text, already existed in the Old Testament church. The contrast does not pertain to the matter itself, but to the manner of administration and the degree of application. The agreement lies herein: The covenant of grace and all its benefits are as much a reality in the New Testament church as they have been in the Old Testament church.

Objection #9: "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:39-40). Since Old Testament believers did not witness the fulfilment of the promises, the ransom had not yet been paid, and they had not yet been made perfect; and

whereas New Testament believers have received better things, Old Testament believers did not have the complete forgiveness of sins, and were deprived of all the benefits which flow forth from the complete forgiveness granted in the New Testament.

Answer: The promise, which Old Testament believers did not and New Testament believers did receive, does not pertain to the forgiveness of sins, but rather to the incarnation of Christ, whereby He fulfilled all the prophecies and types, paying the ransom for the sins of all the elect by His death. The better thing which New Testament believers have is the fulfillment of God's promises in the long-promised Savior Himself. He had not yet come in the Old Testament, although He was promised. However, to have the thing itself is better than the promise; "to have" is better than "shall have." The better thing having come, the administration is also better. It is without shadows, and there is more spirituality, light, faith, hope, love, holiness, peace and joy in the conscience. If we apply the phrase "that they without us should not be made perfect" to the church in general, then the Old Testament church was not complete as far as membership was concerned; the church was anticipating the addition of more children. All the elect had not been gathered in and New Testament believers still had to be added before the church would be complete as far as her membership was concerned. It is in this sense that the congregation is called Christ's body, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23). If one applies this passage specifically to believers, it states that Old Testament believers were not made perfect without that fulfillment of the promise which we enjoy: the actual satisfaction made by Christ in the flesh. The text does not deny perfection in the Old Testament. Rather, it states expressly: They have been made perfect. The phrase "without us" does not imply that New Testament believers render Old Testament believers perfect. It also does not imply that Old Testament believers did not attain perfection until the New Testament era, having been imperfect in heaven until that time. In heaven there is no room for that which is sinful, impure, and imperfect. Rather it states that they were perfect by virtue of the satisfaction of Christ, who had not accomplished the act of atonement in their days, but did so during our days in the New Testament. "The promise" is to be understood as referring to the Messiah; "the better things" as referring to the execution of His suretyship upon which a better administration followed; and "they without us should not be made perfect" as referring to Christ's atonement, which is equally efficacious in both testaments (even though the act of atonement transpired in the New Testament). There is thus no proof for an incomplete forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament -- a forgiveness distinguished from and contrasted with the forgiveness of sins in the New Testament.

It is evident from Hebrews 11:39 that all these matters are as we have stated them to be: "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith." What was the object of their faith? None other than Christ, who had then been promised and who now had come. Abel's eye was upon Christ when he sacrificed, for thereby he obtained witness that he was righteous. This could not have occurred in any other way but by a faith which looked unto Christ (Hebrews 11:4). The faith of Enoch, who was taken up, looked unto Christ (Hebrews 11:5). Abraham's faith looked unto Christ, the promised seed, and thereby he was justified (Hebrews 11:12 cf. Romans 4:11-22; Galatians 3:16). Moses looked unto Christ, whereby he esteemed the reproach of Christ the greatest of all riches (Hebrews 11:26). For this Christ they all yearned, and even though they did not receive Him in the flesh, they nevertheless saw Him from afar, believed in Him, and embraced Him (Hebrews 11:13).

Since these two matters are facts (and in our estimation it has been clearly shown that they are facts), namely, that the Lord Jesus has been the same perfect vicarious Surety in the Old Testament as He is in the New Testament, and that Old Testament believers have been as fully reconciled with God and have received as complete a forgiveness of sins as New Testament believers, the following questions will be more readily answered.

Old Testament Believers Had the Spirit of Adoption

Question: Did Old Testament believers have the Spirit of adoption? Answer: Some neither deny that Old Testament believers have been partakers of God's Spirit and of regeneration nor that they were indeed children of God. They posit that believers generally had less light, less assurance, and less comfort, etc. In these two matters there is agreement. Some insist, however, that Old Testament believers did not have the Spirit of adoption, which would enable them to approach unto God as their Father with liberty and a childlike heart, to address Him, "Abba, Father!," and to serve and obey God as a reconciled Father with a free and childlike disposition. They maintain that only New Testament believers have this, claiming that Old Testament believers have always gone their way with a troubled heart, with dread and fear, and as a slave who fears a beating and is compelled to do his work out of fear. They claim that the Spirit inclined their hearts to yield to slavish bondage and to submit their shoulders to the yoke of the ceremonies. They were subject to the slavish dominion of angels, priests, principalities, and devils, who as rulers compelled them to perform their work. Moreover, these insist that this spirit of bondage did not exist prior to, but only from the golden calf incident until the New Testament. They also claim that the unconverted did not have this spirit of bondage. This only occurred in believers, and this spirit worked in them compliance with God's instituted form of worship and its observance by faith.

What poor faith and sonship this is! We completely deny these claims to be true. We acknowledge instead that they had the same Spirit of faith, the same Spirit of the adoption of children, the same access, the same childlike disposition, and the same childlike obedience. The evidence for this is as follows:

First, as Christ was a vicarious Surety in the Old Testament who fully removed all guilt from believers, having taken their guilt upon Himself in order to make satisfaction for them at the appointed time, and since they had the complete forgiveness of their sins as much as we do, they also had a childlike disposition of the heart, and thus the Spirit of adoption. There is nothing which separates God and man, preventing God from manifesting His fatherly favor and love, except sin. When God removes sin, He embraces the soul in love: "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it ... for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isaiah 38:17). Christ was, however, their vicarious Surety, and God forgave them all their sins. This has been proven in the previous chapter, as well as earlier in this chapter. Consequently, they had a childlike disposition of heart and the Spirit of adoption.

Secondly, both Old and New Testament believers possessed and exercised faith, and whenever faith is lively and active, there will also be this childlike disposition -- the Spirit of adoption. That they did indeed exercise saving and justifying faith is evident throughout the entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews, as well as in 2 Corinthians 4:13 : "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed." They trusted in God: "But I trusted in Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God" (Psalms 31:14). Whenever faith is in exercise, however, there is also the Spirit

of adoption: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). Whenever faith is in exercise, there is also peace: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Whenever faith is in exercise, there is also joy: "In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). Whenever faith is in exercise, there is an intimate walk with God: "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23). The Lord Jesus likewise calls His believing disciples His friends: "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). It is thus a certainty that they had a childlike disposition and the Spirit of adoption.

Thirdly, that Old Testament believers had the Spirit of adoption -- that is, that God made known to them that He accepted them as His children and begat a childlike disposition in them -- is evident from the manner in which He led His children.

(1) God made known to them that He was their God: "I am the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:2).

(2) He called them His children: "Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant child?" (Jeremiah 31:20); "Surely they are My people, children that will not lie" (Isaiah 63:8).

(3) He loved them and made known to them that He loved them: "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee" (Isaiah 43:4); "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3).

(4) God showed His fatherly compassion to them in their distresses, and they acknowledged this as such: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Psalms 103:13).

(5) The Lord refreshed them by His presence and gave to them, upon their prayers, the desires of their soul: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psalms 145:18-19).

(6) The Holy Spirit taught and guided them: "Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalms 143:10).

(7) The Lord Jesus dealt with them in a loving manner. He kissed them with the kisses of His mouth Song of Solomon 1:3, and He called them His love (Song of Solomon 5:2). When considering all these and other similar dealings of God with Old Testament believers, then I would ask whether God deals differently with New Testament believers. Are there indeed any different expressions in the New Testament? Does He who deals thus with believers give them the spirit of bondage rather than the Spirit of adoption? Truly, if one were to ignore all these dealings and insist that the Old Testament believers had a wretched, slavish disposition, does one then do justice to the workings of God's Spirit in His children? If one speaks in such terms, would he then not offend the generation of God's children? We conclude, therefore, from all these fatherly dealings of God that Old Testament believers did have the Spirit of adoption.

Fourthly, consider also the description of the disposition of God's children in the Old Testament.

(1) “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers” (Acts 3:25); “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants” (Romans 9:4).

(2) They had the same Spirit of faith which New Testament believers have (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:13).

(3) They were assured of God’s fatherly heart and love toward them, and put their full trust in Him: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me” (Psalms 23:1; Psalms 23:4).

(4) They had free access to the throne of grace: “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit” (Psalms 51:12); “Nevertheless I am continually with Thee” (Psalms 73:23).

(5) They addressed God with the name Father -- just as the Lord Jesus taught His disciples in (Matthew 6:9). Elihu said: “My desire is that Job may be tried” (Job 34:36). [Note: The Statenvertaling reads: “Mijn Vader! Laat Job beproefd worden tot het einde,” that is, “My Father! let Job be tried to the end.”] Believers spoke as follows: “Doubtless Thou art our Father” (Isaiah 63:16); “But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father” (Isaiah 64:8). The Lord put the word “Father” into their mouth: “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?” (Jeremiah 3:4).

(6) They found delight and joy in the Lord and His service: “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10); “My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord” (Psalms 104:34); “Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing” (Psalms 100:2).

Let us consider all the things mentioned together: Those who have Jesus as their vicarious Surety; those who have complete forgiveness of sins; those who have an active faith in God through Christ which engenders peace and joy; those whom God calls His friends and children, dealing with them in a familiar manner as one would with children; those who address God in Christ with the name Father; and those who have fellowship with God as their Father in a familiar, sweet, soul-satisfying manner, and delight themselves in Him -- those most certainly have the Spirit of adoption. Old Testament believers had all these, however, and thus they did not have a slavish disposition, but a childlike disposition and the Spirit of adoption.

Objection #1: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). Here the spirit of bondage is contrasted with the Spirit of adoption, and the fruits of the one with the fruits of the other -- which are to fear, and to cry, “Abba, Father.” The “spirit of bondage again to fear” is divorced from the New Testament and attributed to the Old Testament, which generally is designated as having been a period of bondage, whereas the Spirit of adoption and the crying of “Abba, Father” is attributed to the New Testament church and denied to the Old Testament church. Therefore, the spirit of bondage was only to be found in the Old Testament, and the Spirit of adoption was only found in the New Testament.

Answer: First, we categorically deny that what is spoken of here even remotely pertains to the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, we deny that a distinction is made here between believers of

both testaments, and that the spirit of bondage is attributed to the Old Testament and the Spirit of adoption is attributed to the New Testament -- and thus that they feared in the Old Testament, whereas they cried "Abba, Father" in the New Testament. Until we draw all arguments together, we have herewith sufficiently responded to the objection.

Secondly, the very opposite is proven by the text itself.

(1) Neither in this verse, in the previous verses, nor in those which follow is there a single reference to either the Old or New Testament, or anything that even suggests a distinction between believers in both testaments. To suggest this is only conjecture. If one states that the words "bondage again to fear" and "have received the Spirit of adoption" are indicative of any distinction, we reply that this is *petitio principii*; that is, this is the very principal point itself, which is here denied. Thus, these words do not support the objection at all. This is all the more evident when considering that Old Testament believers had the Spirit of adoption, and they did cry, "Abba, Father." This we have proven with four arguments. Moreover, there is also fear in the New Testament: "Afterward shall the children of Israel ... fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:5); "Let us therefore fear" (Hebrews 4:1); "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Php 2:12).

(2) The apostle does not speak in this verse of various persons -- some belonging to the Old Testament and others to the New Testament. Rather, he speaks of the very same persons: the members of the congregation at Rome as they presently dwelt there. The text says: "... ye have not received ... ye have received." If there were but the least possibility that this was so, it would first of all have to be proven that this congregation solely or primarily consisted of Jews. Furthermore, it would have to be proven that these Jews, prior to believing that Jesus was the Messiah, had been believers and converted persons. The disputants state resolutely that the unconverted in the Old Testament did not have the spirit of bondage, but that only believers had the spirit of bondage again to fear. This argument does not even have a semblance of validity, for the church had already been transferred to the Gentiles. God had already deserted Jewry, the godly had in principle already moved elsewhere, and the destruction of Jerusalem was imminent. One thing is certain: The church of Rome consisted of converted Gentiles. This can be observed in Romans 1:5-6; Romans 1:13 : "... for obedience to the faith among all nations, [Note: The Statenvertaling uses the word "heidenen," that is, "Gentiles."] for His name: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ ... that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles."

Evasive Argument: The apostle does indeed speak of the same persons and of converted Gentiles. However, he says concerning them that they were not brought into the state in which the Jewish church had been of old; namely, having the spirit of bondage again to fear, and with fear of heart being subject to the ceremonies. Rather, they were in a much better state -- an evangelical state.

Answer: We deny that there is such a difference. Moreover, would it make any sense for the apostle to speak to converted Gentiles about the state of believers who lived in a very distant land during a period long gone by -- of whose form of worship they had no knowledge and which had already been done away with? Would it make any sense for him to say that they had not come into the state in which the Jewish church had been of old?

Thirdly, the spirit of bondage again to fear is a spirit of fear. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). Whenever there is fear, there is the inclination to subordinate and subject one's self to the will of those who threaten and inflict suffering. The world, the enemies of God, persecuted the church very fiercely during that time. To confess and experience Jesus was to make oneself a prey of the persecutors who robbed believers of their possessions and their lives. This method was very capable of making men's hearts faint with fear, and causing them, by way of this fear, to depart from the faith and the practice of religion. It was against this threat that the apostle sought to bolster the believing Romans by stirring them up to be steadfast in the faith and in godliness -- even if they were to become subject to physical suffering. That he spoke of a fear for suffering, which caused an inclination to forsake the pathway of godliness and to subject themselves to the bondage of the will of the persecutors is evident in the following passage: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:17-18). However, (thus speaks the apostle) you are children, for you are partakers of the Holy Spirit and have received the Spirit of adoption which cries, "Abba, Father!" You are therefore the heirs of God. You should not fear suffering, for it will not rob you of your eternal inheritance. That inheritance incomparably transcends all the suffering and whatever else could supposedly be gained upon earth if you were to forsake the truth due to fear of suffering. The Spirit you have received is a Spirit of power (2 Timothy 1:7); He is a free Spirit (Psalms 51:12).

(1) Natural men seek their portion, peace, and delight in visible things. They are slaves to earthly possessions, fearing all that might rob them of those possessions. However, you, being converted, have not received this spirit, this disposition of bondage -- the spirit of the world 1 Corinthians 2:12 -- so that again you would fear the loss of earthly possessions as you did before. You have received the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption. This spirit does not engender bondage to earthly possessions; it does not cause fear again as before, but instead gives a free, childlike, and bold disposition to address God as a reconciled Father -- to endure all suffering for Christ's sake in anticipation of the heritage of the children of God.

(2) The spirit of bondage again to fear is a bondage of fear -- a being in bondage to earthly, visible things. The converted Gentiles in Rome did not receive again the spirit of the world, the spirit of bondage which formerly made them fearful of all those things which could deprive them of their earthly belongings. Rather, they had been delivered from this bondage. They had now become the children of God and had received the Spirit of adoption which gave them liberty to address God by the name of Father. They had the hope of glory. By way of this argument the apostle stirs them up to godliness and not to succumb because of suffering, but rather that they might glory with him, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" Romans 8:35; Romans 8:37. This is his intent.

Objection #2: "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:5-6). In verse 3 the state of the church is defined as being one of bondage, in verse 1 as being the state of a servant, whereas verse 5 states that Christ delivered

them by His coming. The apostle contrasts this with the state of the New Testament church, consisting in the adoption of children, which causes them to call upon God as “Abba, Father!” Thus, Old Testament believers did not have the Spirit of adoption.

Answer (1) Let us put it this way: In the Old Testament was the spirit of bondage, during which period the Holy Spirit worked regeneration, faith, and sanctification in believers. In the New Testament there was the Spirit of adoption. The apostle contrasts the two. And then what? One could at the very most conclude a difference in measure rather than of essence, for also in the New Testament the Holy Spirit works through fear. Paul persuades men to faith by way of the terror of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:11); Jude admonishes to “save some with fear” Jude 1:23; and conversion wrought fear in the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7:11). Paul himself had fightings without and fears within. Moreover, Old Testament believers had the Spirit of adoption and bold access to the throne of grace, crying out, “Abba, Father!” We have demonstrated this in our proof. They also had peace and joy as we shall show below, and thus the distinction can only be one of measure -- with which we fully concur.

(2) The apostle does not speak here of the Spirit of adoption, but of adoption itself. If it were to be construed as a contrast between the Old and New Testaments, the adoption of children as having occurred in the Old Testament would have to be completely denied, for it is connected here with the New Testament in comparison with the Old Testament. However, that is contrary to both Scripture and their own sentiments.

(3) The apostle here demonstrates the benefits and efficacy of Christ’s suretyship among the Gentiles -- which the Galatians were prior to their conversion, having been idolaters. “Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods” (Galatians 4:8). We do not have here a contrast between church and church, but rather between nation and nation. Formerly only the Jews enjoyed the benefits of the covenant of grace, but presently the Gentiles do likewise. They presently also receive the adoption of children.

(4) The sending forth of the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of believers and the crying out, “Abba, Father,” flow forth from their sonship: “... and because ye are sons,” etc., rather than out of the state of the church in either the Old or New Testament. Since no one is a child of God, God sheds forth the Spirit of His Son, who cries out, “Abba, Father.” However, since New Testament believers are as much God’s children as they of the Old Testament, God has bestowed the same blessings upon them, and vice versa.

(5) Understand it to be as follows: There being a contrast here between the Old and New Testaments, it is not one of essence, but rather of degree -- as between immature and mature children. They both are children, both have a childlike disposition, and both cry out, “Abba, Father.”

Old Testament Believers Enjoyed Peace of Conscience

Question: Did Old Testament believers have peace of conscience and spiritual joy in God, or did they live with continual fear in their conscience? Did they live with continual fear and an anxious spirit because they were in an unreconciled state, being accused of sin, being subject to the curse and wrath of God, to which they would remain subject until the Surety had paid -- and being in a slavish bondage to the ceremonies?

Answer: Some respond to the latter question in the affirmative (however, not in the manner as the ungodly would experience this), and claim that it was God's will not to pour out His curse and wrath upon them unto their perdition. However, we answer negatively upon this question. These believers did have peace of conscience and joy in God. They were not in such a wretched state. We confirm this as follows:

(1) We have previously proven that in the Old Testament the Lord Jesus was a vicarious Surety in the full sense of the word; that Old Testament believers did have full justification by faith and the forgiveness of sins; and that they were adopted as children and had the Spirit of adoption. When such is the case, there is neither curse, wrath, nor a being accused of unpaid debt; instead, there is peace and joy in God. However, Old Testament believers had all these benefits. Thus, etc. [Note: à Brakel obviously assumes here that the reader can complete the argument himself.]

(2) There are clear texts. Consider, among others, the following: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart. ... I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Psalms 4:7-8); "Truly my soul waiteth upon God" (Psalms 62:1); "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee ... God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:23;Psalms 73:26;Psalms 73:28); "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord" (Psalms 104:34); "... that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance" (Psalms 106:5); "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! ... when I awake, I am still with Thee" (Psalms 139:17-18); "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me" (Psalms 23:4).

He who considers these spiritual frames will be incapable of having such dismal thoughts of Old Testament believers. Are there expressions anywhere in Scripture to indicate that the frames of New Testament believers are more spiritual, familiar, and joyful than those of Old Testament believers? Furthermore, although Christ had not actually paid for the sins of Old Testament believers, did they not have perfect peace, joy in God, and communion with God in heaven? If the unpaid debt was no obstacle to prevent them from having perfect joy after their death, why then could this be a reason for their state on earth to be a wretched one? We thus conclude that Old Testament believers have had the same peace and joy in God as did New Testament believers. That there was generally a difference in measure was not ascribed to unpaid debt, but to the wisdom of God.

Objection #1: Old Testament believers were subject to wrath. "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). This law is the ceremonial law, which demonstrated that satisfaction for sin had not yet been made. The ceremonial law accused Old Testament believers of sin and indicated to them that they were still subject to divine wrath, and that the curse still rested upon them. The apostle contrasts this with the state of New Testament believers and posits that the ceremonial law ceased upon Christ having rendered satisfaction; consequently there was no longer any transgression which was not atoned for.

Answer (1) Such sentiments are very erroneous; they are therefore to be fully rejected.

(2) Even though the transgression of the ceremonial law also merited the wrath of God, the apostle is not referring here to the ceremonial law, but to the moral law. He speaks of the law which stands

in contrast to faith; however, the ceremonial law is not contrary to faith. In this as well as the previous chapter, the apostle contrasts justification by the law with justification by faith, declaring that man cannot be justified by the works of the law, since that law engenders wrath. He states that if man is to be justified, it is to be by faith. He posits that Abraham was not justified by the works of the law, but by faith (Romans 4:1-5). It follows that all who seek their justification in the works of the law will not obtain it, but will remain subject to God's wrath, since man is a transgressor of the law and has a curse pronounced upon him. If God had given no law to man, he would not have been capable of sinning, since he then would have been neither commanded nor prohibited anything. He would thus also not have been subject to punishment. Since, however, God has given man a law, and man has transgressed the law, the violated law provokes to wrath and therefore cannot justify man. This does not constitute a difference between the state of Old and New Testament believers.

(3) The apostle does not say that New Testament believers are without the law, nor does he say that they are free from transgression. They have both: law and transgression. It is indeed true that they do not sin against the ceremonial law, as it is no longer in force. However, they do have the moral law and sin against it. Being without transgressions is not to be without atonement, but rather to be without sin.

Objection #2: Old Testament believers were subject to the curse. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Galatians 3:10). Old Testament believers were under the law, but New Testament believers are not. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

Answer (1) This argument does not pertain to the unconverted, but to Old Testament believers. The former are under the dominion of sin, whereas the latter, having been regenerated, are not. The former are under the curse, and the latter are under grace and not under the curse. Had Old Testament believers been under the curse, they would not have been under grace nor have obtained salvation.

(2) The apostle, speaking of justification in Galatians 3:1-29, shows that it does not proceed out of the law -- neither the moral nor the ceremonial law. The Jews at that time mingled the ceremonial laws with the moral law. They separated them from the antitype, expecting to be justified by their actions, that is, by works. Of such the apostle declares that they are far from being justified, and renders them subject to the curse. In the very same verse he adds the following as an argument for his proposition: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). By contrast, he shows that justification transpires by faith, and faith stands in opposition to the law in justification, stating immediately thereafter in verse 11: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith." Thus, the apostle does not speak here of Old Testament believers and of their state -- which is the point of contention -- but of the unconverted, who strive to be justified by the law and to whom Christ has thus become of no value.

(3) Concerning the passage in Romans 6:14, there is not the least mention made of any contrast between Old and New Testament believers, for the apostle says that sin has no dominion over those who are under grace. The dominion of sin pertains to man being under the power of sin. Sin then compels man to commit all manner of sin, even to obey it in the lusts thereof -- as he says in

verse 12 [Romans 6:12]: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12). Had the apostle considered Old Testament believers to be under the law, he would have said that sin did have dominion over Old Testament believers. However, this cannot be -- for to be regenerate, to be a believer, and yet to be under the dominion of sin are contradictory matters. Thus, the apostle, when contrasting man as being under the law and being under grace, is not referring to the Old and New Testaments, but to the unregenerate and regenerate states of man, whoever he may be. To be under the law is to be subject to the power of the law -- this being the case in either the Old or New Testament -- whereby one is either justified by the law if it is perfectly obeyed, or condemned by transgression against it. The law points out man's duty; it promises and threatens. Hereby man is convinced that in his natural state he is in direct opposition to the law, that he does nothing but sin, and that the law can neither justify, change, nor sanctify him. To be under grace is to have Christ unto justification and sanctification. He who is under grace, having the blood and Spirit of Christ, is a partaker of the divine nature, and cannot be under the dominion of sin. By virtue of this argument, the apostle admonishes believers to fight earnestly against sin, and exhorts them to the practice of holiness; they have God's seed in them and have received Christ unto justification and sanctification.

Objection #3: Old Testament believers did not enjoy peace of conscience, for they were still conscious of sin. "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" Hebrews 10:19 Peace of conscience is for New Testament believers -- for those living subsequent to the satisfaction made by Christ. "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14). Only subsequent to Christ have believers had freedom to approach unto God. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Hebrews 10:19-22). Peace of conscience was reserved for New Testament believers. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9).

Answer: In Hebrews 10:2 the apostle does not say that Old Testament believers had any remembrance again of sins; that is, that they had terror or trembled due to committed and unforgiven sins. Rather, the apostle speaks of the efficacy of the sacrifices of the Old Testament as contrasted with the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. He denies the sacrifices of the Old Testament had the efficacy to pacify the conscience, as they were not capable of removing sin; rather, he ascribes that efficacy to the sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22). That is the very argument of the apostle in that chapter (cf. Hebrews 9:13-14). However, His sacrifice had the same efficacy prior to His actual atoning sacrifice as thereafter, for as Surety He had taken sin upon Himself prior to this. Christ is the same yesterday and today -- and thus believers in both dispensations have enjoyed the efficacy and fruits of His death, which also include peace of conscience. We have proven this to be true (cf. pp. ###474-475). Hebrews 4:9 does not speak of the rest of the New Testament, but rather of the rest of heaven (cf. vol. 3, chapter 6).

Objection #4: Old Testament believers continually lived in the fear of death. Their continual wish was to have a long life. This is to be observed in David (Psalms 6:1-10 and Psalms 30:1-12), Heman Psalms 88:1-18, and Hezekiah Isaiah 38:1-22. Paul states this expressly in Hebrews

2:14-15 : "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Paul speaks of the Jews, for this letter is addressed to the Hebrews. He states that they were subject to bondage -- a being in bondage under the ceremonies. They were in fear of death, and were so all their lifetime.

Answer (1) Death is unnatural; it is the king of terrors. All Old and New Testament believers would, with Paul, rather be clothed than unclothed (2 Corinthians 5:4). Thus, fear of death was not only peculiar to the Old Testament, for in the New Testament believers are sometimes very fearful of death. Why else did other believers, who were called to martyrdom, yield? And why would Old Testament believers have been more fearful of death? Was this due to the weakness of their faith? That is possible. Was it because they had such a love to be of service to God's people, to make God's name known among the people, and to worship and glorify Him? This would have been laudable. Was it because they would then come short of Canaan? How foolish! Would he who had received the matter itself be fearful of having lost the earnest of it -- that is, if Canaan was indeed an earnest, which supposition we deny? Or was the earth more dear to them than heaven?

(2) In Hebrews 2:15 Paul is neither speaking of the Old Testament nor of the bondage under the ceremonies, even though he is speaking to the Hebrews. The Word of God -- and thus the entire covenant of grace -- had been proclaimed to the Hebrews. Does this therefore only pertain to the Hebrews? Rather, he speaks of the fear of death as being a punishment upon sin -- a punishment that had been threatened in Genesis 2:17 and had come upon all men (Romans 5:12). All men fear this death. The one banishes this fear by reason of his base ignorance, not knowing what follows thereafter; the other does so in proud presumption in order to have glory among men; others do so by considering death to be an unavoidable fate; others have the false notion that they will thereby be delivered from their misery; and some do so by entertaining an unfounded hope of salvation. The apostle, however, shows the true cause whereby one can be delivered from the fear of death -- the death of the Lord Jesus received by faith. Through sin man has become captive to the power of the devil, having believed and obeyed him. Thus, to be subject to the power of the devil and to the fear of death and bondage are the results of the sins which have come upon all men, who are all by nature children of wrath. Since man has become subject to the power of the devil through sin, he is in bondage to the devil, is in his snares, is captive to his will 2 Timothy 2:26, and desires to do the lusts of the devil. Christ delivers His children from this wretched state, and to that end He has bruised Satan's head, according to the promise made in Genesis 3:1-24. In delivering His own from the power of the devil, He also delivers them from the accompanying evil: bondage to the devil and its resultant consequence, the fear of death. This is evident from the text itself. Those who during their entire lifetime have been subject to this bondage in fear are said to be delivered from it. However, when and whereby are believers delivered from it? This would not be during their lifetime, since, according to the opposing view, they would have to be subject to it until their death. Were they delivered from this bondage when Christ died? Then they also would have been subject to the fear of death in heaven, a matter which is a contradiction in itself. Or were they delivered from the fear of death by reason of their own death? This would be in conflict with the text, which declares that they have been delivered from the power of the devil and the fear of death by the death of Christ. Thus, these words cannot be understood to refer to this fabricated

fear of death in the Old Testament, but as referring to deliverance from the power of the devil and the fear of death to which man by nature is subject and from which he is delivered by the death of Christ. Man becomes a partaker of this benefit at regeneration by faith. Prior to that he, along with all men, is subject to the power of the devil and to the fear resulting from being in bondage to the devil and sin. It is just like saying that a man who is born blind, but later receives his sight, has been blind his entire lifetime. One does not understand this to mean until his death, but rather until the moment he received his sight. Likewise here, "all their lifetime" is equivalent to saying, "as long as they were unconverted -- until the time of regeneration and faith in Christ."

Old Testament Believers Did not Live in Grievous Bondage Question: Did Old Testament believers live in grievous bondage to governors, priests, angels, and devils?

Answer: Some answer affirmatively, and we answer negatively. They did indeed have many tribulations in this present life -- as do New Testament believers. They were obligated to obey principalities, and listen to the priests and the prophets, just as we are to do in the New Testament. They were subject to the assaults of Satan, just as we are in the New Testament. However, such grievous dominion and slavery as is suggested we fully deny.

(1) Old Testament believers did have Christ as their vicarious Surety; they therefore also had a true, saving faith, complete justification and forgiveness of sins, the Spirit of adoption, peace of conscience, and joy in God -- which has previously been proven. Who shall lay any charge against the elect of God who are in such a state? They cannot be subject to such grievous bondage.

(2) To whom were believing governors and priests then to be subject? -- to other governors and priests? Did they become violent toward each other? Was the tribe of Levi lord and master over the other tribes? And did the governors rule over religious affairs and church people in an ecclesiastical sense? These and similar absurdities follow from such assumptions, proving that these propositions themselves are absurd.

(3) Did such dominion by governors, priests, angels, and devils pertain to the body or the soul? It neither pertained to the soul, the conscience, nor to religious practice; these are only subject to God, and one is to be obedient to God alone in these matters. If it pertained to the body alone, it was either a punishment or a chastisement. It was not a punishment, for sin having been forgiven, no punishment remains. If it were a fatherly chastisement, it would not pertain to the point of contention.

Objection #1: "Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world" (Galatians 4:1-3). The apostle is here speaking of the Old Testament church, declaring that it differs nothing from a servant or from a slave, but that it is the same as being under bondage -- under tutors and governors, which are the angels, governors, and priests.

Answer (1) Why are devils not mentioned along with these? Furthermore, some governors and priests were thoroughly ungodly people. Wretched child who is subject to such tutors and guardians!

(2) The text consists of an analogy and its application. The analogy is in the first and second verses, and the application is in the third verse. It is a known fact that every analogy is not true in every detail, but only insofar as the objective of the analogy is concerned. This is very evident here, for tutors and guardians are appointed over those children whose fathers are deceased; however, the Father of the church is the God who lives forever. A child who is subject to tutors differs much from a servant. He is clothed better, eats better, is raised in a more relaxed setting, is served, and is not assigned to do slavish labor, etc. The analogy here only pertains to the enjoyment and use of the possession of which the child is the proprietor. The child has no more of this than the servant. However, what benefit did the Old Testament church not possess? It was Christ who had been promised to them in the flesh, but who had not come as yet. The Old Testament church did indeed partake of Him, but they did not actually possess Him as far as His coming was concerned. This is evident in verse 4 which follows immediately: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."

(3) Who were the tutors and governors? Were they angels, authorities, or priests? This is absolutely not the case; the text itself states who they were: the elements of the world, the ceremonies. By these they were, so to speak, led by the hand to Christ. These preserved them from errors in religious worship, doctrine, and life. These ceremonies were the foundational principles -- the ABC's whereby they became acquainted with Christ, although they differed much from the matter itself: Christ in the flesh. To these ceremonies they were in bondage. In this way they worshiped -- not the ceremonies, for that would be idolatry -- and served God by means of this divinely instituted service. These ceremonies were the parameters for their religious worship, and directed them to the exercises of faith in Christ. Thus, there is nothing to be found in this text in support of such a grievous state of Old Testament believers. On the contrary, it describes their blessed state, showing how they had been provided for by God so well; that is, in accordance with the time in which they lived, prior to Christ's coming.

Objection #2: "And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians 2:15). The principalities and powers are the angels, authorities, and priests in the Jewish church. They were as a garment behind which Christ, the eternal King, was hidden. However, Christ by His coming has laid them all aside as a garment and deposed them from their offices, so that they no longer have any authority in the New Testament.

Answer: The principalities and powers mentioned here are neither angels nor earthly authorities and priests. These principalities were enemies of Christ, of whom He has made an open show (Greek: stripped of everything), as is done to a conquered enemy. The garment implied here is not placed between Christ and those powers which conceal Christ. Rather, it refers to the garments worn by the enemies which were removed from them. If these were the garments of the ceremonies, they would have been the garments of Christ and Christ would have removed Himself. Christ triumphantly led about the enemies -- as was customary during that era. The conquered enemies were led about as captives in bonds and made a public display for everyone to see when the general triumphantly made his entry. Angels and principalities were, however, not the enemies of Christ, and thus they cannot be intended here. Even the angels were not types of Christ, and the principalities and priests did not make up the garments of Christ. Instead, the principalities and powers are the devils; they carry this name. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,

against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12); "... according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). The Lord Jesus bruised their head and destroyed them in His death (Hebrews 2:14-15); He made an open show of and triumphed over them.

Objection #3: "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Hebrews 2:5). The law has been given by angels (cf. Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2). Thus, by way of the giving of the law, they have been established as masters and gods over the Old Testament church. However, He has not put the New Testament church in subjection to them. Therefore, by denying subjection to angels in the New Testament, their dominion in the Old Testament can be concluded.

Answer (1) The fact that the law was given into the hands of Moses by means of the angels does not vest them with the least dominion over the church. No less does the fact that they were the first messengers of Christ's birth and resurrection give them dominion over the New Testament church. In both cases, the angels were but ministering spirits.

(2) The text is a comparison between angels and Christ -- not between the Old and New Testaments. The apostle hereby wishes to display the eminent glory of the Lord Jesus -- just as he does in the previous chapter by comparing Him to angels. "Being made so much better than the angels. ... For unto which of the angels said He at any time ..." (Hebrews 1:4-5). So it is here: He did not bring the world to come into subjection to the angels, but to the Son, of whom He speaks in the following verses.

(3) To conclude from the negation that since the world to come has not been put into subjection to the angels, and therefore the world of the past -- the Old Testament church -- had been put into subjection to the angels, is selfcontradictory. It would then follow that the church from Adam to Moses, as well as after the giving of the law (and thus prior to the sin with the golden calf, which the disputants focus on), would have been subject to the angels, a supposition they themselves deny. The Old Testament church also existed during that era. There is no evidence whatsoever that the angels were given more dominion over the church subsequent to the incident with the golden calf than was given beforehand.

(4) The conclusion is invalid, for otherwise it would also be evident that whatever does not apply to the world to come is applicable for the past world. This would mean that since the world to come is subject to Christ, the world of the past was not; and since in the New Testament the angels are not crowned with honor and glory, they necessarily were in the Old Testament. What other absurdities could we then deduce by way of such a conclusion? However, the texts speak of a comparison between Christ and the angels in order to demonstrate the excellency of Christ, rather than of a display of the power of the angels in the Old Testament and the reduction of that power in the New Testament.

Objection #4: "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:9-10). The "fathers of the flesh" were the priests and the elders of the people. They compelled the people to observe the ceremonial laws, and punished

them according to their whim.

Answer (1) To be delivered from such fathers of our flesh would be good indeed! It is our wish that we may continue to be delivered from them and that we shall not have such fathers of the flesh again who would chastise us according to their whim. What a sad state of affairs that would be!

(2) We readily admit that the authorities in the Old Testament governed the people and punished those who disobeyed God and the government. The priests taught the people, guided and directed them in the way of godliness, and exercised ecclesiastical discipline. We also admit that the people were obliged to have respect for them. Thus did matters transpire then, and this is how they must transpire in the New Testament. Both parties -- that is authorities and subjects, as well as priests, elders, and members of the church -- must do all things according to the precepts of God's Word, rather than establish their own will as a law in both government and obedience.

(3) We fervently deny, however, that the apostle is here speaking of the Old Testament or of the authorities and priests in those days. There is nothing whatsoever here to indicate that. We deny that the authorities and teachers of the Old Testament have ever been referred to as fathers of the flesh. Let any proof for either proposition be presented.

(4) Rather, "the fathers of the flesh" refer to natural parents; this is the reason why their children are called "children of the flesh." "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God" (Romans 9:8); "But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh" (Galatians 4:23). The text in question only shows that as the primary meaning of "fathers of the flesh," one is to understand natural parents who chastise their children as it pleases them in order to raise them well. We must adhere to this literal meaning, unless a valid reason presents itself to deviate therefrom -- which is not at all the case here. The apostle hereby encourages the believing Hebrews to be patient in their suffering for the faith, by using as an argument the manner in which natural parents chastise their children for their benefit. He applies this to the spiritual, saying that God is exalted above all and thus pursues a superior objective with His chastisements. We must therefore with patience submit to the Father of spirits. He is referred to as such not in contrast with the Old Testament, but rather in contrast with the soul and body of man, whose body is of the flesh from the seed of the parents, and whose soul is created immediately of nothing at the moment of its generation.

Objection #5: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:9-11). Here is spoken of a battle in heaven (Revelation 12:7) -- heaven being understood to refer to the church. The devil was conquered and expelled from the church at the occasion of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension. Consequently, it follows that Satan previously resided in the church and had power to instill terror and fear in believers due to their unrequited guilt.

Answer (1) We deny that heaven is to be understood to mean the church. John was in the Spirit; a prophetic vision is recounted here. As long as it cannot be proven that heaven is to be understood

as referring to the church, the entire argument is without foundation.

(2) How was the devil in the church? As a member? If so, was it as a common member, or as an elder? Choose either; it is foolishness, no matter what! One cannot be part of the church in any different way; nevertheless, the objectors say that the devil was in the church, since there was a battle in heaven and the devil was cast out. We admit that he, not being in the church, assaults the church from without in both the Old and New Testament dispensations. However, this cannot support their sentiments.

(3) The casting down of and triumphing over the devil is here ascribed to believers; that is, to faithful martyrs who, for the cause of Christ, had no regard for their lives -- even unto death. They have overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. This indicates that this did not occur during the time frame of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension.

(4) The event that transpired here did not occur until three hundred years later when the persecutions by the heathen emperors came to an end under the emperor Constantine the Great. We shall prove this later on when discussing this chapter Revelation 12:1-17. The Ceremonies were a Divine Blessing Rather than a Judgment Imposed in Response to the Golden Calf Episode

Question: Were the ceremonies of the Old Testament blessings from God, or were they a punishment imposed in response to the golden calf?

Answer: Some maintain the latter; we adhere to the former. As time progressed, God caused His church to grow. In this respect we may distinguish between three phases as far as age is concerned: The time from Adam to Abraham is childhood; the time from Abraham to Christ constitutes youth; and the time from Christ until the judgment is manhood -- even though these occurred under varying circumstances. By reason of Christ's coming, the church increased in the light, and the closer the coming of Christ approached, the clearer the prophets revealed this mystery. Those who consider the church prior to Sinai to be more eminent than after, and that God penalized them for the sin of the golden calf by imposing a yoke and the servitude of a multitude of ceremonies upon them, are in error. The fact is that the church continually grew and increased; and the ceremonies, being part and parcel of the precious and saving gospel, were and remained singular blessings. We shall show this to be true as follows:

First, that which is a privilege, of eminent glory, and to the benefit of a people cannot be a punishment imposed upon them for a given sin. The ceremonies and the ceremonial service, however, were a privilege of eminent glory and of benefit to Israel after the time of Moses; thus they were not a punishment imposed upon them because of the sin of the golden calf. The first premise is so very obvious to human reason that none will deny it. The second premise is confirmed by the apostle. "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way" (Romans 3:1-2); "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Romans 9:4); "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4). Thus, the conclusion is firm: The ceremonies are not judgments, but are blessings.

Secondly, the Israelites recognized the entire ceremonial worship in all its particulars, not as a punishment, but rather as a peculiar blessing.

(1) They made a show of and boasted of the ceremonies. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law. ... Thou that makest thy boast of the law" (Romans 2:23).

(2) They were grieved and had sorrow when they had to miss this blessed service (cf. Psalms 79:1-13; Psalms 80:1-19; Psalms 102:1-28). "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" (Psalms 120:5-6); "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God" (Psalms 42:4).

(3) They longed greatly for the exercises of the ceremonial service. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalms 42:1-2); "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalms 27:4).

(4) From the ceremonial service they derived the joy and strength of their soul. "To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary" (Psalms 63:2).

(5) They delighted themselves in the ceremonies and could not get enough of it. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house" (Psalms 36:8); "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple" (Psalms 65:4).

(6) They rejoiced exceedingly when they had the privilege of serving in the temple. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalms 122:1).

(7) They thanked and glorified God for it. "Praise ye the Lord: for ... He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord" (Psalms 147:1; Psalms 147:19-20). All this shows very plainly that they did not consider the ceremonial service to be a punishment, but rather as a great blessing.

Thirdly, the gospel is a blessing, not a punishment. However, the ceremonies and all that was ceremonial constituted the gospel. The ceremonies declared to the people that Christ would come; they taught them how Christ would pay for their sins; they sealed to them the forgiveness of sins, received through Christ by faith. Thus, rather than a punishment, they were a blessing.

Fourthly, the state of the church after Sinai and subsequent to the sin with the golden calf was more eminent than the state of the church prior to Sinai. Thus, the laws given them at Sinai were not judgments to make the church more wretched than before. "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Deuteronomy 5:2-3); "These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them in Horeb" (Deuteronomy 29:1). God had solemnly established the covenant of grace with Israel. This is stated to be a blessing whereby they excelled the fathers. God renewed that very same covenant in a solemn manner in the fields of Moab. Moses even elevated the state ensuing from this event above the state of Israel at Horeb, having in addition to the first transaction the repetition and solemn confirmation of that very same covenant. If the ceremonial worship had indeed been a judgment relative to the golden calf, then a solemn repetition of that covenant which had been made prior to the incident of the golden calf

could not have taken place. Instead, God would have removed Himself further and would have maintained more of a distance from them.

Fifthly, the greater part of the ceremonial laws had been given prior to the sin with the golden calf, and therefore they cannot be a judgment upon that sin. These pertained to the sacrifices, the distinction between clean and unclean cattle, circumcision, the Passover, the firstborn, the washings, the priests, the feast days, and the entire tabernacle along with the altars, the ark, and the sacrifices. All of these had already been instituted and given prior to the sin with the golden calf. Thus, the ceremonies cannot be a judgment upon that sin. Was the gospel transformed into a judgment after this sin? Absolutely not! To suggest this cuts a tender and godly person in the heart, and does injustice to the goodness of God.

Objection #1: "Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live" (Ezekiel 20:25). God is the Giver of these laws. These laws were not the moral law, for they were unto life for those who did them (Ezekiel 20:11; Ezekiel 20:21). Rather, they were the ceremonial laws, which are referred to as the law of a carnal commandment Hebrews 7:18, as being weak and unprofitable Hebrews 7:18, and as incapable of giving life (Galatians 3:21). God had given these laws to them since they already had broken the moral law, the breaking of which can be no other sin but the idolatry committed with the golden calf. Thus, the ceremonial laws were given as a judgment upon the sin with the golden calf.

Answer: First, far be it from the Almighty to be unrighteous; far be it from the holy God to give unrighteous and evil laws! All the laws which God has ever given were good and unto life; this is true for the moral law and the ceremonial laws. "Thou ... gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments" (Nehemiah 9:13); "To keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good" (Deuteronomy 10:13). In substance the ceremonies and sacrifices consisted of the flesh and blood of animals; the apostle therefore calls them carnal commandments. The ceremonies were given in order to be united with the antitype, Jesus Christ, and constituted the gospel by which Christ was both proclaimed and offered. However, they were not given to exist and to be performed independently -- that is, divorced from the antitype -- and in order thereby to bring about atonement. They were too weak and ineffectual to accomplish that. They did not have the inherent ability to make alive; else it would have been unnecessary for Christ to have died. United with the antitype, however, they were both necessary and beneficial. We deny that these laws which were not good are to be understood as referring to the ceremonial laws. This cannot be proven. Those laws which were not good pertained to the sacrificing of their children by causing them to pass through the fire -- and thus pertained to a fabricated worship of idols, as is confirmed in the next verse (Ezekiel 20:26).

Secondly, the reason for the giving of these laws was not the sin with the golden calf. This is not even mentioned in this chapter -- yes, there is not even one word or argument which would lead one's thoughts in that direction. Therefore, to introduce the golden calf here and to propose it as being the cause of the giving of the ceremonial laws is nothing but a fabrication. This is furthermore evident from the fact that the ceremonial laws already had been given prior to the incident with the golden calf; consequently, this cannot be the cause for the giving of these laws. Other sins are delineated here as being the cause for the giving of these laws, namely, the entire sequence of the sins of the people of Israel from their residence in Egypt until the time of Ezekiel.

Among them is even mentioned the transgression of the ceremonial laws, such as the desecration of the sabbaths, which pertains not only to the Sabbath of the seventh day, belonging to the moral law, but to the several sabbaths which belong to the ceremonies. Therefore, the reference here is neither to the ceremonies nor to the calf.

Thirdly, God is said to have given these evil laws, not by way of command, but by way of permission, punishing sin with sin. This is very evident in the following verse (Ezekiel 20:26): "And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb." Just as God polluted them by way of the commission of sin, so He likewise gave them evil laws. Both occurred by way of permission, that is, by giving them over to themselves. Such a manner of speech occurs frequently in God's Word. "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections" (Romans 1:26); "Because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David" (2 Samuel 16:10); "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels" (Psalms 81:12). The judgment God executed upon the sin with the golden calf is described by Stephen: "And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven" (Acts 7:41-42). The meaning of this text Ezekiel 20:25 is as follows: Since Israel was so ungodly, and persisted so stubbornly and rebelliously in sin, God departed from them and gave them over to all manner of dreadful idolatry by permitting them to fabricate their own religion and to make laws accordingly. These were not good and thereby they would not live; whereas by virtue of the keeping of God's laws they would have lived. However, these laws which they themselves had fabricated would be unto death for them.

Objection #2: "... to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10); "... and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). A yoke, the yoke of bondage, is a judgment. The ceremonies are a yoke, however, and thus they are a judgment.

Answer (1) What mention is made here of the golden calf? Such would have to be the case, would it not? Thus, it cannot be concluded from this text that the ceremonies are a judgment in response to the golden calf.

(2) Circumcision is the point of discussion here, as it belonged to the ceremonial service. Circumcision had already been instituted several hundred years prior to the incident with the golden calf. Was circumcision therefore also a judgment upon Abraham? How then could it have been the seal of the righteousness of faith? How can a sacrament of the covenant of grace be a judgment?

(3) The gospel is also referred to as a yoke, albeit an easy yoke (Matthew 11:29-30). Thus, one cannot deduce a judgment from the word "yoke." God wills that His children be not licentious. Instead, He sets boundaries and subjects them to Himself -- that is, to His laws which He imposes upon them as a yoke so that they might be of service to Him. Is being of service to God -- being under His yoke -- a judgment?

(4) A yoke implies bondage; however, a yoke that is unbearable does not imply judgment, but rather difficulty and distress. A matter is either impossible in and of itself -- such laws the righteous God has not imposed upon anyone -- or a matter is unbearable due to the weakness of man, a

weakness into which he has brought himself. This is true for the moral law which sinful man cannot keep. The very best among men daily offend in many things. Since the moral law is an unbearable burden for sinful man, does that mean therefore that it is a judgment? The same also applies to the ceremonial laws. They were demanding and difficult, and even in an outward sense it was difficult to observe them without becoming defiled in some way. It does not follow, however, that they were a greater judgment than the moral law. They were nothing but blessings, even though they were demanding for the flesh. If someone must journey several miles to hear a sermon, it is indeed inconvenient; however, it is not a judgment, but a blessing, for by way of this difficulty he may still receive the Word.

Objection #3: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression" (Galatians 3:19). Was the ceremonial law (this is the law of which the apostle speaks) added to the promise because of the transgression? Then it is a judgment upon sin.

Answer (1) Once again, no mention is made of the calf, which is the issue being disputed. This renders the objective to use this text invalid.

(2) We deny that the apostle here has the ceremonial law in view. That would have to be proven. It is just an assumption, and whoever does not wish to believe this is free in this.

(3) The ceremonial laws were already partially in existence when Abraham received the promise. Therefore, the apostle cannot have them in mind. The fact that something is more or less true does not change the nature of a matter.

(4) Even though we do not wish to exclude the ceremonial laws from this chapter, it is nevertheless evident that the apostle has the law of the ten commandments in view. He speaks of that law which brings a curse upon the person who is subject to that law (Galatians 3:10); by the works of which no one can be justified (Galatians 3:11); which is contrasted with faith (Galatians 3:13); and which by angels has been placed in the hands of the Mediator (Galatians 3:19). This law is not the ceremonial law, but the law of the ten commandments.

(5) Paul does not ask why or for what reason the law has been given, but rather for what purpose, to what end, and for what use it has been given. Since the inheritance is not by the law but by the promise, he asks whether the law has then been given in vain. Does the law then have no purpose? "Yes, it does indeed," so states the apostle; "it has been added to the promises charin [for the purpose of], or charin ton parabaseon [to the end], that is, 'because of the transgressions.'" The purpose was that one would know his transgressions by means of the law, and thus be drawn away from his own righteousness as a means unto justification by seeking the promise in the law. Its purpose is that one would seek to obtain the inheritance by faith in Jesus Christ. Observe this in the following verses: "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:22-24). The apostle shows this to be the purpose in Romans 5:20: "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound." Thus, the phrase "because of transgressions" does not relate to the cause of the giving of the law, as if the giving of the law were a judgment upon sin; rather, it speaks of the purpose for which the law was given: to know sin.

116. Chapter 6: The New Testament Church from the Birth of Jesus Christ to the Revelation of ...

----- CHAPTER SIX ----- The New Testament Church from the Birth of Jesus Christ to the Revelation of John The Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Having considered the state of the church from Adam to Abraham, and from Abraham to Christ, which constitutes the Old Testament era and the administration of the covenant of grace during those periods, we shall now proceed to consider the New Testament church. We shall commence by considering the birth and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the focal point of all the prophecies. All the types pointed to Him. When the time arrived which God had decreed in His counsel, denominated by Paul as the fullness of time Galatians 4:4, God sent forth the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, a priest, and announced to him that his wife Elizabeth (even though they were both of great age) would bear a son whose name would be John, that is, delightful one. He would be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus, and according to prophecy would go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah. Approximately six months later the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, a very godly virgin of the seed of David, and made known to her that by the creative operation of the Holy Spirit she would conceive and bear a Son. She was commanded to name Him Jesus, as He would be the Savior. At the conclusion of nine months, she bore her first born son, who had been promised for a period of approximately four thousand years, and whom believers had already anticipated with great yearning. Subsequent to this, heaven and earth came into motion. An angel announced the birth of the Savior to some shepherds, which was confirmed by a multitude of angels glorifying God with these words, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Thereafter the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found the newborn Savior wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. They made this known everywhere. Subsequently, prominent wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, asking for the newborn King of the Jews. This caused great consternation in all of Jerusalem. Herod convened the great council of the chief priests and scribes in order to learn from them where the promised Messiah would be born. Thereupon he sent the wise men to Bethlehem. They found and glorified Him by way of an extraordinary star that went before them and remained standing above the place where Jesus was. The birth of the Lord Jesus received even more publicity through the murdering of the children of two years old and under -- a murder committed by Herod in Bethlehem and its surrounding region in order to kill the infant Messiah, whom he expected to be among those children. Joseph and the mother of Jesus, having been admonished by divine revelation, fled with Him to Egypt. Upon returning to the Jewish nation, they set up their residence in Nazareth in Galilee. Jesus at twelve years of age so manifested a glimpse of His divinity while in the presence of the doctors in the temple that they were astonished about His understanding.

After Jesus remained in hiding until His thirtieth year, John the Baptist began to preach, baptize, and prepare the way for the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus came to him and was baptized by him. John, knowing who Jesus was, made Him known to the people. Subsequently, the Lord Jesus

appeared in public and preached in a most powerful and delightful manner. He showed Himself to be the Savior by performing innumerable miracles which resulted in the healing and deliverance of numerous wretched ones. Consequently the people clung to Him, and His reputation not only pervaded the Jewish nation, but also went forth into various regions and nations outside of Canaan. Since He neither came with external pomp nor made any move toward the establishment of an earthly kingdom and the deliverance of the Jewish people from the dominion of the emperor -- and being esteemed by the people above the Pharisees and scribes -- they were filled with envy and hatred toward Him, and therefore sought to kill Him. The Lord, upon having finished His course, gave Himself as a ransom for the elect by the accomplishment of His sacrifice. He permitted Himself to be taken captive and to be subjected to all that was prophesied concerning Him -- even to His being put to death on the cross. After the third day He arose again; He ascended into heaven after forty days. Ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, He poured out His Spirit upon the apostles. By the agency of their preaching in various languages, three thousand people were converted in one day, and as they continued to preach and perform miracles, a large multitude of many thousands of Jews believed in Christ. These blessings were not restricted to the Jews only, but the gospel was also proclaimed among the Gentiles who were very desirous to hear and receive it, and were thus converted.

Prior to this, the Lord, by means of many internal and external adversities, had dispersed a large portion of the Jewish nation among numerous nations under the sun. Of those dispersed Jews an innumerable multitude, in obedience to God's command, came every year to Jerusalem to celebrate the three feasts. Since Easter and Pentecost follow shortly upon each other, most who came from a great distance stayed in Jerusalem in order to celebrate both feast days. The Lord ordered in His providence that Jesus was crucified on the Passover, arose after three days, and that the Holy Spirit was poured out in an extraordinary manner upon the day of Pentecost -- and thus a large multitude of Jews received Christ as the long-promised Messiah. This paved the way for the conversion of the Gentiles, for upon returning to their native country, these Jews would recount there all that had happened, namely, all that had transpired in Jerusalem as well as that Jesus had been acknowledged and received by many as the Messiah. The dispersed apostles -- and other believers upon arriving in their native land -- subsequently gained entrance among the Jews, and by reason of that opportunity, among the Gentiles. The Gospel Sent Forth to the Gentiles As the gospel increased among the Jews, the devil did not sit still. He stirred up his instruments against the Christian Jews. The deeply rooted hatred against Christ and against all who believed in Him and acknowledged Him to be the Messiah, stirred up the chief priests and scribes to persecute the congregations in Jerusalem and Judea to the utmost of their ability. To accomplish this, they stirred up the chief magistrates as much as possible to lend a hand at times in the work of persecution. The more the persecutions intensified, however, the more powerfully the gospel broke forth. At last there ceased to be conversions among the Jews; blindness came upon the entire nation, and the gospel was unanimously rejected. It was thus in this way that the gospel resided among the Gentiles. One must be amazed that the gospel spread so rapidly among the Gentiles, permeating within a short time Asia, Africa, and Europe. "... their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Romans 10:18). The Lord was found of them that sought Him not, and was revealed to them that asked not for Him (Romans 10:20). Thus, all the prophecies concerning the calling of the Gentiles were fulfilled, and the Lord Jesus received His promised portion: "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance,

and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psalms 2:8); "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalms 72:8). The gospel having been confirmed among the Gentiles and the Jewish nation having been blinded, the Lord poured out His wrath in an extraordinary manner upon that ungrateful, wicked, and God-forgetting people -- a people who had wished upon them and their children the blood of the Lord Jesus, whom they had rejected and whose death they had required. He gave Jerusalem into the hands of Titus Vespasianus, who burned and levelled Jerusalem to the ground in approximately AD 70 or AD 72. This occurred approximately forty years after the ascension of Christ. The Lord dispersed the Jewish nation among all the nations of the earth, and wheresoever they dwell it is in utter shame and contempt -- which remains upon them everywhere until this very day. Thus, the city which once was the jewel of all the earth, the perfection of beauty, and the gathering place of God's people for His worship, was destroyed to such an extent that the place was no longer recognizable. The temple, wherein the ceremonial worship had been performed and where God dwelt between the cherubim, was removed along with all the ceremonial services which long since had ceased to have a purpose and had become unprofitable. The gospel, however, was dispersed among those Gentiles who worshiped God in spirit and in truth.

Differences Between the Old and New Testament Church as to the Manner of Worship

There is a great distinction between the church and her manner of worship in the Old Testament, and the church and her manner of worship in the New Testament. The latter greatly excels the former, doing so, among other things, in these four matters:

First, even though the same covenant, the same Mediator Jesus, and the same spiritual benefits were a reality in the Old Testament as much as they are today, the worship of God transpired by way of physical and visible matters which were shadows of the future Messiah and His works. It was indeed a most eminent blessing that the Messiah was daily depicted for them before their very eyes, and that by way of external washings they were led to the internal cleansing of the soul. However, as far as the body is concerned, it was a difficult and cumbersome service. It consisted of a multitude of duties to be performed: painful circumcision, a continual watching against touching or tasting something, and a multitude of washings and sacrifices for bodily defilements. In the New Testament, however, all these things have been eliminated, and instead of all physical performances, the Lord has instituted a more spiritual, exalted, visible, and thus a more immediate manner of worship. One now comes to the heart of the matter without shadows. "The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). Now we may enter the sanctuary at once without shadows. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:19-22). No one may presently judge us "in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17). "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).

Secondly, even though the church was comprised of various nationalities prior to the calling of Abraham, she nevertheless made little progress, and had little light and glory. After God made a covenant with Abraham, the Lord separated all other nations from him, permitting them to walk in their own ways; however, the church was comprehended among the descendants of Abraham through Isaac. "He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Psalms 147:19-20). Subsequent to the coming of the Lord Jesus, however, that distinction among the nations has been removed. Yes, the Lord Jesus has given His old people over to blindness and accepted the Gentiles to be His people. "In every nation He that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:35); "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity" (Ephesians 2:13-15). The Gentiles are now followers of Shiloh and are gathered unto Him, Genesis 49:10, and the root of Jesse has now become the banner of the nations (Isaiah 11:10). Now many nations go forth saying, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths" (Isaiah 2:3); "It was necessary," says the apostle, "that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad" (Acts 13:46-48). Abraham has thus become an heir of the world Romans 4:17 and a father of many nations Romans 4:17 -- this because 1) Abraham, being an idolater, was called immediately; 2) his seed was instructed by him; and 3) through his seed the gospel was proclaimed and transferred to the Gentiles, through which they have believed in Christ, the promised seed of Abraham. "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:7-8).

Thirdly, in the Old Testament the entire mode of worship was much stricter and functioned in a more legalistic manner. In the New Testament, however, everything is more evangelical and delightful. Consider the comparison: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest. ... But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" Hebrews 12:18; Hebrews 12:22.

Fourthly, in the Old Testament everything was more scarce, fewer people truly believed, and those who were indeed believers possessed those spiritual benefits in a lesser degree and measure. However, in the New Testament there is an abundance of everything. From this issues forth:

(1) A greater measure of the Spirit. "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses" (Isaiah 44:3-4); "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28). The Lord Jesus having come, He now baptizes His children with the Holy Ghost and with fire Matthew 3:11, pouring it upon them in abundance (Titus 3:6).

(2) A greater measure of light. Thus it had been prophesied: "... the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). And thus it also transpired: "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie" (1 John 2:27).

(3) A greater measure of holiness: "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time" (Isaiah 60:21-22); "... he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David" (Zechariah 12:8); "... the Lord ... hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle. And they shall be as mighty men" (Zechariah 10:3; Zechariah 10:5); "Let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3:10).

(4) More familiarity and freedom in one's communion with God: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 4:16.

(5) More comfort, peace, and joy. "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13); "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Psalms 72:7). In light of the above (and other considerations), make a frequent comparison between the state of the church of the New Testament with the Gentiles who are utterly estranged from the gospel, with those heretical assemblies which have the name of being Christian, and also with the state of the church in the Old Testament. Then consider how gloriously our dispensation excels theirs, and:

(1) Rejoice in this. Oh, how the Old Testament believers yearned for this time! They prayed for it, sang about it, and rejoiced in it. And now that we are in this dispensation, should our hearts not be enlarged and rejoice in having all those blessings which they anticipated?

(2) Thank and glorify God concerning this. If the church of the Old Testament was so grateful for the promises of the ministry of shadows, how joyfully our souls ought to praise the Lord! Our mouths should be filled with His praises, continually giving Him both glory and honor.

(3) Walk therefore in that light in the way of holiness. "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:5); "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1); "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ" (Php 1:27).

We have thus considered the rejection of the Jews and the receiving of the Gentiles to be the people of God. Here the following question needs to be answered:

Question: Will the Jewish nation always be a rejected nation, or will the entire nation yet come to repentance, believing and confessing that the Messiah has already come, and that Jesus is the Christ?

Answer: When speaking of the conversion of the Jews, we understand this to refer to the entire nation, and not only to Judah and Benjamin who had returned from Babylon and lived in Canaan until the destruction of Jerusalem. Rather, it also refers to the ten tribes. These tribes neither remained together nor are they hidden in an unknown corner of the world, as the Jews fabricate. Instead, they partially intermingled with the eastern nations, forsaking the Jewish religion. Another

part, having dispersed themselves among the nations of the earth, continued to adhere to their religion; whereas a very large multitude also returned to Canaan and intermingled with the other Jews. Anna, the prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Aser, served God at Jerusalem in the temple (Luke 2:36). Furthermore, very many from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi did not return from Babylon. Among those who did return were also very many who again left their native land due to internal disturbances, and thus were dispersed throughout the entire world among various nations, still maintaining the Jewish religion. James wrote to the "twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (James 1:1). The dispersed Jews came from all manner of nations to Jerusalem on the feast days for the purpose of worship, as is to be observed in (Acts 2:5-11).

After the destruction of Jerusalem, the entire Jewish nation was dispersed and no longer has a specific residence. We are speaking here of this nation without distinction, and we believe that it will acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ -- the Messiah who was promised in the Old Testament and anticipated by the fathers. This is the general sentiment of the theologians of all ages -- even Lutheran and papist theologians. There are, however, also those who doubt this, and some deny it. In order to confirm this matter, we shall not now say all that can be said about it. Rather, we shall only take two proofs from the New Testament and give them a place of prominence, since they are not subject to any evasive arguments of substance. After having given a clear exegesis of them, the few proofs we shall present from the Old Testament will give us more clarity and steadfastness in this matter. The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of Romans 11:1-36

Proof #1: This proof we derive from Romans 11:1-36. We shall give a brief exposition of the entire chapter, since the effectiveness of our proof is derived from the context. This chapter has three divisions: 1) a question which is presented by way of an objection (Romans 11:1-2), 2) the answer to that question (Romans 11:3-32), and 3) the conclusion (Romans 11:33-36).

First Division. The question is stated in Romans 11:1 : "I say then, hath God cast away His people?" By God's people the apostle understands the Jewish nation, which he generally refers to as Israel -- also in this chapter. God had given Jacob the name of Israel after he had wrestled with the Lord, and his descendants were called by this name. In order to eliminate any secret doubts, one ought to know that throughout the entire New Testament the name Israel is never assigned to believers, that is, the church of the New Testament. Rather, it is always understood that this refers to the Jewish nation; that is, in distinction to and separation from all other nations. Only two texts need to be clarified.

Question: "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:6-8). Is not the apostle here referring to the believers among the Gentiles as Israel?

Answer: Not at all; the apostle does not speak here at all of the Gentiles, but strictly of the Jews. His objective is to prove that God has not annulled His covenant with Abraham and his seed, even though the majority of them have rejected the Messiah, have not believed in Him, and have been disobedient to the gospel. "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect" (Romans 9:6).

God has not annulled His promises and covenant, for not all who descended from Abraham were partakers of the covenant and the promises. Ishmael and the children of Keturah did not belong to the covenant, but only Isaac. Furthermore, all of Isaac's children were not partakers of the covenant and the promises. Esau was cast out as an unholy one, but the covenant and the promises were Jacob's. And so it goes on, for even though many of Jacob's descendants were unbelievers in whom God had no pleasure, nevertheless God's covenant remains steadfast with him and his seed in his believing descendants, who are accounted as that seed. And thus they are not all Israel which are of Israel, that is, of Jacob. Furthermore, the conversion of the Gentiles did not constitute the confirmation of the covenant of Abraham and his seed, for then the covenant with Abraham and his seed would have been confirmed even if none of his natural seed had been converted. This would be absurd. Paul is speaking of his kinship according to the flesh and God's covenant with them, demonstrating that the covenant remains steadfast with them; that is, with the converted among them, even though many remained unbelievers. Thus, this text neither speaks of Gentiles at all, but only of Jews, nor does it call the New Testament church Israel.

Question #2: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). Are not all believers, Jews as well as Gentiles, here called Israel?

Answer: No; for the church at that time consisted of Jews, and the Gentiles, as wild branches, had been grafted into the olive tree. The believing Jews insisted that the Gentiles, who joined them and were united with them in the church, be circumcised. The apostle opposed this, declaring that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision was of any value or engendered any privilege when it comes to faith, but only a new creature (Galatians 6:15). While continuing to join circumcision and uncircumcision, he declared peace and mercy to be upon those who walk according to this rule; that is, upon the believers of the uncircumcision and of the circumcision. Then he calls the Israel of God, which is indicated by the word "and." If he had not been speaking of both Jews and Gentiles, the word "and" would not fit here. Rather, the apostle is saying that peace and mercy were upon the believing Gentiles as well as upon the believing Jews, thereby exhorting them not to quarrel over circumcision and uncircumcision. "Israel" therefore refers to believing Jews and not to believing Gentiles. As everywhere "Israel" is understood to refer to the Jewish nation, this is likewise true in this chapter. This is evident from the entire argument of the apostle, the purpose of which is to confirm that God has not annulled His covenant with Abraham and his seed, even though many would remain unbelievers. This covenant would not be confirmed by the conversion of the Gentiles, but by the conversion of the Jews during Paul's time and thereafter. God would indeed annul His covenant if the Jewish nation were cast away in its entirety -- and if this would continue to be so. Note the continual contrast between Israel and the Gentiles. Romans 10:20 : "I was found of them that sought me not"; these were the Gentiles. Romans 10:21 reads: "But to Israel He saith ..." This is likewise true in Romans 11:11 : "... through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles"; Romans 11:12 : "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world ..."; Romans 11:13 : "For I speak to you Gentiles ..."; Romans 11:14 : "If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh ..."; Romans 11:15 "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world ..."; and in Romans 11:24 the Gentiles are as branches of a wild olive tree contrasted with the Jews as being natural branches. From all this it is evident that the apostle is here speaking of the Jewish nation, which he calls "Israel," contrasting it with believing Gentiles.

He calls the Jewish nation, which at that time (after the conversion of the Gentiles) had been hardened and cast away by God, the people of God. "Hath God cast away His people?" He does not call them the people of God due to their faith and conversion, for they were unbelieving and disobedient; but because of the covenant which God had established with Abraham and his seed (Genesis 17:7). Peter demonstrates this as well: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:25). We have dealt with this more extensively, so that in what follows there can be no resorting to the evasive argument that the apostle spoke of believing Gentiles, or also of believing Jews. The question is: "Hath God cast away His people?" This question has its origin in what has been stated in the previous chapter. The apostle, having confirmed that faith is by hearing, declares in Romans 10:18 that both Jews and Gentiles have heard the gospel, and that the Gentiles have received it (Romans 10:19-20), whereas the Jews rejected the Messiah, and thus had become a disobedient and gainsaying people. This the apostle confirms from the prophecies (cf. Daniel 12:11; Isaiah 65:2). Out of all this the following question arises: Since God had established an eternal covenant with Abraham and his seed that He would be their God and they would be His people, did not God indeed break His covenant with this nation and did He not ultimately reject it fully when the seed of Abraham had rejected the Messiah and God had withdrawn His Spirit and grace from them and forsaken them? That is the question -- the substance of the first portion of this chapter. The second part of the chapter is the response to this question -- which is twofold. The initial answer is brief, thereafter substantiated by various proofs. The short answer consists in a negation and in a confirmation of the opposite. The negation is not merely a factual statement, but it is stated with vehemence and indignation: "God forbid!" It is as much as to say, "It should not even enter one's thoughts." It is a sin to entertain doubts about this, for it is to doubt the faithfulness and veracity of God. Would God cast away His people? Would God break His eternal covenant established with Abraham and his seed? Would God be unfaithful? Would God not cause His Word to stand firm, and not fulfil His promises? That is impossible. The confirmation occurs by way of the vocabulary of the question, accompanied with an inner conviction: "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew" (Romans 11:2). God will neither do it, nor intends to do it, nor is it possible that He would do it. He is the faithful God; they are His people, and they are His property from among all the generations of the earth. He has foreknown them. The foreknowledge of God whereby a given matter is predestined and predetermined makes this matter immovably sure. God has known and predestined Abraham's seed, and taken them into an eternal covenant with Himself. It is thus impossible that God would reject His people. They are His people and they will remain His people. He has known them as such and He will know them as such. The apostle adds various proofs to this, the essence of which is that God has neither cast away His people entirely, nor will cast them away ultimately. The apostle proves by his own example that God has not cast away His people entirely. He reasons as follows: "I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. However, I have not been cast away. Instead, I have been received, do believe, and am an apostle. Therefore, all of Israel has not been cast away."

"Furthermore, not only am I a believer who has been saved, but there is also a large multitude of Israelites with me. It is presently just as it was in the days of Elijah, who was of the opinion that all of Israel had forsaken the Lord and that he alone was left. God answered him, however, that there were yet seven thousand left. Likewise there are yet many thousands of Israelites who are faithful

to the covenant, who acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah, and who believe in Him. This is therefore a certain proof that God has not rejected His people, but that there is yet a remnant according to the election of grace.”

Then the apostle proceeds to render proof that God will not ultimately, eternally, and completely cast away His people. In Romans 11:7-10 the apostle makes a distinction between the believing remnant of the Jewish nation and the bulk of that nation who not only were unbelieving, but also had been blinded to the gospel. He shows the cause thereof and the prophecies of it found in Isaiah 29:10 and (Psalms 69:22). Thereafter, he leaves the believing remnant to be what it is and no longer speaks of it. Instead, in what follows he speaks of this blinded nation, as is evident in nearly every verse. He speaks in Romans 11:11 of those who stumbled, in Romans 11:12 of those who have fallen, in Romans 11:15 of those who are cast away, in Romans 11:17-18 of natural branches which are broken off through unbelief, in Romans 11:25 of the blinded portion of the nation, and in Romans 11:28 of those who have become enemies for the sake of the gospel. Concerning this blind nation he declares that it would not always remain an outcast, but that there would come a time when God would convert them and bring them to Himself. In their state of exile He still has His eye upon them, thereby maintaining the isolation of this nation. Hereby their conversion, and thus the immutability of God's covenant with Abraham and his seed, would be all the more obvious.

Concerning this blinded Israel the apostle asks in Romans 11:11, “Have they stumbled that they should fall”; that is, in order that they would remain in their fallen state? His initial answer is brief, and thereafter he enlarges and proves his answer forcefully by way of four convincing arguments. He answers “God forbid” with the same earnestness, indignation, and abhorrence, saying how God would then break His covenant and not remain faithful to His promises. Man's unfaithfulness would then nullify God's faithfulness -- which is impossible. Therefore, he answers indignantly: God forbid; absolutely not; this cannot occur. They have not stumbled in order that they would fall and remain fallen. They will rise again and be converted, being aroused to jealousy (Romans 11:11). The entire fullness of the Jews will come in again (Romans 11:12). They will become delightful again (vs. 14> [Romans 11:14-23]). They will be grafted in again after they have been broken off (Romans 11:24). After their blindness and the coming in of the fullness of the Gentiles, “all Israel shall be saved” by the Deliverer which shall come out of Zion, “and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:26). They will again obtain mercy (Romans 11:31-32).

Having determined that blinded Israel shall come to repentance, he enlarges upon this by speaking of its excellency and benefit (Romans 11:11-15). If their fall be the riches of the world, how much more will this be true for their fullness, for that will be a most excellent change!

(1) Their fall is the salvation, the riches of the Gentiles -- of the world. It is not the essential cause, but rather the occasion. “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46).

(2) The steadfast faith and the holy life of the Gentiles will provoke blind Israel to jealousy, cause them to be zealous to acknowledge, believe in, and live out of the Messiah who had been promised to them and came forth from them. The apostle knew that it was not yet their time, and therefore he labored that he might save some of them. This obligation also devolves upon us,

even though their general conversion will not occur as yet.

(3) The general conversion of Israel, who at present are blind, will bring about much more blessing, light, life, and zeal among the Gentiles than did their fall. "How much more their fullness" (Romans 11:12); "What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead" (Romans 11:15). When God will fill this blind nation with His Spirit and grace, resulting in the acknowledging and receiving of the Messiah (David, their king), then a wondrous love, joy, and holiness in believing will manifest itself in them. It will be a more eminent time than the age of the apostles. The church of the Gentiles will be so quickened and revived by the conversion of Israel that her former state will appear to be such as the difference between a dead and a living person. The unconverted will be converted in great numbers, and the converted will become partakers of a wondrous increase in the measure of grace. Oh, what a glorious time this will be! Who will then be alive?

Hereupon the apostle demonstrates the absolute certainty of their conversion by comparing two matters. "For if the firstfruits be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches" (Romans 11:16). The first analogy is derived from their instituted form of worship, whereas the second is derived from a natural process known to all. Among the firstfruits, also the firstfruits of the dough had to be dedicated and sanctified to God (Numbers 15:20-21). Israel is called the firstfruits of God, for He claimed this nation for Himself from among the nations of the world (Jeremiah 2:3). This is also true for believers (James 1:18). By firstfruits the apostle does not understand so much the Jews who were converted at the beginning of the apostolic period, for he calls them a remnant (Romans 11:5). Such a conclusion would be very weak since many Jews were converted at the beginning, and then the entire nation ought to have been converted thereafter. Rather, by the firstfruits the apostle understands in particular Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to which could be added the Old Testament believers. By the root the apostle also understands Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, out of whom the entire nation sprang forth as branches. He states that if the one is holy, the other must be holy as well. The word "holy" here does not refer to internal holiness and virtue, but to 1) a being separated from others, as Israel was a separated people unto worship (Deuteronomy 7:6); and 2) a being devoted to God (Exodus 13:2). The latter occurs by entering into the covenant, be it in truth or in pretense (cf. Exodus 19:6; 2 Corinthians 7:14). Abraham is not to be noted here as the father of his natural descendants, such as Ishmael and the children of Keturah also were; rather, he is to be noted as the father of the covenant established with him and his seed in Isaac, and through Jacob. The dough is gathered together in a lump. From this lump, something is first taken and devoted to God, whereby the entire lump becomes holy and blessed to them. The root produces such branches as are of the same nature as the root. As the nature of the root is, so is the nature of the branches and the fruits. If, however -- thus speaks the apostle -- the firstfruits and the root are holy, that is, devoted and consecrated to God, then this is also true for the dough, and thus also the branches are holy. If Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are holy by virtue of the covenant, then also the entire nation is holy and consecrated to God. From this the apostle concludes that the nation neither will nor can be cast away forever, but will come to repentance and be received again by God. For if that were not to occur, and if they were to be cast away forever, then neither the dough would be sanctified by the firstfruits, nor would the branches be sanctified by the root. Since, however, they are sanctified thereby, the entire nation will also come to repentance. In Romans 11:17-24, the apostle applies this as a warning to the converted Gentiles. In this warning the apostle makes plain statements about the

conversion of the Jews. He warns the Gentiles not to boast against the broken off branches, nor to be proud and conceited, despising blind Israel. For the Jews were the natural branches of the olive tree, whereas the Gentiles were grafted as wild olive branches into their stems -- into the covenant established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They do not owe you any gratitude for having entered into covenant with God. Rather, they are the means that you have been brought into that same covenant established with them. You do not bear the root, but the root bears you. Furthermore, you are not to boast against them, thinking that God will cast them away forever. No, as natural branches they will again be grafted into their own olive tree. This is more compatible with nature, is easier to perform, and has better results than that you, being wild by nature, are grafted into their stem. The apostle proves this from the Old Testament Scriptures in Romans 11:25-27. He calls the conversion of blinded Israel a mystery. It was no mystery to anyone that during the times of the apostles a great multitude of the Jews believed in the Messiah. That was known to everyone. However, that this Israel, so hardened and hostile toward the gospel, would once embrace in faith, and with love and joy, the very gospel they now so hated, seemed entirely improbable -- and nevertheless, this would transpire. It would not be the conversion of only a few -- of a few individuals here and there -- but it would be a conversion of the entire nation. "And so all Israel shall be saved" -- that Israel, upon which hardening had been imposed, would once become so blessed that it would as yet turn to the Messiah. This does not mean that they will all be truly born again and become partakers of eternal salvation, but that they would all acknowledge and confess that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah, the Savior. And when would this be? "... that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25). This condition will last so long and no longer, until the harvest of the Gentiles, a multitude foreordained, would, prior to the conversion of the Jews, be brought to conversion. This does not mean that there would still be a large multitude left, but rather that when the gospel would have borne its fruit among the Gentiles, it would return to the blinded Jewish nation which would also believe -- a fact which would constitute a wondrous change and revival. The apostle calls this a mystery -- not because God did not reveal it to him until now, nor that it had not been foretold in the prophetic Scriptures, but because it was neither observed nor understood. He wanted people to know this, desiring that they would view and anticipate this as a matter which would certainly come about. He did not want them to become proud and conceited, and to despise the Jewish nation, but to have pity upon them and anticipate their conversion. This already had been prophesied before, and Paul mentions some declarations made by the prophets. "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 59:20); "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days ... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:33-34). Here we can neither argue nor quarrel about whether these texts are to be applied to a different time period, for to do so is to argue with Paul who spoke and wrote being immediately and infallibly inspired by the Holy Spirit. He states that this points to the time when the fullness of the Gentiles will have come in. He asserts that these texts indicate that blind Israel will as yet come to repentance -- and that is the end of all arguments. The apostle adds in the last place a proof derived from the immutability of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed (Romans 11:28-32). In verse 28, the partakers of this covenant are described in a twofold manner in regard to their state. They are described in relation to the gospel, of which they are enemies (and therefore of all the Gentiles who have received the gospel); however, they are the beloved, not

relative to their present state and as far as they individually are concerned, but relative to 1) the covenant with their forefathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and 2) election -- not in respect to eternal election unto salvation, but to their election as partakers of the covenant. "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself" (Deuteronomy 7:6); "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure" (Psalms 135:4). The apostle declares this covenant with them, even though they are presently enemies of the gospel, to be unbreakable and immutable. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). This is always, in all circumstances and for all persons, a matter of truth. Such is also the case with the calling of Abraham and with the covenant which God established out of free grace with him and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob. That covenant neither can nor will be changed, God being immutable. Israel, which is blind at present, will therefore not always continue to be cast away, but Israel will again obtain mercy (Romans 11:30-32). Just as you who are presently Gentiles have previously been disobedient to God and have received mercy by reason of Israel's disobedience, rejection, and persecution of the gospel, Israel will likewise, though presently disobedient (as was true for you previously), obtain mercy by reason of the mercy which you have obtained from God. When the Gentiles will flow to the gospel in great numbers, and will be filled with a great measure of the Spirit, grace, and holiness, blind Israel, being the people of God by virtue of the covenant, will become jealous of the fact that the Gentiles serve God and are loved by Him. Being aroused to diligence by the mercy and grace of God toward the Gentiles, they will then turn to the Lord. And after God will have concluded the entire nation under disobedience for a long time by giving them over to themselves and leaving them in their blindness and wickedness, He will then be merciful to them all and receive them again in grace. The third section of the chapter is found in the concluding verses -- Romans 11:33-36. This is an acknowledgment of the unsearchable wisdom of God in all His dealings, particularly with respect to His people. This is true relative to judgments and blessings, as well as to all the ways by which God rules His church and leads the elect unto salvation. When considering all this together, the attentive and truth-loving heart will be convinced that the apostle first concludes that God has not fully cast away His people, the people of Israel, for he himself, along with so many thousands, had believed in Christ, the promised Messiah. Following this, he made a distinction between the converted and blind Jews of that time, declaring, verifying, and confirming that this blind Israel will again return, be received, be grafted in, and obtain mercy after having been in a state of blindness for a long period; that is, after the fullness of the Gentiles will have come in. The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

Proof #2: This proof of the anticipated conversion of the Jews we derive from 2 Corinthians 3:1-18. This conversion is emphatically affirmed in verse 16: "Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." In order to understand the thrust of this verse, one needs to consider the context. The obscurity some consider to be in this text proceeds from a misunderstanding of the word "veil." They understand this "veil" to refer to the ceremonial worship, and "the end of that which is abolished" (2 Corinthians 3:13) to Christ. The extent to which this misses the mark will become evident by examining the context. The apostle is generally engaged in showing that the justification of the poor sinner cannot be acquired by the law -- neither by the moral law nor the ceremonial law when considered in and of themselves without being united to the antitype Christ, who is the soul of the ceremonies. The Jews understood the ceremonial law as such, considering it to be of the same nature as the moral law and therefore sought their justification in its

observance. This is also the apostle's objective in this chapter, where he speaks of the ministry of death and condemnation, and of the ministry of righteousness. In this chapter, the Old Testament and its administration according to God's institution is not contrasted with the New Testament and its administration. It will become evident that the entire contents of this chapter contradict this; and the matters which are contrasted contradict this as well. Who would dare to say that the Old Testament and the administration of the ceremonies, the ceremonial worship as instituted by God, were a ministry of death and condemnation? Could the holy and good God bind man to such a ministry? Far be this from the Almighty! When the ceremonial worship was performed according to God's institution -- that is, by faith, leading the type to the antitype, and uniting the antitype, Christ, with the types -- believers served the Lord in a spiritual sense, and that ministry was unto life for them. On the contrary, to those in the New Testament who cling to external matters, not progressing to the exercise of a true faith in Christ, the ministry of the New Testament is a ministry of death and condemnation -- a savor of death unto death (2 Corinthians 2:16). The old administration could be performed in a spiritual manner, and the new administration can be performed in an external manner. Thus, the contrast here is not between the Old and New Testaments, but between the letter and the Spirit. The ministry of the Spirit is exalted above the ministry of the letter. The elevation of the ministry of the Spirit above the ministry of the letter occurs in three ways: 1) relative to what follows (2 Corinthians 3:6-7; 2 Corinthians 3:9); 2) relative to its glory (2 Corinthians 3:7-11); and 3) relative to its manner (2 Corinthians 3:12-18).

First, that which emanates from the letter and the Spirit is the following: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (vs. 6). "The letter" is not to be understood to refer to the Old Testament and its administration (that the Old Testament is neither an external covenant, nor consists in the inheritance of Canaan, has been demonstrated at the appropriate place), for the Holy Spirit was also present in the Old Testament and that administration was also spiritual. Else no one in the Old Testament could have been saved nor would have been able to please the Lord -- not even Abel, whose sacrifices pleased the Lord (Hebrews 11:4). Thus, the Old Testament cannot be contrasted with the Spirit. Nowhere is this done, just as the Old Testament is never referred to as the letter.

"The letter" is also not to be understood as referring to the ceremonies, for in this chapter the apostle is specifically and literally focusing upon the moral law: "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones ..." (2 Corinthians 3:7). When the countenance of Moses shone as he descended the mountain, he held two tables of stone upon which the moral law had been recorded (Exodus 34:29-30). However, by "the letter" the apostle understands the moral law in 1) its demand, "do this," 2) its promise, "the man that doeth these things shall live by them," and 3) its threat, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." If man adheres to the external aspect of the law and if he seeks his righteousness and salvation in this law, he cannot be saved. The ministry is a ministry of death and condemnation for him. If we assume (even though it is not true) that the apostle understood "the letter" to refer to the ceremonial laws -- like the Jews considered them, namely, as being of one and the same nature as the moral law, divorced from the antitype, their observance consisting in external deeds -- then the ministry was indeed a ministry of death and condemnation whereby no salvation could be obtained.

Therefore, “the letter” is to be understood as referring to the moral law in its demands, promises, and threats -- as being a condition of the covenant of works. Add to this the observance of the ceremonial law in regard to the external deeds, divorced from the antitype. It is this letter the apostle refers to as “the ministry of death” (2 Corinthians 3:7), and “the ministry of condemnation” (2 Corinthians 3:9), because man is not able to keep it, but transgresses it and thereby brings the curse due upon transgressors upon himself.

Over against this, he posits that which emanates from the Spirit. By “the Spirit” he understands Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17). “The Lord is that Spirit.” As Surety, Christ has rendered payment for all guilt by His suffering and death, and has by His obedience merited perfect holiness for His own. The ministry of the Spirit is the gospel in which Christ is offered and men are allured to come to Christ to be justified by His merits. This ministry makes alive. Hereby man is regenerated, justified, sanctified, and led to eternal salvation. By the covenant of works, that is by the law, no flesh can be justified. This is an impossibility as far as the law is concerned, for the law has been rendered ineffectual by the flesh (Romans 8:3). However, through Christ the ministry of the gospel has been held forth unto justification and life -- in the Old Testament in its promise, and in the New Testament in its fulfillment. This is the first contrast, by which the ministry of the Spirit, that is, of Christ, is so eminently elevated above the covenant of works -- its condition being the law of the ten commandments, engraven with letters upon tables of stone, and considered in its internal demands. As such there is no comparison, for the one kills and the other makes alive. The second distinction between the letter and the Spirit by which it is evident that the ministry of the Spirit is more excellent than that of the letter is the glory which is manifested in its administration (2 Corinthians 3:7-10). The letter had glory relative to:

- (1) the matter itself, its contents being love and pure holiness unto the glory of God;
- (2) its being given upon Mt. Sinai, which in every respect was awe-inspiring: the voice, the fire, the annunciation, and the inscribing upon tables of stone; and
- (3) its messenger, Moses, whose face shone to such an extent that when he came down the mountain with the tables of the law, one could not endure the shining of his countenance. The Spirit had glory relative to:

- (1) The Person of Christ, the express image of His Father’s glory, of whom the Father declared with an audible voice from heaven, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” He revealed a glimpse of this glory upon the holy mountain.

- (2) The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost upon the apostles, whereby they proclaimed the great deeds of the Lord in various languages, inspiring awe in all who heard them; as well as thereafter upon believers, whereby the assembly of believers inspired such fear that no one else dared to join with them.

- (3) The matters related to His administration; that is, the justification of the sinner to the glory of the righteousness, wisdom, and free grace of God.

- (4) The efficacy of His ministry in illuminating, converting, and rejoicing souls. Consider these two and compare them with each other. You will find that whatever is glorious has not even been glorified when considering how eminently the glory of the Spirit excels the glory of the letter. The

glory of the letter, when compared with the glory of the Spirit, is extinguished, obscured, and becomes black, so to speak. The third aspect in which the Spirit is more excellent than the letter is the manner of administration. Moses' administration of the letter was accompanied by a veil (vs. 13> [2 Corinthians 3:13-17]), whereas the ministry of the Spirit consists in an uncovered countenance, observing not the glory of Moses, but the glory of the Lord in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). The apostle dwells on this veil a bit longer in order to demonstrate the difference between the letter and the Spirit -- between the law and Christ. By the veil one is not to understand the ceremonies, for:

(1) the literal reference here is to the moral law inscribed with letters upon tables of stone (2 Corinthians 3:7);

(2) the ceremonies were not given to cover or conceal their antitype, Christ, but to reveal Him and by them to lead men to Christ;

(3) Old Testament believers were strongly encouraged to look to Christ -- yes, not to do so was sin. Evasive Argument: It was indeed not the objective of the ceremonies to conceal Christ, but the outcome was such due to the foolishness of men.

Answer (1) This is contrary to the text, which does not speak of an outcome due to chance, but of a deliberate purpose and objective, using the word "that."

(2) Many looked unto Christ through the ceremonies, doing so with intensity, longing, and yearning. Thus, the ceremonies did not have this effect with all. The best among them were those who "could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." Thus, one cannot understand the veil to refer to the ceremonies, and the most significant purpose of the ceremonies was therefore not the concealing of Christ. Instead, the veil upon Moses' countenance was a depiction of the veiling of the glory of the moral law as to its demands, promises, and threats, lest one would cling to that and seek his justification and salvation thereby. This would be ruinous for them and therefore the covering of Moses' countenance was a blessing; it kept them from a way which would not lead them to salvation. There was indeed glory in the law, but it could not justify man, as it had become ineffectual through the flesh. One may thus not cling to the law in that manner.

"The end of that which is abolished" does not refer to Christ, for:

(1) Christ is here contrasted with the letter, and thus He cannot be the end of the letter.

(2) They were indeed permitted to look intently upon Christ. They were obligated to do so, for to forbear doing so was sin. The purpose of this veil, however, was not to look steadfastly to the end, but to restrain anyone from doing so. Instead, "by the end of the letter" one is to understand the justification of man by the works of the law. To that end the law had been given to Adam, and in the keeping of the commandments is eternal life. The man who does these things shall live by them. That end neither can nor may be pursued in living according to this rule, for man cannot attain that end by the keeping of the law. If he were to cling to such keeping of the law, he would find himself deceived at last. That which is abolished is the letter, that is, the moral law -- not as far as its end is concerned whereto it had been given upon Sinai -- to be a rule of life for the partakers of the covenant, who do not seek their justification in the law, but rather in Christ. Instead, it is abolished by believers as far as:

(1) Being justified thereby, justification being impossible by way of the law due to sin. In this respect Christ takes the place of the law, relative to which the apostle says: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4).

(2) Its condemning power over all who transgress the law -- as believers have done and do daily. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). Moses' veil was an indication that they had to look away from the law so as to be justified thereby. Instead, they had to be led by the law as a schoolmaster to Christ. The apostle applies this to the present state of the Jews in their blindness, doing so by transposing this to another matter (2 Corinthians 3:14-16). The apostle does not understand the veil to refer here to that which was upon Moses' countenance, but by way of analogy he refers to something that lays upon them as a covering veil. This veil is not upon their countenance, but upon their heart, intellect, and will. He understands hereby the ignorance and blindness of the heart of which the prophet speaks: "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (Isaiah 6:9-10). The apostle applies this to Israel and its blindness during his time (Acts 28:26). This darkness lies upon them as a veil in the reading of the Old Testament, wherein Christ is clearly portrayed. They do not see Him there, however, and this veil remains upon them until this present day, and will remain upon them until it is done away for them in Christ. And indeed, it will once be taken away. They will one day turn to the Lord, as the apostle states in plain language in 2 Corinthians 3:16 : "Nevertheless when it (the people of Israel, and not this or that person) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." They will then know Christ, receive Him, and believe in Him, and with us "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord" will be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," Amen. The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of Matthew 23:38-39

Proof #3: This proof is derived from Matthew 23:38-39 : "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." Here we have a prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:38), followed by Christ being hidden from them. This is the blindness of Israel of which we have spoken in light of Romans 11:1-36. Here we have the designation of a time frame: "till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh." There will come a day that they will say, "Blessed is He that cometh"; "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26). Until then they will neither see, know, nor acknowledge Jesus -- however, no longer than that. Christ will then come again to His old people Israel and they will then be turned again.

"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The Lord Jesus prophesied of the eradication of the Jewish nation and of the subsequent dispersion of the Jews among all the nations, as well as the long duration of the desolation of Jerusalem, designating the time when this dispersion and desolation would end as being when the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled. This is identical to what the apostle says: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery ... that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25). The word "until" does not imply

“never,” but rather a certain moment; that is, after that time, when the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in. Then will Israel no longer remain blind, and then Israel will repent, as is stated expressly in Romans 11:26 : “And so all Israel shall be saved.” The partial conversion during the time of the apostles is not the global conversion of Israel, but that of a small remnant. However, the blinded part of Israel would also be converted when the fullness of the Gentiles will have come in, and thus will all Israel be saved. If, therefore, their dispersion and the treading down of Jerusalem will last until the times of the Gentiles will have been fulfilled, there will most certainly be a restoration of the nation, not only in a spiritual sense, but also in a physical sense. This we shall now consider. The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of Isaiah 61:1-4

Proof #4: We derive this proof from Isaiah 61:1-11. “The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings ... to proclaim liberty to the captives” (Isaiah 61:1); “To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Isaiah 61:2); “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes ... that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3); “And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations” (Isaiah 61:4); “But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves” (Isaiah 61:6); “For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them” (Isaiah 61:7). Here a most excellent restoration of Israel after her destruction is prophesied -- according to body and soul. Nothing can be construed against this, except if one were to maintain that the prophet is speaking of the deliverance from Babylon. Since it is a certainty, however, that after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 40 A.D., and the dispersion of the Jews by them, there will be a general restoration of the Jews -- as we have previously shown from the New Testament -- one would have to show from this text that the reference here is to the deliverance from Babylon rather than to their last conversion.

Objection: This is the point of contention, namely, whether such a conversion is to be anticipated.

Answer: If the matter itself has been confirmed from other texts, and one then arrives at this text, the point of contention is: Of which of the two deliverances does this text speak? If one claims that the reference is to the first, one will have to prove this to be so. However, let us consider the text by itself, and it will be proven that the reference here is not to the deliverance from Babylon, but to a deliverance of Israel which as yet has not transpired, but will occur.

(1) This deliverance after a lengthy desolation would occur after the coming of the Messiah. This is evident when we compare Isaiah 61:1-3 with Luke 4:14; Luke 4:21, where the Lord Jesus, having read this prophecy, states, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

(2) This conversion and restoration would take place after a desolation of Canaan, the duration of which would be from generation to generation. It cannot be said of the captivity in Babylon, which lasted but seventy years, that it lasted from generation to generation, for the same generation returned. There were those among them who still had a good memory of the glory of the first temple (Ezra 3:12).

(3) They did not receive double after their deliverance from Babylon -- also not spiritually. Generally speaking, they were buried under a deep layer of ignorance, superstition, and ungodliness. How wretched was their condition when Christ came! After this deliverance, however, Israel would be "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." This was also not true in physical terms, for during the entire period from the restoration from Babylon until the destruction of Jerusalem, which is a period of approximately five hundred years, they have experienced nothing but unrest, troubles, wars, and their land being occupied. They did not possess their land, but were cast out -- as is the case until this day.

(4) Israel would be adorned with an extraordinary luster and glory after this deliverance. They would be called priests of the Most High. In the Old Testament, the priestly office was limited to the tribe of Levi, to the house of Aaron, while other tribes were barred from this. However, here a time is prophesied of when the entire nation would thus be glorified, and all would approach unto God, as did the priests. After their deliverance from Babylon they have never been in such a state as is promised here. "And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed" (Isaiah 61:9). From all that has been said it is evident that this text does not speak of the deliverance from Babylon, but of a conversion and restoration which as yet is to be anticipated, and which is promised here in certain terms. The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of Jeremiah 31:31-40

Proof #5: This proof we derive from Jeremiah 31:1-40. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31); "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33); "... they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34); "If those ordinances (that is, of day and night) depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever" (Jeremiah 31:36); "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:37); "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:38); "And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron (these were unclean places) ... shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever" (Jeremiah 31:40). That the spiritual benefits recounted in Jeremiah 31:33-34 are the benefits of the New Testament, and that the Gentiles have become partakers of them, is a certainty. However, the Gentiles would not be the sole partakers of these benefits; the text states that Israel and Judah will also partake of them. The names of Israel and Judah refer to the Jewish nation. They never refer to the church -- the believers among the Gentiles. These are never denominated by the names of Israel and Judah in the New Testament. Not only would a remnant become believing, but they would "all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them"; that is, the entire seed of Israel would not be cast away, but would be saved. This would occur after a great destruction and dispersion. Jerusalem would be rebuilt and be further expanded, and also the unclean places in Jerusalem would be removed. There is no room for an exception here, namely, that mention would be made here of the deliverance from Babylon, for:

(1) all that has been related would occur after the coming of the Messiah (Jeremiah 31:22), and after the infanticide at Bethlehem (Jeremiah 31:15);

(2) after the restoration from Babylon, Israel did not partake of these benefits in either a spiritual or physical sense -- a fact which is beyond dispute;

(3) they were removed and broken down after five hundred years. This restoration, however, would be of everlasting duration. It is thus evident from these texts that the Jewish nation will once most certainly be converted, and be re-established in her country. The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of Hosea 3:4-5

Proof #6: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:4-5). This text speaks of the children of Israel, the Jewish nation. It is prophesied to them that they will experience a lengthy desertion during which they will be devoid of a leader, true religion, and idolatry. Hereupon it is prophesied that they will return in the latter days and will acknowledge and receive Christ as the Messiah. From this it can be clearly perceived that we are to anticipate a general conversion of the Jews who as yet are in this state as is described here. One could advance the evasive argument here that the reference is to the deliverance from Babylon, but the texts show the contrary to be true.

(1) While in Babylon, Israel had not been in the state which is described here. They still had princes and governors who ruled them with the permission of the kings of Babylon. They still had priests and prophets to teach them, and also their captivity did not last long.

(2) Neither during nor after their Babylonian captivity has Israel turned to the Lord in the manner described.

(3) Their restoration was to be after the coming of the Messiah. They would seek and turn to David their king -- the Messiah -- and would acknowledge Him to be the true, promised Messiah.

(4) This would transpire in the latter days, which is an expression generally understood to refer to the New Testament (cf. Isaiah 2:2; Joel 2:28 in conjunction with Acts 2:17; Micah 4:1; Jeremiah 23:20). Thus, this cannot be understood as referring to the restoration from Babylon. Rather, it proves that such a conversion is yet to be anticipated.

He who wishes to have at his disposal more texts wherein this conversion is prophesied ought to consider the following texts which we will make note of in order to prove that not only will the Jews turn to the Messiah, but also that they will again dwell in Canaan.

Proof #7: In addition to the above six Scripture passages pointing to the anticipated conversion of the Jews, consider the following:

(1) Throughout the world the Jewish nation remains isolated, even though the genealogies have been lost. The Jews do not intermingle with the nations among whom they live -- neither by marriage, nor by way of religion. They also stand out among all the nations, no matter in what land they reside.

(2) They still adhere to the externals of the Jewish church, such as circumcision, feast days, distinction among foods, and a careful avoidance of idolatry.

(3) They preserve the Holy Scriptures very carefully and acknowledge their divinity.

(4) They still expect the Messiah to come to deliver them. Even though these matters do not prove that their conversion will occur, nevertheless, when added to the quoted prophecies, the heart will be inclined all the more quickly and powerfully to believe these prophecies. God's providential dealings with this nation are still very evident. He is preserving her until her conversion, in order that the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning her will be all the more obvious. The Return of the Jews to Canaan Proven from Various Old Testament Passages

One more question remains to be answered: Will the Jewish nation be gathered together again from all the regions of the world and from all the nations of the earth among which they have been dispersed? Will they come to and dwell in Canaan and all the lands promised to Abraham, and will Jerusalem be rebuilt?

We believe that these events will transpire. We deny, however, that the temple will be rebuilt, and that therein the previous mode of worship will be observed, which prior to Christ's coming was of a typifying nature and would then be of a reflective nature. We also deny that Israel will then have dominion over the entire world -- and other such things which the Jews imagine and some Christians dream about. Rather, they will be an independent republic, governed by a very wise, good-natured, and superb government. Furthermore, Canaan will be extraordinarily fruitful, the inhabitants will be eminently godly, and they will constitute a segment of the glorious state of the church during the thousand years prophesied in Revelation 20:1-15. We shall not enlarge here by vindicating every text over against evasive arguments one could construe -- as if those texts referred to the deliverance from Babylon. They could easily be refuted from the answers already given to evasive arguments, and by the attentive examination of texts, comparing them with the actual state of Israel's restoration from Babylon.

We prove this from the two passages we have dealt with: Isaiah 61:1-9 and (Jeremiah 31:31-40). We have refuted those evasive arguments against these texts, for they state expressly that the Jews will again return to their land, and that both their ruined places and Jerusalem will be rebuilt. Consider in addition to this the following texts.

Deuteronomy 30:1-6 : "... when all these things are come upon thee" -- namely, "that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom" (Deuteronomy 29:23). This did not occur during the Babylonian captivity, as the land remained fruitful and was cultivated. Canaan was in this condition after the destruction of Jerusalem (and it is nearly still the case) -- "thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God ... with all thine heart, and with all thy soul (which occurred neither upon their return from Babylon nor thereafter); that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee: and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and He will do thee good, and

multiply thee above thy fathers. (This did not occur at all after the Babylonian captivity, as those times bore no resemblance whatsoever to the times of David, Solomon, and other kings. There was continual warfare and external dominion, and there were continual troubles within.) And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Since these things will most certainly befall Israel, and since this has occurred neither in a spiritual nor in a physical sense after the Babylonian captivity, then such a spiritual conversion and a restoration to the land of Canaan is still to be anticipated.

Amos 9:14-15 : "And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God." However, after the Babylonian captivity they only possessed the land for five hundred years, having then been evicted from their land until this very day. Thus, this conversion is yet to be anticipated.

Ezekiel 37:21-25 : "I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land ... and one king shall be king to them all (they did not even have a king after Babylon). ... And David (Christ) My servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one Shepherd: they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and My servant David shall be their prince for ever." Israel did not experience this after the Babylonian captivity -- neither spiritually, nor physically. This would occur in the days of the Messiah, after His coming -- after which the Jews did not reside in the land of Canaan from generation to generation. Instead, the land has been destroyed and they have been dispersed. Thus, that time is yet to come.

Isaiah 62:1-4 : "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." Israel is referred to as such in these days. She is the forsaken one and her land is desolate. Therefore, this cannot be said of them after the Babylonian captivity. During this period Israel was also not in the glorious state spoken of here. Thus, it is yet to come.

"... Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein" (Zechariah 2:4); "... and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem" (Zechariah 12:8); "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David" (Zechariah 12:8); "... and it (Jerusalem) shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place" (Zechariah 14:11); "And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited" (Zechariah 14:11). Jerusalem has not been in such a state after the Babylonian captivity; she has been fully destroyed, and is now in a state of exile. It is therefore not applicable to the return from Babylon,

but to a period of time yet to come. From all this it is clearly evident that the Jewish nation will yet be converted, come to her land Canaan, and reside there.

Evasive argument: All the texts quoted above speak of the glorious state of the church of the New Testament, and all these expressions are to be understood as referring to spiritual matters, rather than to the conversion of the Jews and their restoration to Canaan.

Answer: This is being asserted, but has not been proven. With every text we have shown emphatically that they speak of Israel and what would befall them according to soul and body.

Objection: "And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined ... and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Daniel 9:26-27). Here it is stated that it has been determined that there will be desolations until the end. Thus, the Jewish nation will neither be converted, nor return to Canaan to possess it.

Answer: The angel Gabriel not only made known to Daniel their deliverance from Babylon, but also the time when the Messiah would be born, suffer, and die in Canaan, as well as how the Jews would fare in Canaan. There would be continual warfare there until Jerusalem would be destroyed to the ground -- a destruction that was most surely decreed and would therefore certainly come to pass. No mention is made of what would befall the Jewish nation and Jerusalem after their destruction, but rather that which would precede their destruction and that which would befall them shortly before the death of Christ: warfare until the end. [Note: The equivalent phrase of the KJV "and the end thereof shall be with a flood," reads as follows in the Statenbijbel: "en tot het einde toe zal er krijg zijn," that is, "there shall be war until the end."] This does not refer to the end of the world, but of Jerusalem. The warfare would not cease until Jerusalem would be destroyed in a dreadful manner by the Romans, the destruction of which would signal the end of the warfare. Thus, this text does not speak against the conversion of the Jews and their restoration to their land.

Various Reasons Given for Focusing upon the Conversion of the Jewish Nation

We have not considered the conversion of the Jewish nation and her restoration to Canaan merely for the purpose of ascertaining this to be so, and to end in this as a matter for contemplation. Rather, we have done so in order that we would be exercised to engage in the performance of various duties.

(1) Attentively observe the immutability of the covenant God made with Abraham and his seed. Consider that God, in spite of all their sins and stiffneckedness under it, does not break His promise nor will He permit any of the good words spoken to them to fall to the earth. Believers, glorify God concerning this and be strengthened thereby as to the immutability of the covenant of grace and its promises, which God will most certainly fulfill to you. Therefore, anticipate their fulfillment with faith and patience.

(2) Do not despise the Jewish nation. "Boast not against the branches" Romans 11:28, the natural branches of that olive tree into which you, as branches of a wild olive tree, have been grafted contrary to nature. "Be not highminded, but fear" (Romans 11:28). 1) They have received more

than enough contempt from the unconverted. 2) They are in one and the same covenant with Abraham, their father. 3) "They are beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Romans 11:28). Therefore, let there be the love of benevolence toward them. They are the children of the covenant (Acts 3:25). 4) They will once be converted and be a glorious and holy people above all the nations on the face of the earth. Therefore, esteem, honor, and love them.

(3) Have pity upon their state, which is so wretched according to the flesh, being despised and detested among the nations -- this is a righteous judgment of God upon them for their rejection of Christ. They are even more wretched spiritually. They hate the Lord Jesus, the true Messiah, with an evil hatred, and are living without the true religion -- yes, have a religion which does not even resemble a religion. Nevertheless, they find a wonderful delight in it; thus they live in a state in which they cannot be saved, but have nothing to look forward to but eternal damnation.

(4) Pray for their conversion. How they have prayed for the conversion of the Gentiles! How they rejoiced in the prophecies that one day the Gentiles would be converted! Therefore, you ought to do likewise for their conversion, for you can pray this in faith, since they will certainly be converted.

(5) By way of a holy life show that you are walking in the footsteps of their father Abraham. The life of many so-called Christians offends them and keeps them from exercising faith in Christ. They do not know, except it be to a very limited extent, that among Christians there are presently many who fear and love Jehovah, the God of Israel. Therefore, manifest the image of Christ by way of a holy walk, so that they may be convicted by it and yet be aroused to jealousy. Occasionally make use of opportunities to speak in a friendly manner with them, making your affection known to them, as well as your anticipation of their restoration in Canaan. Speak to them about the Lord Jesus by the name of Messiah. Speak of the dreadfulness of sin and of eternal damnation to follow upon sin, and show this from the Scriptures of the Old Testament if you are able to do so. Show them that man cannot be justified before God by works, and that all their deeds cannot justify them. Show them from the Old Testament that the Messiah would make satisfaction for sin by His death, reconcile God with man, and convert souls, proving this from Isaiah 53:1-12, and Daniel 9:1-27. Perhaps you would be instrumental in the salvation of one. The fact is that in doing so you have done your duty, and it will be a delight to your soul that you have done so. Be very careful not to quarrel, however, thereby giving them an opportunity to slander and grieve you by their diatribe. Their national conversion will not occur in our day, but it will indeed come to pass. At His time the Lord will cause it to come to pass suddenly. May the Lord be gracious to His people of old. Oh, that the Redeemer would come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob! Israel would then rejoice and the Gentiles would glory, and together they would render the Lord honor, glory, and thanksgiving. Hallelujah!

Thus far we have considered the state of the church and God's dealings with her from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Sinai, from Sinai to Christ, and from Christ until the Revelation of John. It now remains for us to consider the state of the church, and God's dealings with her, from the Revelation of John until the end of the world, as recorded for us in the Revelation of John. [Note: à Brakel's exposition of the book of Revelation is not included in this four-volume set due to its controversial nature. However, out of respect for à Brakel and for the sake of historicity, it has been decided to publish this exposition as a separate volume at a future date.]

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